

SENATOR MICHÈLE
AUDETTE

VALÉRIE
COURTOIS

DR. SUZANNE
SIMARD

ELDER AJ
FELIX

ELDER DAVE
COURCHENE

THE
ISSUE
WITH
TISSUE
a boreal love story

What we do
to the land,

we do to
ourselves.

FILMOPTION INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS A MICHAEL ZELNIKER FILM
CAMERA MICHAEL ZELNIKER AND ABANOUB ANDRAOUS
ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED AND PERFORMED BY VICTORIA YEH
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PAUL CADIEUX MICHÈLE AUDETTE
DAVE PORTER AND ALLEN EDZERZA
WRITER PRODUCER EDITOR DIRECTOR MICHAEL ZELNIKER

THE ISSUE WITH TISSUE

a boreal love story

Written, directed and produced by
Michael Zelniker

Executive producers
Paul Cadieux, Michèle Audette,
Dave Porter & Allen Edzerza

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Synopsis

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“What we do to the land, we do to ourselves.”

The Issue with Tissue - a boreal love story documents the little known, largely untold story of the boreal forest and the Indigenous Peoples who call it home, how it is being clear-cut for the manufacture of toilet paper and that protecting and conserving the boreal is an existential imperative.

Told by the First Nations Elders and Leaders of the boreal, leading scientists and activists, ***The Issue with Tissue*** creates a kind of talking circle that inspires our storytellers to speak with intimacy and candor about the issues confronting us all, sharing their enlightened, unified vision that the way forward lies in elevating and supporting Indigenous knowledge/stewardship in combination with the ages old wisdom that can be found in the life of these forests and trees.

Director's Notes

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In April 2020 I became aware that large intact, old growth forest landscapes across the Canadian boreal are being clear-cut for the manufacture of toilet paper. These existentially important forests, that we literally depend on for our very survival, are being cut down so we can wipe our bums with softer, more plush toilet paper. Is there a more obscene illustration for what's gone wrong?

Having grown up in Montreal, spending summers 100 miles north of the city on the southern edge of the boreal, feeling deeply bonded to these forests and trees, I felt compelled to learn more.

Countless hours of research, dozens of hours on zoom, I came to believe that the little known, largely untold story of the boreal must be told. Perhaps the most important insight I had was that any story about the boreal must place the Indigenous Peoples of the boreal front and center. It's home to more than 600 First Nations communities - lands and waters they've lived and thrived on for thousands of years.

Flying from my home in Los Angeles to Vancouver, during COVID, quarantining for 14 days, before embarking on a 42 day/12,000 mile journey, from coast to coast, meeting with more than 50 First Nations Elders and Leaders, prominent scientists and conservationists, all who opened their hearts and shared their stories, ending up in a remote part of Northeastern Quebec at an Innu gathering, before returning to Los Angeles with 125 hours of interview, landscape and wildlife footage.

What began as a story about trees and toilet paper evolved and emerged into a much deeper story that takes us from trees to toilet paper to treaties, from carbon to climate change to caribou to colonization, from water to birds to Indigenous knowledge/stewardship to the way forward. The boreal is an epic landscape that demands a very large canvas.

The Issue with Tissue has transmuted from just another movie about eco-destruction into a critically relevant story about the horrifying impacts and legacies of colonization, the Indian Act, residential schools, and the other atrocities that the Original Peoples of Turtle Island have endured at the hands of settler governments and how all of it was done in the service of unfettered extractive industrial exploitation.

"What we do to the land, we do to ourselves." I have come to understand that the larger systemic issue we are going to have to confront and reconcile is the one of disconnection. Disconnection allows us to do things like colonization. Disconnection allows us to go into wild spaces, exploit the resources, without any care or concern for how we're impacting the rest of creation. Disconnection allows us to throw away our children's future, in service of satiating selfish, greedy, temporal needs.

As Elder Dave Porter says, "when we're in a forest, among the trees, we're with our ancestors, our Elder relatives. The trees are talking to us, telling stories of life. The question is, are we listening?" Through the process of photosynthesis, trees breathe out oxygen, we breathe in that oxygen. We exhale carbon dioxide, trees inhale that carbon dioxide. Can there be a more mutually beneficial relationship? Were it not for these forests and trees, we wouldn't be here - our very survival depends on trees and plants.

Dr. Suzanne Simard, "Finding the Mother Tree", speaks of her decades long research into the subterranean, mycorrhizal networks that exist in forests, that these collaborative, cooperative, mutually supportive relationships between the trees, the fungi, the mosses and plants are what have allowed forests and trees to strive and thrive for millions of years. Trees have been on Planet Earth much longer than we humans, surely they have something to teach us about longevity and sustainability.

Perhaps the trees, our Elder Ancestors are talking to us, perhaps they are guiding us to understand: The way forward is not through survival of the fittest and competition to the death but through cooperative, symbiotic, mutually supportive relationship. As Elder AJ Felix says, "let's be family again, let's be relations again, let's love each other, because when we love, we respect and we look after each other."

This theme of interconnectivity ties all the elements together encouraging us to realize, we are all connected, we are all family. As Joni Mitchell says in her iconic song, "Woodstock" that we adapted for the closing of our documentary, "we are star stuff, billion year old carbon". We are all made up of the same elemental DNA, the same primordial soup that those who call Planet Earth home, literally have emerged from. In fact, we are all related, we are all family, we do all come from the same stuff, the same Mother Earth.

And the sooner we embrace and embody this ideal, the sooner we are going to find our way out of the existential crises that we have created, that confront us today, threatening human survival and the survivability of the rest of creation that we share Planet Earth with.

