



Genre: Drama, Historical

Run Time: 14:40min

Date of completion: March 2018

Format: 4k

Canadian Distributor: Moving Images Distribution

Log-line: Through his father's gift of a secret and tiny hand carved cedar canoe, a child discovers the strength and resilience to endure his first year at an Indian Residential School.



Synopsis:

The story begins the morning the cattle truck is to arrive and brother and sister, Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko, must say good-bye to their Yayah (grandmother), their Mother, and Father. While they wait, they ask their father to build them their very own canoe for the next summer, while they are away. They insist that they're getting too big to be always riding in his canoe. As the time for the cattle truck to arrive draws near, Shin-chi's parents tell him that if it was up to them they would never let him go, but it's Canada's law that forces them to send him away.

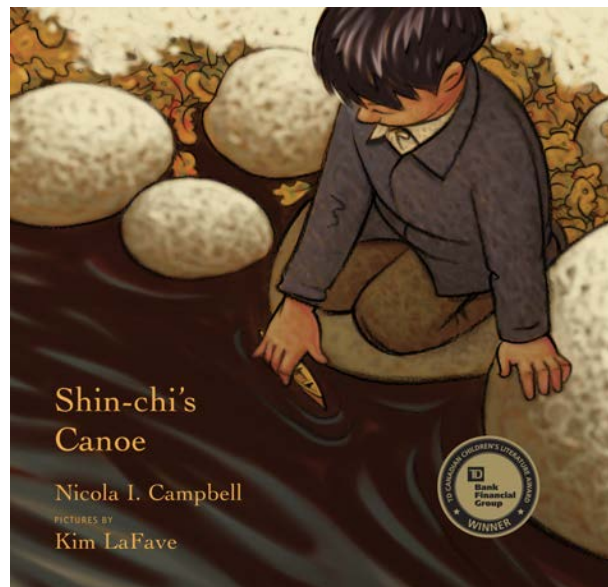
Shin-chi and Shi-shi-etko are loaded onto the cattle truck with other Native children, "So tight they can hardly breath." Many hours later, they arrive at the school, but before the brother and sister are separated and forbidden to speak to each other for the next ten months, Shi-shi-etko hands Shin-chi a tiny cedar canoe that was carved by their father. She tells Shin-chi to always keep it with him and always keep it hidden. At night Shin-chi can't sleep and he holds the canoe to his face and the sweet smell of cedar reminds him of his father. He remembers that his dad said that when the sockeye come in the summertime, that's when he can go home. Over the next several months, Shin-chi tries to adjust to the residential school's strict routine of religious devotion, work, and classes. Shin-chi is always hungry so he steals food. He misses his family. He gets in the habit of checking a near-by stream to see if the salmon have started their run, but it's still many long months before summer.

When summer finally arrives he and Shi-shi-etko take the long trip home. When they arrive at home they are greeted by Yayah, and their mother, and father. With great joy, they find that while away, their father as built them their very own cedar canoe.

Film Festivals and Screenings:

- ImagineNATIVE Film and Media Festival, 2018
- Canadian Consulate, Berlinale, 2019
- Crossroads Film Festival, 2019
- New York Independent Film Festival, 2019





The Books:

In 2008 Salish and Métis author, Nicola Campbell tackled one of the most problematic yet urgent narrative challenges in all of Canada: how do we, as parents, educators and as a society explain the pain and anguish of the Indian residential school system to young children? Nicole wrote two children's free-verse picture books on the subject, each one evocative, lyrical, and honest without being traumatic for young readers. The books tell the stories of a sister and brother who find strength in their culture while being forced into a world so alien their own. In Nicola's first book, *Shi-shi-etko*, a young girl is counting down the days before she must leave her home and attend her first year at Residential School. She moves through her landscape trying to inscribe in her memory the beauty and details of her surroundings; the sunlight, the tall grass, each shiny rock. Her mother, father and grandmother share with her the traditional teachings that will help her survive. When Shi-shi-etko climbs aboard the cattle truck that will take her to the school she has her carefully gathered memories and teachings that will sustain her in the months to come.

Shin-chi's Canoe is the sequel to *Shi-shi-etko*. It is Nicola's second book about a child's experience of residential school. In this book we go with Shin-chi to the residential school and see the entire year and everything that happens through his eyes. Released in fall 2008 by Groundwood Books, it received the 2009 TD Canadian Children's Literature Award and was a finalist for the 2009 Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award and a 2008 Governor General's Award for illustration.

