



ANCESTRAL BEASTS

FEATURE HORROR/THRILLER

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY TIM RIEDEL



A woman in a white dress stands on a bed in a dark, rustic room with wooden walls and floors. The room is dimly lit, with light coming from a window on the right. The floor is cluttered with debris, and a bag is visible on the right. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and unsettling.

LOGLINE

A troubled Métis woman returns to her rural, ancestral home looking for respite from her self-inflicted life troubles only to uncover a terrifying supernatural creature she must battle before it kills her and everyone she loves.

"Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable"
- Mexican poet and academic, Cesar A. Cruz



SYNOPSIS

WHAT IF A SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER MANIFESTED AS A PHYSICAL CREATURE, LURKING IN THE SHADOWS EAGER TO ATTACK?

ELYSE is her own worst enemy. She has struggled with her mental health for most of her life, along with her YOUNGER SISTER, with whom she shared both an apartment and a toxic, co-dependent relationship that ELYSE has just escaped.

She attempts to restart her life by returning to the recently-vacated family home out in the country. She begins to make new friends with the locals and soon they want to throw a housewarming party for ELYSE. She is cautiously optimistic and careful to not let her anxiety get the better of her despite mysterious and disturbing things happening in her house.

Night time is the worst for ELYSE. She experiences terrifying moments in the dark, creaking floors, and creepy crawling noises that abuse her fragile mind. She struggles to separate imagination from reality.

On the day of the housewarming party, ELYSE discovers a large hole in her floorboards under her bed that leads to a system of claustrophobic tunnels and passageways scratched in between the walls and into a burrow where a terrifying CREATURE reveals itself.

Partygoers arrive, and ELYSE tries to conceal the CREATURE until her YOUNGER SISTER shows up uninvited. She makes a scene that sends ELYSE into a manic episode, allowing the CREATURE to break free, lashing out at all of ELYSE's new friends in a series of escalating violent attacks.

Eventually, only the two sisters are left standing. ELYSE is able to trap her CREATURE for a moment only to discover that her YOUNGER SISTER has also had a CREATURE her own this entire time.

With her survival on the line, ELYSE decides to release her CREATURE once again, knowing that it will kill her sister.

There's no real path for ELYSE out of her guilt. She learns to live with her CREATURE ever-present, keeping it at bay to minimize the destruction it has on her and the remaining people she loves.

VISION

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ancestral Beasts is an original story based on my own personal experience as the son of a 60s Scoop survivor who, later in life, was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder.

This story is an allegory for a person's struggle with **borderline personality disorder (BPD)** told as a thriller film centered around the broken relationship between two Red River Métis sisters due to their traumatic experiences growing up and the struggles one of the sisters face on her healing journey.

The thriller genre is used as the lens through which we project the absurd real-life portrayal of toxic patterns that lead to intense emotional instability triggered by paranoia, feelings of being slighted, and fear of abandonment, which all manifest as impulsivity, erratic behaviour, intense anger, and dissociation.

This story was developed in consultation with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors as well as leading Indigenous psychologists who are experts to ensure the accuracy of the portrayals of trauma; triggers and reactions.

I consider the act of storytelling to be sacred. Words are medicine and the words I use in the stories I tell are designed to be good medicine that teaches audiences about the world we share and provokes audiences to think deeply about themselves, their values, their relationships, and their potential contributions towards a better future.



Creature concept art

INTENTIONS



This story will provide audiences with a view into the struggle of borderline personality disorder and the risk of leaving borderline personality disorder unchecked.

To be clear, the intention of this story is not to treat borderline personality disorder in a pejorative manner. The intention of this story is to make sense of the experience of having borderline personality disorder and the difficult path to walk in the early stages of treatment leading to a path to learn self-love and managing one's self-preservation trigger.

The moral of this story is about what we owe to ourselves and the people around us. We can't wait for things to be good to start managing our trauma responses. Sometimes we won't have control over "the bad" going on in our life. But we can learn to live with it and manage it to reduce our self-destructive behaviour and the amount of destruction we inflict on those closest to us.

