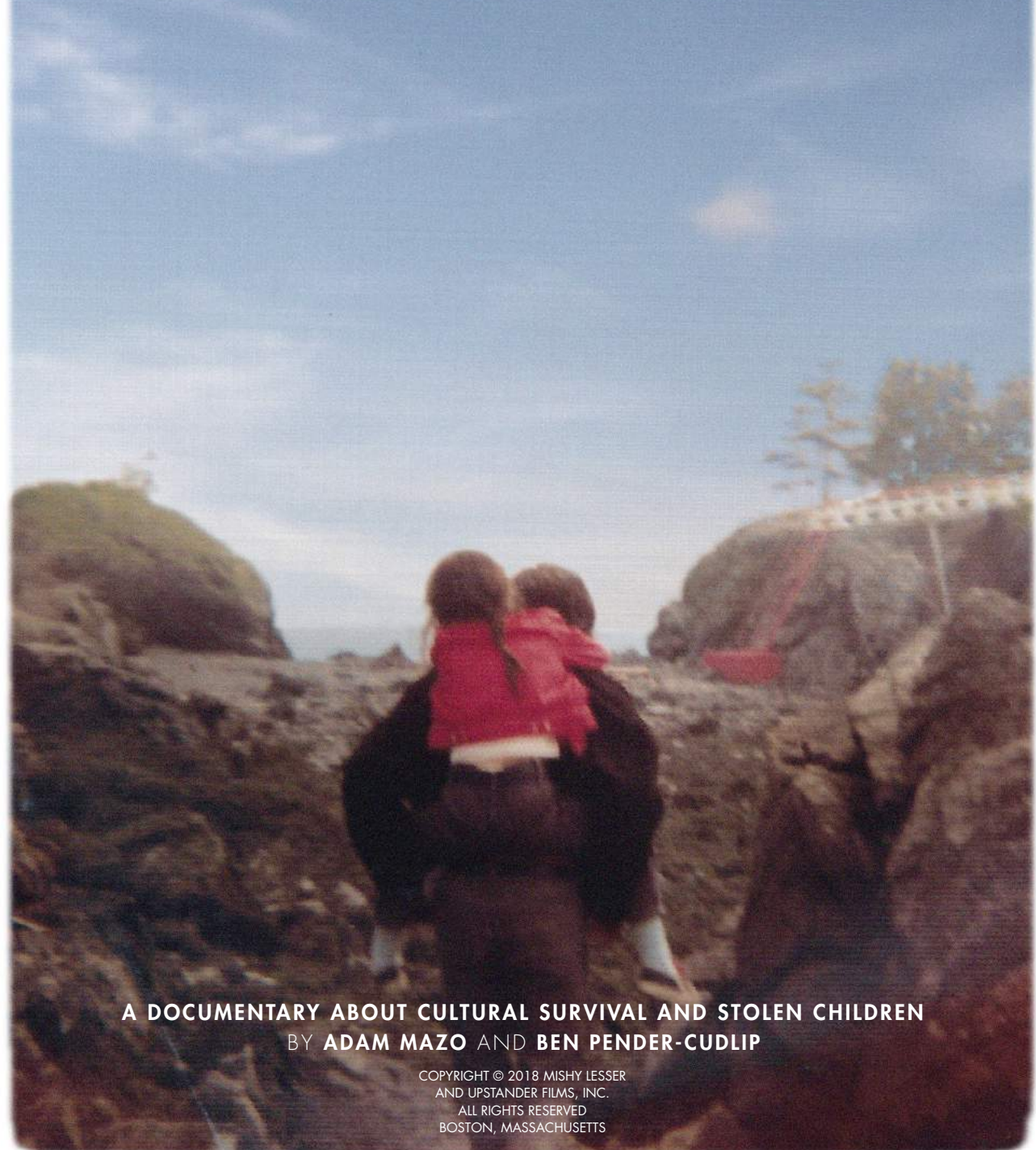




DAWNLAND

VIEWER'S GUIDE



A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND STOLEN CHILDREN
BY ADAM MAZO AND BEN PENDER-CUDLIP

COPYRIGHT © 2018 MISHY LESSER
AND UPSTANDER FILMS, INC.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



DAWNLAND FILM SYNOPSIS

For most of the 20th century, government agents systematically forced Native children from their homes and placed them with white families. Many children suffered devastating emotional harm by adults who shamed and demeaned them, and tried to erase their culture. In Maine the fallout was unbearable. *Dawnland* tells the story of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the first in the U.S. to address Native issues. For over two years, Native and non-Native commissioners traveled across Maine to hear testimony and bear witness to the dramatic impact of the state's child welfare practices on Wabanaki families. *Dawnland* takes viewers to Wabanaki communities and inside the truth commission as it grapples with the meaning of truth, reconciliation, racial healing, tribal autonomy, and child welfare system reform.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