Director's Notes, By Allan Hopkins:

Nicole Campbell's book, "Shin-chi's Canoe," accomplishes two seemingly contradictory things; it addresses a highly delicate, almost taboo social topic, and yet presents it in a story that is lyrical, dreamlike, vivid and powerful. It highlights the strength of family, culture and nature, rather than the trauma of what some have referred to as a genocidal policy toward Indigenous people. In other words Nicole has made art out of tragedy. I want to accomplish two similarly contradictory things. I want to create a very dreamlike magical world, one of sunshine, and lush forests with moss hanging from thousand year old cedar trees. I am inspired by the beautiful illustrations of the book and I hope to translate its beauty in to live action. Featuring giant ferns and crystal clear streams filled with smooth round rocks, I want to smell freshly carved cedar and smoked salmon. This film needs to be shot outdoors and in natural light. The golden, late summer light will almost be a character in and of itself. And although I want to create a magical world, I also feel it needs to be grounded in honesty and authenticity. I want real characters struggling with real emotions as they come to terms with a terrible situation that they are powerless to prevent. I want to tell an original story in a unique setting with vibrant, authentic characters. I want to make a film fascinates audiences from the opening image to the final credit roll. I also hope it introduces them a new way of looking at First Nation people and their lives all through the experiences of a small Native boy.

Why me, why this film? I'm a filmmaker and member of the N'quatqua First Nation located 150 kilometres northeast of Vancouver in Lil'wat traditional territory. Both my grandparents on my mother's side attended residential school. I feel I have a personal connection and a sensitivity to the subject matter that others may not. I've heard many residential school stories, some heroic, some tragic, some which left me shocked at the level of cruelty that humans are capable of inflicting on other humans. Yet, I have also experienced the strength, perseverance and sheer beauty of First Nations people and culture. I am uniquely positioned to tell this story with deep respect and a powerful artistic vision. In addition, growing up on the reserve I was surrounded by great storytellers including my father, grandfather and many others. I believe stories help us make sense of chaos, stories are a path to healing.

I remember interviewing for CTV the wonderful Nuu-chah-nulth artist, Art Thompson. He was one of the first residential school survivors to win legal victories over his abusers. He told me the story of being outside the courtroom and overhearing two, "courtroom watchers," talk about his testimony. They were saying things like, "that could not have happened," and, "no church going person would do that to a child," and, "he must be lying, he's obviously making it up." Things have changed since then. Most of the Canadian public accepts that these abuses actually took place. Since the 2008 residential school apology, and the final release in 2015 of the Truth and Reconciliation Report entitled: Residential School Shame, the Canadian public are not only out of their collective denial, they are ready to listen, they are ready to learn. This project is an amazing, poetic and imaginative introduction to the topic.

Director's Biography – Allan Hopkins:

Allan W. Hopkins is member of the N'quatqua First Nation located 150 kilometres northeast of Vancouver in Lil'wat traditional territory. At an early age he fell in love with books, film and storytelling. He graduated from Simon Fraser University with a BA in Communications and a minor degree in Film and Video Studies. Allan has worked as a TV producer and journalist, has run a 16 episode current events series, directed hundreds of news features and short documentary shoots. Recently Allan has turned his creative talents to writing feature films and TV pilots, and directing. Allan will be directing his first feature film in May in 2017. He is primarily a storyteller, and stories are, ultimately, about people, about us. Stories help us make sense of the past, understand the present, and design the future.



Stories build connections, get people talking, and inspire us to imagine that which was once unimaginable. Allan loves stunning images, choreographed camera moves and polished editing, but all this is just style and technique if not in the service of a story that will move the viewer to understand, think and act in new and better ways. As a screenwriter and producer he looks forward to collaborating with media professionals who are adventurous, intelligent, passionate and determined to make a difference.

Producer's Biography – Kate Kroll:

Kate Kroll and her company, Black Moon Media, are passionate and committed to utilizing digital platforms as a conduit to allow important stories to be told and voices to be heard.

Kate and her films have garnered numerous awards including: the Whistler Film Festival *Women On Top* Mentorship award; Vancouver WIFTV *Legacy Award*; The WIFTV *Pitch Mentorship* award; the Director's Guild of Canada *Kickstart* award; and grants from Canada Council for the Arts; the National Film Board; BravoFACT; and the BC Arts Council. Notably, Kate's work has screened at TIFF, VIFF, ImagineNative, Halifax Pop Explosion and has been broadcast on Bravo, Super Channel, Knowledge Network, Vision, APTN and Air Canada.



In 2015, Kate was selected as part of the *Women In The Director's Chair Story Incubation Module* and in 2014, she did a residency at the Banff Centre as part of the *Women In The Director's Chair Career Advancement Module*. She graduated with honours from Confederation College Film Production Program and studied Photojournalism at Langara College.

Kate has worn a variety of creative hats from concept to post - working relentlessly as a director, producer, production manager, post supervisor and cinematographer. She loves being in the field and has lead productions in nine different countries.

Kate brings her many passions to all of her projects. She has traveled the world, is an accomplished performance artist and theater producer, and is an entertainment wrestler. She is always searching for unique ways to tell stories, fascinating people to meet, keyholes into secret worlds to peer, and unique subcultures to uncover.

CONTACT:

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