With the right support, we can find ourselves choosing between suffering the pain of self-awareness and self-discipline, or suffering the pain of disappointment and regret.

CHARACTERS

ELYSE POITRAS

(30 yrs) is the oldest of the two sisters. She's well-dressed and moves with an air of grace while always keeping an eye out for the threat coming around the corner. Often, Elyse herself is the cause of the threat.

She drinks too much, spends too much, and before the start of our story, didn't think enough about her future.

Despite her outward confidence, she struggles to maintain healthy relationships, particularly romantic ones. Her self-protective instincts lead her to react to people's actions as either slights or threats. This defensive behavior can cause her to push people away but, once they're gone, she won't let it show that it bothers her. Her dignity is all she has left.

She saves her most intense emotions for when she's alone. Her panic attacks have gotten worse, and she experiences far more lows than highs these days. It's getting harder to conceal that she's drowning in her own depression and desperately seeking a life raft.



MORGAN HOLMSTROM

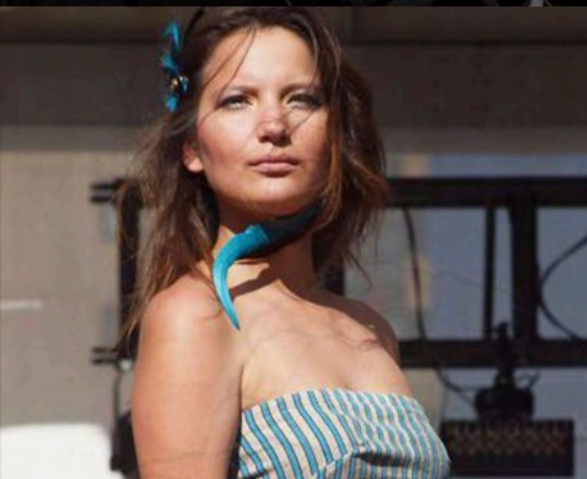
Morgan Holmstrom is a Red River Métis/Filipina actress from Winnipeg known for Paramount+/CBC's SkyMed, SyFy's Day of the Dead, and the APTN miniseries Shadow of the Rougarou, as well as a guest star in the highly acclaimed series Outlander.

CHARACTERS

NIKKI POITRAS

(28 yrs) is the eldest of the two sisters and she is an all out assault on your senses. Nikki is loud, outspoken and wants you to know that she doesn't give a flying f### about what you think. She had you figured out within thirty seconds of you walking into the room.

Acerbic, self-righteous, and self-destructive, she wears her extreme narcissism on her chest and will make you believe she is better than you.



DARLA CONTOIS

Darla Contois is an Indigenous writer and actress from Misipawistik Cree Nation, Grand Rapids, Manitoba, Canada. She won a Canadian Screen Award for her performance as Esther Rosenblum / Bezhig Little Bird in the drama series Little Bird.

CHARACTERS

CODY CHARTRAND

(32 yrs) is a kind, stable, and humble person who gives more than he takes and tries to leave every place he visits a little bit better than when he left it. He has grown up uncomfortable receiving praise. He is a very high-functioning people-pleaser so it's easy for people to take advantage of him. Luckily he's a likable guy and his friends look out for him.



ASIVAK KOOSTACHIN

Asivak Koostachin is a Cree-Inuk actor from Canada, known for the films *Red Snow* (2019) for which he received a Leo Award nomination, *Run Woman Run* (2021) and *Portraits from a Fire* (2021) for which he won the award for Best Supporting Actor at the 2021 American Indian Film Festival.

CHARACTERS

MAX

(50s-60s), a gruff-looking old bastard who makes everything his business but wants everyone else to mind their own damn business.

He's lived as a hermit most of his life and has been disconnected from societal rules since birth. Lack of intimate interaction with others has eroded his empathy over time.

He treats the lands in this rural area as his domain and believes he has the right to act however he wants, regardless of how it affects others.