This guide is written for viewers who want to learn more about the issues behind the film, *Dawnland*. Community screening hosts, gathering circles, Native centers, neighborhood groups, book clubs, faith organizations, librarians, and people who love documentary film will find helpful information and resources to enrich their viewing. Those who want to go deeper can download the [Dawnland Teacher's Guide](#) that includes five inquiries: history of Indigenous Peoples in New England (published in 2018); Native families and the Indian Child Welfare Act; inherited resilience and historical and intergenerational trauma; truth and reconciliation commissions; and genocide and resistance (expected publication: 2019).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Filmmakers	2
About the Film and Team	3
Scene-By-Scene Synopsis	4
Getting to Know the People of <i>Dawnland</i>	8
Issues to Explore	10
Before watching <i>Dawnland</i>	15
After watching <i>Dawnland</i>	16
Ideas for Taking Action	18
Resources for Further Learning	19

LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKERS



Dawnland co-directors Ben Pender-Cudlip (left) and Adam Mazo

Making *Dawnland* has been a transformational process for me personally that I am only now beginning to grasp. I grew up in Minnesota never knowing the meaning of the name (“sky-tinted water”) and with little sense of whose land I was on (Dakota and Anishinaabe). And for much of the 12 years I have lived in Boston, Massachusetts, I did not know I was on the land of the Massachusett, Wampanoag, and Nipmuc. I was equally as shocked and ignorant, as many non-Native viewers may be, about the contemporary crisis of Indigenous child removal.

I first learned about it thanks to the swearing in of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners in 2013 and the invitation to film the TRC that followed. I grew up learning about “tikkun olam,” the Jewish idea that each of us bears responsibility for improving our community and repairing the world. Through the filming of *Dawnland* I have learned that there is a deep brokenness in the land we now call the United States. I believe this is because of our continued failure to honestly acknowledge that European colonists perpetrated genocide against Indigenous peoples with the explicit mission of stealing the land.

Working for decolonization is a way that I can try to practice “tikkun olam.” Together we can begin to heal this massive wound. To do this I can try to stop continued seizure of Native lands, support the repatriation of land to tribal nations, support local farmers and food sovereignty, reduce consumption and waste, learn my local history, and know and acknowledge publicly whose land I am on at all film screenings and Upstander Project workshops. – **Adam Mazo**

Making this film, I had the honor of witnessing many Wabanaki men and women share their stories. Their acts of truth-telling were sometimes painful, and always courageous. My goal has been to lift up these voices and create a film that is a force for good. At the same time, this project has reinforced my commitment to think critically when members of the dominant culture, like me, set out to help Native people.

In the film, government officials use force to “help” Native people leave behind their culture. Child welfare workers try to “help” children grow up in a certain type of home: white, middle class, and far from their ancestral homeland. The colonization that began with the theft of life and land has not ended; it continues in acts like these that support and preserve the power of some people over others.

As a filmmaker, I have the power to represent. In *Dawnland* I have tried to use it with humility and respect—and to think carefully about who I am serving. To guide my work and ensure that it serves Wabanaki people, I look to the truth-telling process I witnessed in Maine. As the film shows, positive change happens when we listen to Native voices, stand with Native-led movements, and support healing that comes from within Native communities. – **Ben Pender-Cudlip**

ABOUT THE FILM AND TEAM

[Upstander Project](#) develops documentary films and related curricula that challenge false historical narratives and help bystanders become upstanders. We are especially interested in upstanding to stop injustice. We believe our society is weakened by social indifference that comes from an overreliance on myths, silencing of some voices, and distortion of history. The words and deeds of upstanders can help us become more aware of and engaged with forgotten historical and current events, and more fully participate in a democratic society. Our films are tethered to learning resources that support educators who want to focus on ignored stories by using documentary film. We made our short film, [First Light](#), and developed a suite of nine related learning resources, and then created *Dawnland* to help tell the important, timely, and complex story of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It has been our privilege and responsibility to honor the stories of the people who shared personal statements with the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We have aspired to be worthy of their trust as filmmakers, researchers, and educators.

