

OFFICIAL WEBSITE AND TRAILER: dawnland.org

LONG SYNOPSIS

“My foster mother told me ... she would save me from being Penobscot.”

For most of the 20th century, government agents systematically forced Native American children from their homes and placed them with white families. As recently as the 1970’s, one in four Native children nationwide were living in non-Native foster care, adoptive homes, or boarding schools. Many children experienced devastating emotional and physical harm by adults who tried to erase their cultural identity.

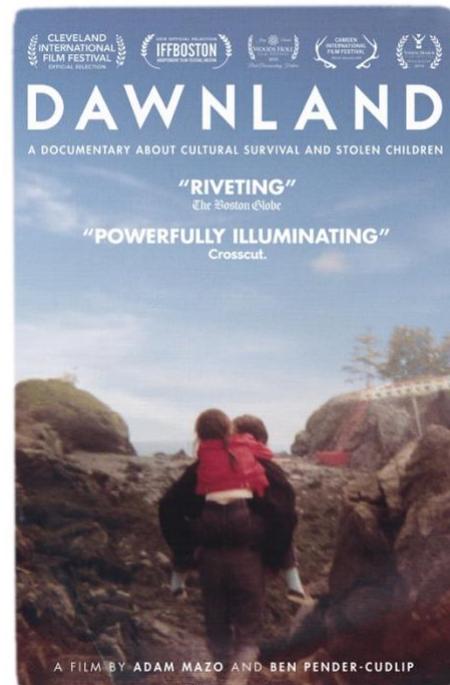
Now, for the first time, they are being asked to share their stories.

In Maine, a historic investigation—the first government-sanctioned truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) in the United States—begins a bold journey. For over two years, Native and non-Native commissioners travel across Maine. They gather testimony and bear witness to the dramatic impact of the state’s child welfare practices on families in Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribal communities. Collectively, these tribes make up the Wabanaki people.

The feature-length documentary DAWNLAND follows the TRC to contemporary Wabanaki communities to witness intimate, sacred moments of truth-telling and healing. With exclusive access to this groundbreaking process and never-before-seen footage, the film reveals the untold narrative of Indigenous child removal in the United States.

The TRC discovers that state power continues to be used to break up Wabanaki families, threatening the very existence of the Wabanaki people. Can they right this wrong, and turn around a broken child welfare system? DAWNLAND foregrounds the immense challenges that this groundbreaking body faces as they work toward truth, reconciliation, and the survival of all Indigenous peoples.

Living at the easternmost edge of Turtle Island, the Wabanaki people are the first to see the new day’s light. If harmony and justice begin in the east, as some prophesize, surely the TRC is a sign of this beginning.



TEACHER'S GUIDE

The free [Dawnland Teacher's Guide](#) is organized around a Compelling Question: What is the relationship between the taking of the land and the taking of the children? It includes five separate yet related 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 date in 2019).



AWARDS & SELECT SCREENINGS

[Independent Lens PBS broadcast - November 5, 2018](#)

Woods Hole Film Festival – Jury Award Best Documentary
Cleveland International Film Festival 2018
Camden International Film Festival 2018
Portland Museum of Art



PRESS

April 20, 2018 Boston Globe page A1, Tom Farragher
[Reclaiming a culture, reclaiming a life](#)

April 27, 2018 WBUR, Radio Boston
['Dawnland' Tells Of The Taking Of Native American Children In Maine](#)



May 25, 2018 Crosscut, Florangela Davila
[At SIFF: bearing witness to stories of 'cultural genocide' Dawnland chronicles Maine's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it collects stories of the Wabanaki people.](#)

July 18, 2018 Huffington Post, Sarah van Gelder
[The Dark U.S. Legacy Of Ripping Children From Their Families](#)
[A new film tells the story of Native American families forcibly separated.](#)

CONTACT

Mishy Lesser
DAWNLAND/Upstander Project Learning Director
www.dawnland.org | www.upstanderproject.org
mishy@upstanderproject.org