POTENTIAL CASTING



Willem Dafoe



Christoph Waltz



Mike Myers



THE CREATURE

The symbol of borderline personality disorder left unchecked. A protector who causes chaos and instability for the one it intends to protect and does harm to the people closest to them.

This creature is a giant mutated centipede-looking beast with a gnarled hand in place of where a head would normally be, because you know, generational trauma is handed down to us.

BRINGING IT TO LIFE

We will use a hybrid of practical effects and computer-generated enhancements to achieve tactile realism and enhance immersion.

Often, the creature will be hidden in the shadows, but the audience's imagination will be provoked through sound design, cast performance, and evidence of destruction, deeply connecting viewers to the horror.

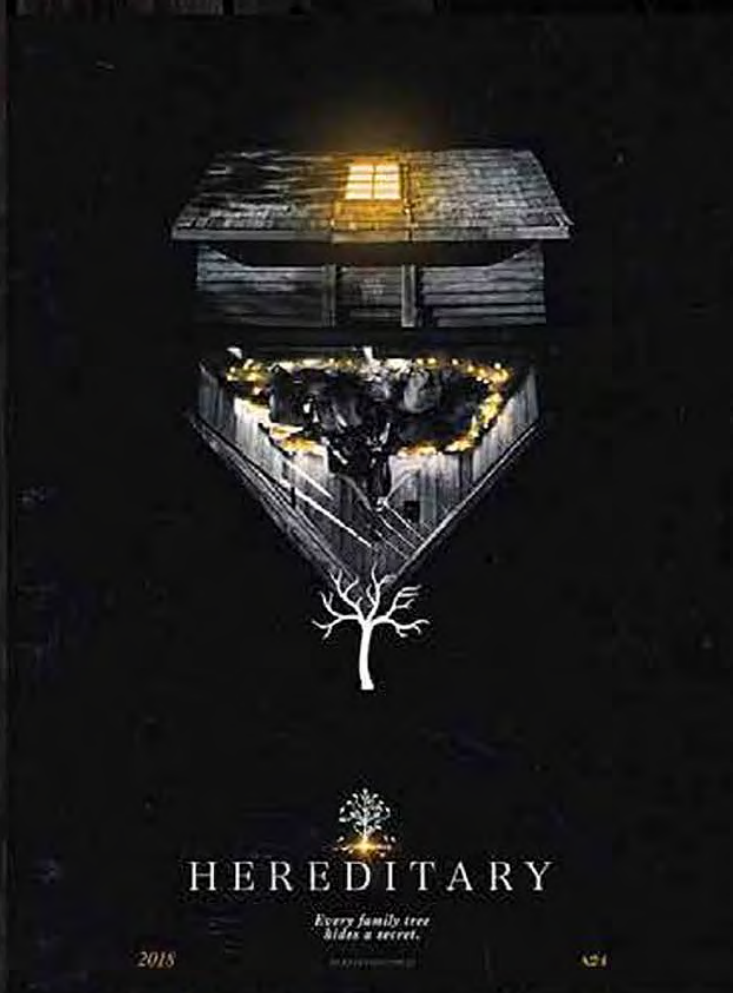


Tree Dragon Films

The practical creature puppets will be created by Toronto-based Tree Dragon Films who specialize in puppetry, and practical special effects.

CREATURE DESIGN

COMPARABLES





TIM RIEDEL

writer | director | producer

Tim Riedel is a proud Red River Métis filmmaker who applies immersive storytelling practices on projects that bring healing through both traditional knowledge and modern practices using a Two-Eyed Seeing approach.

Tim started as a writer of the 3D animated series *Eddy Unleashed*, before spending several years in factual filmmaking where he worked with non-government organizations to make advocacy content designed to improve the representation of marginalized people in media. These projects include 2019's award-winning *Jackstones* and 2021's *Pressure Baby*.