DAWNLAND

FILMED IN THE TERRITORY OF AROOSTOOK BAND OF MICMACS, HOULTON BAND OF MALISEET INDIANS,
PASSAMAQUODDY TRIBE AT MOTAHKOMIKUK, PASSAMAQUODDY TRIBE AT SIPAYIK, PENOBSCOT INDIAN NATION
AN UPSTANDER PROJECT FILM IN ASSOCIATION WITH

PRINCIPLE PICTURES, UNRENDERED FILMS, AND CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY

DIRECTORS ADAM MAZO AND BEN PENDER-CUDLIP

PRODUCERS ADAM MAZO AND N. BRUCE DUTHU

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BEN PENDER-CUDLIP

EDITOR KRISTEN SALERNO

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BETH MURPHY AND HEATHER RAE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FOR VISION MAKER MEDIA SHIRLEY K. SNEVE

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY JENNIFER KREISBERG

SENIOR ADVISER CHRIS NEWELL

IMPACT PRODUCER TRACY RECTOR

LEARNING DIRECTOR MISHY LESSER

SCENE-BY-SCENE SYNOPSIS

DAWNLAND FEATURE CUT | TOTAL RUN TIME: 86:01



PROLOGUE

(00:00) **1974** – U.S. Senate hearing on Indian child welfare

ACT I

(2:07) **Fundamental Question** – Maine, 2012; gkisedtanamoogk, one of five TRC commissioners, frames the purpose of the commission

(4:36) **Motahkomikuk** –TRC commissioners visit the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (Motahkomikuk); they introduce themselves; an elder (Georgina) speaks up

(10:27) **“Ten Little Indians”** – The history of boarding schools and forced assimilation is revealed by archival photographs, and gkisedtanamoogk and Esther Anne of Maine-Wabanaki REACH

(14:41) **The Commission** – TRC executive director Heather Martin introduces the commission’s purpose and significance

(16:12) **Statement Gathering** – TRC research coordinator Rachel George explains the statement gathering process; Wabanaki people begin to testify

(19:10) **Sacred Fire** – A moment of ceremony, healing, and reflection

ACT II

(20:52) **People of the Dawn** – Esther introduces the Wabanaki

(22:36) **Truth Commissions** – Esther tells how REACH created the TRC, inspired by other truth commissions

(25:01) **REACH** – Esther describes decolonization and aspirations beyond the TRC

(26:13) **Slow Progress?** – Commissioners are concerned about the work that remains

(27:26) **The Vault** – Matt Dunlap is Maine’s Secretary of State and a commissioner; he examines a treaty from 1795 and reflects on the word “genocide”

(29:20) **1974, part 2** – A mother testifies; Esther shares the importance of passage of the federal law, Indian Child Welfare Act; gkisedtanamoogk considers occupiers vs. neighbors

(35:35) **Child Welfare** – Montage of child welfare workers, judges, and others revealing varying levels of awareness of Native child welfare practices

(37:31) **Culture** – Images of everyday Wabanaki life help gkisedtanamoogk explain the meaning and significance of culture and community

(40:07) **Dawn** – A Penobscot activist, survivor, and mother shares the abuse she suffered in foster care, and how she perseveres

(43:19) **Indian Days** – Wabanaki communities celebrate; gkisedtanamoogk reflects on the resurgence of culture

(46:00) **Mi'kma'kik** – Commissioners visit the Aroostook Band of Micmacs in Presque Isle, Maine but few people show up; Commissioner Sandy White Hawk reveals her history as an adoptee; time to indigenize the process

(50:40) **Sipayik** – TRC visits the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (Sipayik); Denise, a Passamaquoddy community leader, describes the trauma of foster care and demonstrates the difficulty of testifying

(55:27) **Upstairs, Downstairs** – Community members decide their next talking circle must be private, non-Native people are sent downstairs; TRC and REACH intensely discuss differing concepts of truth and reconciliation

ACT III

(59:55) **500 Years** – Matt Dunlap reflects on the challenges the TRC has faced to date; explores issues of identity and representation amongst the commission and communities

(1:01:32) **White Privilege** – Matt Dunlap and Heather Martin on REACH and TRC's differing missions and roles; Heather pushes issue of who is invited into communities; Esther speaks up and connects with her ancestors

