

PRESS CONTACT

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DAWNLAND

In Post-production, estimated release early 2017

WEBSITE: upstanderproject.org

TRAILER LINK: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/amazo/dawnland>



(Courtesy: Upstander Project)

FILMMAKING TEAM

Directors: Adam Mazo, Ben Pender-Cudlip

Producers: Adam Mazo, N. Bruce Duthu, J.D.

Executive Producer: Beth Murphy

Director of Photography: Ben Pender-Cudlip

Editors: Ben Pender-Cudlip, Kristen Salerno

Learning Director: Mishy Lesser, Ed.D.

DAWNLAND LOGLINE

Dawnland, a film about cultural survival and stolen children, tells the inside story of the first truth and reconciliation commission for Native Americans.

DAWNLAND SHORT SYNOPSIS

Decades of forced assimilation and misguided child welfare policy have blighted the lives of Maine's indigenous people. Can an unprecedented "truth and reconciliation commission" recognize centuries of abuse and begin an era of decolonization? *Dawnland* goes behind-the-scenes as this historic body redefines reconciliation, grapples with unseen truths, and transforms all involved in unexpected ways.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dawnland is an independent feature documentary film that uses exclusive behind-the-scenes footage to share the transformative journey of an historic body: the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission ultimately concludes that the state of Maine has been, and continues to be, engaged in "cultural genocide" against the Native people who have lived there for millennia.

Dawnland will shine a spotlight on the commission and its unprecedented response to a nationwide crisis in the United States. Today Native American children are far more likely than other children to grow up away from their families and tribes. Many of us are familiar with popular culture's portrayal of the westward expansion, Indian wars, and boarding schools. We are often taught to think that these occurred in a distant time, disconnected from people who are alive here now. The headlines hide the historical through-line from the state-funded bounty killings of Native women and children, to forced assimilation of children, to what one commissioner in Maine calls the federal government's atonement for colonial policies of dismantling tribes and families.

We released our short film *First Light* on Indigenous Peoples Day, October 2015 to begin to tell these stories to help break the silence that undermines healing. We felt we could not wait until 2017 when we plan to release *Dawnland*.

In *First Light* we tell a piece of the story of the commission and its origins. In *Dawnland* we will bring viewers inside the commission, and share testimony from those who suffered because of the child welfare system and those who upheld its policies.

-Adam Mazo, *First Light* and *Dawnland* Co-Director/Producer

UPSTANDER PROJECT

We help bystanders become upstanders through compelling documentary films and learning resources. Films we have produced include *First Light* (2015), *Dawnland* (in production) and *Coexist* (2014). We serve mass and targeted audiences by challenging indifference to injustice and raising awareness of the need for upstanders, especially among middle and high school educators and their students. With original documentaries, related learning resources, and educator workshops, the Upstander Project helps teachers and students become upstanders. Our goals are to: Overcome indifference to social injustice; develop the skills of upstanders; contribute to action-oriented campaigns in response to vital social issues.

Our previous film *Coexist* was broadcast in 25 countries, including PBS WORLD Channel in US (2014), reaching an estimated 500,000 viewers. The Upstander Project has trained more than 1,000 teachers in face-to-face workshops since 2010. The film, *Coexist*, and teacher's guide have reached 5,000+ educators and tens of thousands of students in more than a dozen countries.

MAINE WABANAKI-STATE CHILD WELFARE TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION BACKGROUND

(Adapted from the TRC website) The Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission's mandate was endorsed in February 2013. The governor of Maine and the five tribal chiefs signed as equals to authorize the Commission to investigate whether or not the removal of Wabanaki children from their communities has continued to be disproportionate to non-Native children and to make recommendations, as the Declaration of Intent exhorts us, that "promote individual, relational, systemic and cultural reconciliation." This Commission is the first in the United States in which two parties agreed to come together to pursue answers to difficult questions, and it is one of the first in the world to examine issues of Native child welfare. While our commission does not involve an entire country as did the process brought to prominence by Nelson Mandela in South Africa, it nonetheless marks a historic moment, one we have been proud to steer and witness.

CREW BIOS

Adam Mazo is the Co-Director/Producer of *First Light* and *Dawnland*. His feature film, *Coexist*, is airing on public television this spring. Over 5,000 educators on six continents now have *Coexist*. The Upstander Project, which he co-created with Dr. Lesser, has trained more than 1,000 teachers in bringing compassion, empathy, and respect for difference into students' lives.

Ben Pender-Cudlip is the Co-Director/Cinematographer/Editor of *First Light* and *Dawnland*. He is an award-winning director of over a dozen short documentary films, including *Sanjiban* in 2012 (Hot Docs, CIFF) and *Fetch* in 2014 (Woods Hole). He was selected as a 2014 Points North Fellow at the Camden International Film Festival alongside Mr. Mazo.

N. Bruce Duthu, J.D. is a Producer of *First Light* and *Dawnland*. An enrolled member of the United Houma Nation of Louisiana, Professor Duthu is an internationally recognized scholar of Native American law and policy in Dartmouth's Native American Studies Program.

Beth Murphy is the Executive Producer of *First Light* and *Dawnland* and founder of Principle Pictures. She is director/producer for nearly 20 films (Sundance Channel, PBS, History Channel), including feature documentaries *Beyond Belief* and *The List*, both of which premiered at Tribeca. She is a fellow at Boston University and Iraq's Basra University.

Kristen Salerno is the Editor of *First Light* and *Dawnland*. A longtime collaborator of director Ben Pender-Cudlip, Kristen has edited numerous short documentaries, including *Sanjiban*. She is co-editor of the upcoming public television documentary *Raising of America*, produced by California Newsreel and Vital Pictures.

Mishy Lesser, Ed.D. is the learning director for the Upstander Project. She conceived and developed the Coexist Teacher's Guide to help teachers and students use the film in impactful ways. She is a Circle Keeper and has been featured on WBUR (Boston) and PRI/BBC's "The World." Mishy spent over 12 years living and working in Latin America. She is currently developing learning resources for the short documentary *First Light* and *Dawnland*.

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