Tim now shares Indigenous stories from his homeland to shine a light on identity, inter-generational trauma, correct history, and reconnect fractured heritages while advocating for the sustained growth and wellbeing of the future generations of indigenous peoples.

He is currently a student in the Filmmakers in Indigenous Leadership & Management Business Affairs (FILMBA) at Capilano University and a recent graduate of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) Aboriginal Business and Entrepreneurship Skills Training (BEST) program.

Ancestral Beasts has been selected to be part of the Indigenous Film Fellowship at the 2024 Whistler International Film Festival.

TEAM

EDMON ROTEA

(Executive Producer)

Edmon produces projects with filmmakers from diverse walks of life, including emerging artists, Indigenous, neurodivergent, and 2SLGBTQI+ filmmakers.

Edmon's producing credits include the hit 2023 indie feature film *Skinamarink*, that won the 2024 Fangoria Chainsaw Award for Best First Feature Film and was recognized by *Variety* and *Rolling Stone* as their #1 top horror film of 2023.



PHYLLIS LAING

(Executive Producer)

Joining forces with a variety of producing partners, Phyllis has been at the forefront of quality Canadian production for over three decades.

Her impressive filmography includes the films *Rumours* (2024), *Flag Day* (2021), and *The Haunting in Connecticut* (2009).

Phyllis was recognized by her Canadian peers in 2012 when she was presented with the Doug Dales Canadian Industry Award



TINA KEEPER

(Executive Producer)

Tina Keeper is a Cree actress, film producer and former politician from Canada.

Keeper was inducted as a Member of the Order of Canada in recognition of her work as an actress and producer, as well as for being one of the first Cree members of Parliament.

Her films include *Road of Iniquity*, *Through the Black Spruce*, and the CTV/Crave comedy series *Acting Good*.



TEAM

LIZ JARVIS

(Producer)

Liz Jarvis has worked in the film industry for over 30 years. She served as Production Executive for Sean Penn's feature FLAG DAY, which premiered at Cannes in 2021.

Her producing credits include Guy Maddin's THE FORBIDDEN ROOM (Sundance 2015) and AMREEKA which won the FIPRESCI Critics Prize during the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes.

FAWNTA NECKOWAY

(Producer)

Fawnda is an Ithiniw (cree) filmmaker from the Nisichiawayasihk Cree Nation, residing in Winnipeg. She is the founder and president of Nikâwiy Productions and Senior Projects Manager at Film Training Manitoba.

She studied Digital Film and Media production, Cinematography, and Film Production at Red River College Polytechnic and is a recent graduate of the Filmmakers in Indigenous Leadership, Management and Business Affairs at Capilano University.



DR JULES KOOSTACHIN

(Advisor)

An award winning filmmaker whose projects include television series AskiBOYZ (2016), documentary feature Waapake, and feature dramas Broken Angel and Angela's Shadow which won the Panorama Audience Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival.



TEAM

JUSTIN DELORME

(Composer)

Justin Delorme is a Red River Métis screen composer from Winnipeg, MB, recognized by Variety as one of 10 Canadians to Watch.

His credits include Deaner '89 and Angela's Shadow, as well as the television documentary series Taken and the feature film Diaspora, both of which earned Justin Canadian Screen Award nominations for his compositions..

DR CAROLE PATRICK

(Advisor)

Dr Patrick is a Red River Métis Psychotherapist and a registered service provider for the First Nations Health Authority in practice since 1995.

She has won the Deputy Minister's Award for Suicide Prevention Strategies from a Community Approach and the Public Service Award of Excellence for Youth Suicide Prevention.

She studied in the Psychology at Harvard Medical School and received her PhD from Saybrook University.



STEPHEN GLADUE

(Production Designer)

A widely recognized artist from Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, Stephen has been the focus of several profiles by major media outlets for his work in the Arts.

His credits include Bones of Crows, Tansi! Nehiyawetan, and Amy's Mythic Mornings.

He studied animation, visual effects and design at the Vancouver Film School and the Art Institute of Vancouver and took part in the Aboriginal film production program at Capilano University.