(1:04:31) **Alenapayí-Mənehən** – Commissioners visit the Penobscot Indian Nation on Indian Island (Alenapayí-Mənehən); Commissioner Gail Werrbach apologizes on behalf of white social workers, Gail realizes the need to adapt to community needs

(1:06:22) **Healing Circle** – At Wabanaki Health and Wellness community members share intimate reflections

(1:09:51) **Commissioners pivot** – Commissioners adapt their process based on what happened in the Circle

(1:10:20) **Statements** – A montage of testimony both heart-wrenching and healing, Esther on "the can opener"

RESOLUTION

(1:14:11) **Cultural Genocide** – Commissioners tour the state to share their headline findings; REACH explores its post-TRC purpose; everything begins in the East

(1:19:05) **Fire Keepers** – gkisedtanamoogk and Matt ponder reconciliation



PROLOGUE

(00:00) **1974** – U.S. Senate hearing on Indian child welfare

ACT I

(2:07) **Fundamental Question** – Maine, 2012; gkisedtanamoogk, one of five TRC commissioners, frames the purpose of the commission

(4:06) **Motahkomikuk** –TRC commissioners visit the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (Motahkomikuk); they introduce themselves; an elder (Georgina) speaks up

(9:27) **“Ten Little Indians”** – The history of boarding schools and forced assimilation is revealed by archival photographs, and gkisedtanamoogk and Esther Anne of Maine-Wabanaki REACH

(13:39) **Statement Gathering** – TRC staff introduces the commission’s purpose; Wabanaki people begin to testify; a moment of ceremony, healing, and reflection

ACT II

(18:34) **People of the Dawn** – Esther Anne introduces the Wabanaki

(20:12) **REACH** – Esther explains how REACH created the TRC, inspired by other truth commissions, to work toward decolonization

(21:41) **“The G-word”** – Matt Dunlap is Maine’s Secretary of State and a commissioner; he reflects on the impact of his participation with the TRC and on the term “genocide”

(22:39) **1974, part 2** – A mother testifies; Esther shares the importance of passage of the federal law, Indian Child Welfare Act; gkisedtanamoogk considers occupiers vs. neighbors

(27:42) **Child Welfare** – Montage of child welfare workers, judges, and others revealing varying levels of awareness of Native child welfare practices

(30:11) **Dawn** – A Penobscot activist, survivor, and mother shares the abuse she suffered in foster care, and how she perseveres

(32:25) **Culture** – Images of everyday Wabanaki life help gkisedtanamoogk explain the meaning, significance, and resurgence of culture and community

(35:51) **Mi'kma'kik** – Commissioners visit the Aroostook Band of Micmacs in Presque Isle, Maine but few people show up; Commissioner Sandy White Hawk reveals her history as an adoptee; time to indigenize the process

(38:16) **Sipayik** – TRC visits the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (Sipayik); Denise, a Passamaquoddy community leader, describes the trauma of foster care and demonstrates the difficulty of testifying

ACT III

(45:25) **Fire Keepers** – gkisedtanamoogk and Matt ponder reconciliation

(46:29) **Alənapayí-Mənehən** – Commissioners visit the Penobscot Indian Nation on Indian Island (Alənapayí-Mənehən); Commissioner Gail Werrbach apologizes on behalf of white social workers, Gail realizes the need to adapt to community needs

(48:16) **Healing Circle** – At Wabanaki Health and Wellness community members share intimate reflections

(50:29) **Cultural Genocide** – Commissioners tour the state to share their headline findings; REACH explores its post-TRC purpose; everything begins in the East

PEOPLE OF DAWNLAND



Carol Wishcamper is a commissioner and the co-chair of the TRC.



Dawn Neptune Adams (Penobscot) had her mouth washed out with soap for speaking Penobscot. As a foster child, she survived horrific abuse and has now reconnected with her community and is a leading environmental activist.



Denise Altwater (Passamaquoddy) was removed from her home at a young age and became a godmother of the TRC, a tireless leader who has served Wabanaki families for decades.



Esther Anne (Passamaquoddy) is a child welfare expert and a fierce advocate for protecting and preserving her community, which led her to establish the TRC and form an advisory organization, Maine-Wabanaki REACH.



Gail Werrbach is a commissioner and director of the University of Maine at Orono School of Social Work.



Georgina Sappier-Richardson (Passamaquoddy) is an elder who was taken from her family and tribe at a young age. She tried to bleach her skin to make herself white.



gkisedtanamoogk (Mashpee Wampanoag) is a commissioner, co-chair of the TRC, and emeritus professor at the University of Maine at Orono.



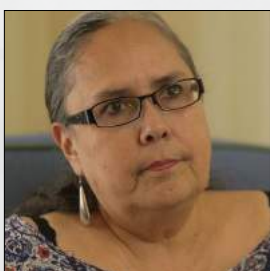
Heather Martin is the executive director of the TRC (2013-2014).



Matt Dunlap is a commissioner and secretary of state of Maine.



Rachel George (Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Ahousaht First Nation) is the research coordinator for the TRC.



Sandy White Hawk (Sicangu Lakota) is a commissioner who herself was “adopted out” of her tribe as a toddler.

ISSUES TO EXPLORE

Wabanaki History

The [Wabanaki, "People of the Dawn," are organized in a confederacy of tribal nations in Maine and Atlantic Canada](#). They are among the thousands of Indigenous societies that have inhabited Turtle Island for millennia. After European colonizers and fortune-seekers occupied much of the land known by its First Peoples as Turtle Island, they renamed it North and South America, and entire tribal nations were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands due to the uncontrolled expansion of settler colonies, towns and cities. Despite early and short-lived instances of coexistence, settlers disregarded treaties, spread catastrophic new diseases, and forced children and adults into indentured servitude and slavery. Violence, occupation, and war came to define the early relationship between settlers and Native communities.



1929 Navajo
Reservation.
Image courtesy
University of South
Carolina

Boarding School Era

In the 1800s, the U.S. government began funding and operating boarding schools with the explicit goal of assimilating Native children into white culture. Students were required to cut their hair, abandon their clothes, cease their ceremonies, and were prohibited from speaking their own languages. Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, infamously articulated the boarding school philosophy as: "Kill the Indian in him, and Save the Man." (Carlisle Indian School Project, 2018), Digitized student records can be searched according to a student's nation and tribe at the [Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center](#), which includes student files, documents, and correspondence. Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and other Indigenous children from dozens of tribes and nations were sent to Carlisle. The records of some students were marked as 'deserters'. Others who did not stay long at Carlisle were marked 'unsatisfactory pupil'. Researchers are left wondering if this was due to defiance and repeated acts of resistance.



April 8, 1974,
Washington,
D.C. U.S. Senate
Hearings on Indian
child welfare.
Image courtesy
NBCUniversal

Child Welfare Hearings

This ideology filtered its way into state child welfare agencies throughout the 1900s. By the 1970s, between 25 to 35 percent of all Native children were being removed from their families and communities, and placed in white homes primarily—even when “fit and willing” relatives were available. Native American advocates argued that the massive removal of children from their cultures was harmful to both the well-being of the children and the long-term survival of tribal societies. They urged Congress to hold official hearings on the issue—the testimony of which can be heard in the never before seen archival footage included in the opening scene of *Dawnland*. The chair of that hearing, Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota, would later sponsor the Indian Child Welfare Act, which was signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1978.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

ICWA outlines a protocol for child welfare workers to follow when placing Native children in foster homes. That protocol prioritizes placement with Native families in order to maintain a connection between the children and their culture. It has become the **“gold standard” of child welfare policy** now serving as a model for children of any ethnicity.

As we learn at the end of *Dawnland*, Native children today are nearly three times more likely than white children to be in foster care, nationwide.¹ Implementation of ICWA has also been an issue in states such as Maine, which was found to be out of compliance with the law in 1999. Other states have passed their own laws and guidelines to strengthen the federal law. The federal government released its first set of compliance guidelines in 2015 in order to improve state adherence.

¹ See the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges: <https://www.ncjfcj.org> and the most recent report from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) for 2016: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-report-24>.

Ninety-fifth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Thursday, the nineteenth day of January,
one thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight*

An Act

To establish standards for the placement of Indian children in foster or adoptive homes, to prevent the breakup of Indian families, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978".

SEC. 2. Recognizing the special relationship between the United States and the Indian tribes and their members and the Federal responsibility to Indian people, the Congress finds—

(1) that clause 3, section 8, article I of the United States Constitution provides that "The Congress shall have Power * * * To regulate Commerce * * * with Indian tribes" and, through this and other constitutional authority, Congress has plenary power over Indian affairs;

(2) that Congress, through statutes, treaties, and the general course of dealing with Indian tribes, has assumed the responsibility for the protection and preservation of Indian tribes and their resources;

(3) that there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children and that the United States has a direct interest, as trustee, in protecting Indian children who are members of or are eligible for membership in an Indian tribe;

(4) that an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families are broken up by the removal, often unwarranted, of their children from them by nontribal public and private agencies and that an alarmingly high percentage of such children are placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions; and

(5) that the States, exercising their recognized jurisdiction over Indian child custody proceedings through administrative and judicial bodies, have often failed to recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian people and the cultural and social standards prevailing in Indian communities and families.

SEC. 3. The Congress hereby declares that it is the policy of this Nation to protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by the establishment of minimum Federal standards for the removal of Indian children from their families and the placement of such children in foster or adoptive homes which will reflect the unique values of Indian culture, and by providing for assistance to Indian tribes in the operation of child and family service programs.

SEC. 4. For the purposes of this Act, except as may be specifically provided otherwise, the term—

- (1) "child custody proceeding" shall mean and include—
 - (i) "foster care placement" which shall mean any action removing an Indian child from its parent or Indian custodian for temporary placement in a foster home or institution or the home of a guardian or conservator where the parent or Indian custodian cannot have the child returned upon demand, but where parental rights have not been terminated;

Indian Child Welfare
Act of 1978

Genocide and Cultural Genocide in the Wabanaki Homeland

In its [final report](#), the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that "disproportionate entry into care of Wabanaki children can be held within the context of continued cultural genocide."

While the term 'cultural genocide' was barred by powerful countries including the U.S. from appearing in the [1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), a compromise provision (Article II, clause e) was included, which states that genocide is committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such, by "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." The forcible transfer of children from a targeted group to a dominant group is seen as part of cultural genocide.



Image courtesy
Upstander Project

Effects of Family Separation and Historical Trauma

According to medical and mental health professionals, children who are forcibly separated from their parents experience an [extreme level of stress that has long-lasting effects on their psychological development](#). Many of the adults interviewed by the Maine Wabanaki TRC experienced intensified trauma due to separation from their parents and communities, and abuse and neglect at the hands of foster parents that were assigned with caring for them as children. Native social worker and professor, [Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart](#) (Hunkpapa and Oglala Lakota), applied the terms historical and inter-generational trauma to massive group trauma experienced by Native Peoples across generations, including the forced removal of their children. Her model for addressing unresolved grief and collective wounding is highly regarded and frequently used in Indian Country.

Maine-Wabanaki Truth and Reconciliation Commission

From 2012 - 2015, the Maine Wabanaki TRC gathered testimony from more than 200 people, most of whom are survivors of forced separation. State social workers also gave testimony to the TRC, which published a 90-page report that includes recommendations on how to improve Native child welfare in Maine. (MWTRC, 2015) Community leaders in touch with Upstander Project are exploring how to start similar commissions or truth-telling processes in Michigan, Washington, and Minnesota using *Dawnland* and the TRC as a guide.



April 1996, East London, South Africa, Members of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the commission's first hearing. Image courtesy Benny Gool—Oryx Media/Desmond Tutu Peace Centre

Other Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

Perhaps the most well-known truth and reconciliation commission is the one that formed in [South Africa](#) in 1995 to address the harms caused by fifty years of apartheid. Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, it embraced a restorative justice approach by bringing together victims, perpetrators, and members of the community in response to human rights abuses and violence. Victims who gave testimony to the commission were considered for reparations and perpetrators were considered for amnesty. Official truth and reconciliation commissions have occurred in dozens of other countries in response to civil war and political violence. The challenges they face are great and the results they achieve are mixed.

BEFORE WATCHING DAWNLAND

We invite you to participate in the movement to acknowledge the Native Land upon which your event takes place. This practice is becoming more prevalent in the U.S. as it has been for decades in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. A recognition in what is currently called Massachusetts may sound like: “We begin by acknowledging and paying deep respect to the Massachusett tribal nation, their elders and ancestors — past, present, and future. I acknowledge and offer deep gratitude to this Massachusett land and water that support us. I invite you to join me in that acknowledgment.”

[This article](#) provides context on what land acknowledgments are and why they matter.

The act of acknowledging Native land and people brings local tribal nations to the foreground while addressing the problematic history of settler colonialism’s attempt to erase Indigenous cultures and peoples. Refer to this map for guidance: <https://native-land.ca/> (or the [app version](#)) or this one <https://www.natgeomaps.com/re-indian-country>.

Watching the film may especially impact those in the audience who were separated from their family, sent to boarding school, adopted or fostered, and we strongly encourage viewers to consider this prior to watching the film so all can be well supported while viewing. Please take care of yourself and others.

Reflect on this question before the film starts:

- What did you learn about Native American culture and history as a child?

AFTER WATCHING DAWNLAND

Guidelines

A primary goal of *Dawnland* is for viewers to have a conversation that is based on listening and accountability. Feelings of shame or guilt, particularly from non-Native audience members, may come up and these feelings can sometimes overwhelm the conversation. If you are planning to participate in a discussion and are non-Native, we encourage you to listen to the experiences of Indigenous people.

If you are planning to participate in a post-screening discussion, we suggest a common set of discussion guidelines. For example:

- Speak from your own personal experience and use “I statements” to prevent over-generalizing your individual experiences. For example, “My experience has taught me that...” instead of “We all know that...”
- Refrain from interruptions or back talk in response to someone else’s sharing of their experience.
- Be mindful to share the airtime and not dominate the conversation.

If you choose to have a Listening Circle, you can consult [these guidelines](#).

Discussion Questions

- How did you feel watching this film? What emotions came up for you?
- Early in the film, we hear one commissioner ask the Passamaquoddy chief: “What do you want my community to understand about your community?” How would you answer that question? What would you like others to know about your community?
- The Maine Wabanaki TRC focused on the experiences of Wabanaki children who were removed from their homes and their communities by the state child welfare system. Is this a problem that resonates with Native communities in your region? How does the child welfare system in the state where you live interact with Native families and respond to their needs?
- Truth and reconciliation commissions are often associated with South Africa after apartheid. How were circumstances in South Africa different from those faced by the Maine-Wabanaki TRC? What are the unique challenges of truth and reconciliation in relation to Indigenous peoples and their communities?
- A large part of the TRC’s role was to document testimony as part of the official record. Why was that important to the TRC’s mission? Do you agree that documentation is a necessary part of a reconciliation process?
- “Some of the wounds are so deep... How do you propose that we’re supposed to be healing?” asked Georgina, a Passamaquoddy Elder who spoke to the commission. How would you answer this? What does healing look like from your perspective?

- At some of the commission's community visits, it was a challenge to convince Wabanaki community members to come and share their stories on record. What factors do you think contributed to this? What dynamics did you observe in the hearings or with the TRC that may have made testifying a difficult proposition for some?
- What does TRC commissioner gkisedtanamoogk mean when he states, "Everything that state policy and federal policy is doing is about the eradication of us from the Earth. Now, probably the softest example of eradication is social integration. But the results are the same. No more treaties. No more Indian rights. No more lands. No more Indians."
- Later in the film gkisedtanamoogk refers to the TRC and says, "I never would have thought that the state of Maine would ever engage with the Wabanaki on this level. They might see it as a superficial gesture, but we see it as something very deep, a necessary transition from being an occupier to being a neighbor with legitimacy. What does he mean by 'neighbor with legitimacy' and how do you react to his statement?
- At one hearing, the commissioners decide to do a closed-door session with just the Native participants, REACH, and TRC commissioners. Some non-Native participants feel excluded. What does this conversation mean in the context of racial healing? How does white privilege, as REACH co-founder Esther Anne describes it, come into play? If the goal is racial healing, why is it important to understand how white privilege operates?
- Consider the role of women in the 1974 U.S. Senate Hearings in *Dawnland's* opening scene and their role in the creation of the Maine-Wabanaki TRC. Why do you think women played a leading in these historic events?
- The *Dawnland* Team has made available an [extensive five-part teacher's guide](#) that is built around a central compelling question: What is the relationship between the taking of land and the taking of children? How would you begin to answer that question?
- As we learn in the film, Maine Wabanaki TRC was found to be out of compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1999. The TRC interviewed several child welfare workers. What did they identify as the problems that led to violations of the Act? What is your response to their explanation?
- At the end of the film, we see that Native children are nearly three times more likely than white children to be in foster care, nationwide. That statistic would indicate that family separation is still occurring in Indigenous communities. How do you explain this? How might you explain efforts currently underway to weaken the Indian Child Welfare Act?
- What are the names of the Indigenous tribes and nations living in your area? Are there issues or concerns specific to these communities that were not addressed in the film? What are the priorities of local tribal nations and what kind of support do they want from non-Native neighbors can be of support?
- What work has been done in your state with Native communities around truth and reconciliation? What would you like to see done that isn't being done already?
- With *Dawnland's* release in 2018, some viewers have drawn parallels between the family separation policies used along the U.S.- Mexico border and child removal policies that have targeted Native communities for hundreds of years. How would you respond to that? Do you see them as related? Why or why not?

IDEAS FOR TAKING ACTION

- Acknowledge Native land at your *Dawnland* screening, school, place of worship, community gathering and Thanksgiving dinner. (See [page 15](#) for guidelines)
- Put up “You Are on Indigenous Land” posters around your community. Find a variety of posters from around the U.S. [here](#) and contact the *Dawnland* team if you’d like to make posters for your city or region.
- Launch a **donation drive** to gift large-scale Tribal Nations Maps to local schools. The Tribal Nations Map, created by Aaron Carapella, depicts more than 600 tribal nations using original Native names and places that they inhabit in North America. For more about the maps, listen to this interview from NPR: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/06/24/323665644/the-map-of-native-american-tribes-youve-never-seen-before>. To find maps for purchase, visit: <http://www.tribalnationsmaps.com/>.
- Connect teachers and students at your local schools to [Dawnland](#) and its Teacher’s Guide: <http://dawnland.org/teachers-guide/>.
- Arrange an **educational workshop or tour** at a local museum or center dedicated to Native history and culture. Check with local tribal historians to see what is available in your area.
- Support the work of [Maine-Wabanaki REACH](#), which includes: ally trainings, healing circles for incarcerated Wabanaki men and women, child welfare system reform efforts.
- Encourage your library to create a book display to help connect audience members to additional educational resources. Here are some reading suggestions inspired by *Dawnland* Teacher’s Guide:
 - o Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014.
 - o Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne and Dina Gilio-Whitaker. *“All The Real Indians Died Off” And 20 Other Myths About Native Americans*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2016.
 - o Brooks, Lisa. *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip’s War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
 - o DeLucia, Christine M. *Memory Lands: King Philip’s War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
 - o Weatherford, Jack. *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2010.
 - o Takaki, Ronald. Adapted by Rebecca Stefoff. *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* (For Young People Series). New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012.
 - o Lepore, Jill. *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity*. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.
 - o Orange, Tommy. *There There*. New York: Knopf, 2018.
 - o Leitch Smith, Cynthia. *Hearts Unbroken*. Somerville, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2018.
 - o Mailhot, Terese Marie. *Heart Berries*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2018.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

These websites provide additional information that may be helpful.

- <http://dawnland.org/> - a website created by Upstander Project for Dawnland, which includes information about screenings and resources such as the film's curriculum: <http://dawnland.org/teachers-guide/>.
- <https://upstanderproject.org/firstlight/> - *First Light* (2015), a 13-minute documentary created by Upstander Project that is accompanied by nine learning resources for teachers. This short film evolved into the feature-length film, *Dawnland*.
- <http://www.maine-wabanakireach.org/> - Maine-Wabanaki REACH is the organization featured in the film that created the TRC and is helping to lead efforts to promote healing and create change. They conduct ally trainings so non-Native people can learn about Wabanaki history and their own privilege, and facilitate healing circles in a variety of settings, including prisons where Wabanaki women and men are incarcerated.
- <http://www.maine-wabanakitrc.org/> - Official website of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare TRC.
- <https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/maine-wabanaki-trc/> - Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission collection, housed at Bowdoin College Digital Commons, includes video, audio, and written statements, and other personal documents contributed by participants, founding documents, the final report, and administrative and research records.
- <http://www.wearecominghome.com/ComingHome.php> - First Nations Repatriation Institute, led by TRC commissioner Sandy White Hawk, offers advocacy and community building to all adoptees/fostered individuals and their families in accordance with traditional Indigenous spiritual heritage, and education for social services providers.
- <http://healourcommunities.org/> - The Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation initiative is a program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism.
- <https://www.nicwa.org/> - National Indian Child Welfare Association, which works to eliminate child abuse and neglect by strengthening Native families, tribes, and the laws that protect them.
- <https://www.narf.org/> - The Native American Rights Fund has successfully asserted and defended the most important rights of Indians and tribes in hundreds of major cases, and has achieved significant results in such critical areas as tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, natural resource protection, and Indian education.