Implications of the ecological impacts of climate change on societies in the boreal forest

While much concern in the past has focused on temperate and tropical forests, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the boreal forest is not only highly sensitive to climate change, but it is in the boreal that some of the biggest temperature changes are being experienced. The changes in the ecosystem resulting from climate change will fundamentally affect the communities that live there and that depend on the goods and services provided by forests. The changes will also have broader implications for society, especially if the changing climate results in increased emissions of greenhouse gases from boreal forests. The societal implications will depend on the way that individuals use the forest. For Indigenous communities heavily dependent on the forests, there may be changes to the animal populations that support them, including changes to caribou and to fur-bearing animal populations. Access to these communities may be disrupted, for example by changes in the timing of spring break-up. There may also be phenological changes that can disrupt traditional activities. For the forest industry, including Indigenous-owned enterprises, a warmer climate may curtail the logging season and shorten the operating time of roads. Changes in the magnitude and frequency of fires and other disturbances will affect all aspects of society. Many of the societal changes induced by these ecological changes may have cumulative impacts on the societies, undermining the fabric of communities and accentuating some of the widespread social problems that are already present.

*– Pr. John Innes, Dean of the Faculty of Forestry,
University of British Columbia*

Cast

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Michèle Audette
(Innu First Nation)

Participant &
Executive Producer

Michèle Audette is a recognized Indigenous leader.

The daughter of a Quebecer father and an Innu mother, Michèle Audette comes from the Innu community of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam in Quebec. She has played a key role in transforming the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Quebec and Canadian society since the 1990s. At only 27 years old, she was elected president of the association Quebec Native Women. In 2004, she was appointed Associate Deputy Minister to the Secrétariat à la condition féminine of Quebec. From 2012 to 2015, she served as President of the Native Women's Association of Canada. In 2015, she helped create an innovative graduate program in Indigenous public administration for the École nationale d'administration publique.

Ms. Audette was appointed as one of the five commissioners responsible for conducting the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Since 2019, she has been Assistant to the Vice-Rector of Academic and Student Affairs, and Senior Advisor for reconciliation and Indigenous education at the Université Laval.

In recognition of her significant contributions, Ms. Audette received the 2018 Woman of Distinction Award in the Inspiration category from the Women's Y Foundation of Montréal. She was named Woman of the Year in 2014 by the Montreal Council of Women, and was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. She also received an honorary doctorate from the Université de Montréal, in acknowledgement of the scope of her commitment to the cause of Indigenous women and her tireless work on reconciliation between peoples.

Ms. Audette studied visual arts at the Université du Québec à Montréal, and art education at Concordia University.

Dave Porter
(Kaska First Nation)

**CEO, First Nations Energy
and Mining Council**

**Participant & Executive
Producer**

Mr. Porter is a member of the Kaska Nation whose traditional territory covers a large part of north-eastern British Columbia and south-eastern Yukon. His career includes journalism, politics, communications and extensive public service on behalf of aboriginal organizations as well as public governments in the Yukon, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Porter spent the first seven years of his life on a trapline near Good Hope Lake, B.C. His education included Lower Post Indian Residential School, F.H. Collins Secondary School in Whitehorse, Confederation College in Thunder Bay and Pre-Law at the University of British Columbia. Mr. Porter was founding Chairman of Northern Native Broadcasting, Yukon and was elected as Vice-Chair of the Council for Yukon Indians through two terms (1978-1982), holding several portfolios including Land Claims, Housing and Economic Development.

In 1982, Mr. Porter was elected to the Yukon Legislature and upon re-election in 1985 he served as Deputy Premier. He has also served as Minister of Renewable Resources, Tourism, Heritage and Culture, and Minister Responsible for Constitutional Devolution. After leaving the Legislature, Mr. Porter was named Executive Director of the Yukon Human Rights Commission, then Deputy Minister of Culture and Communications for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

In the 1990's Mr. Porter served as Assistant Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for the British Columbia government. He later led the Fur Industry European Lobby on behalf of the Governments of Canada and the United States.

Mr. Porter was also the first Oil and Gas Commissioner in British Columbia, where he strived to build an open environment that would bring various interests in the province to a common table.

In 2002, Mr. Porter was elected Chair of the Kaska Dena Council, with a special commitment to preserve Kaska culture and create greater opportunity for Kaska youth.

Mr. Porter was first elected to the three member political executive of the First Nations Summit, the Summit Task Group, in June 2004, and was re-elected in June 2006 to a second term. The Task Group is authorized by the Summit to carry out specifically mandated tasks on issues related to treaty negotiations in British Columbia.

The First Nations Summit, which is comprised of a majority of First Nations and Tribal Councils in BC, provides a forum for First Nations in British Columbia to address issues related to Treaty negotiations as well as other issues of common concern.

Dave is currently the CEO for the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council (2007- present).

Allen Edzerza

Allen is currently leading salmon discussions on behalf of the Tahltan Central Government.

Consultant/Negotiator

Allen worked as lead for mining reform discussions with the Government of British Columbia on behalf of the First Nation Energy and Mining Council.

Participant & Executive Producer

Allen worked with the Gordon Foundation to develop an IBA Community Toolkit and assisted in conducting workshops with First Nations on the IBA Community Toolkit across Canada.

Allen was appointed to the Office of the Premier, Government of British Columbia as Special Advisor on Aboriginal issues. In this capacity, Allen assisted the Province to foster a better working relationship with First Nations by improving communications and coordination between the Province and First Nations.

Allen has served as an Advisor and Chief Negotiator for the Premier and Cabinet for the Government of the Yukon in 2002/2003.

Allen has been a senior negotiator for the past 25 years serving as Lead Negotiator for the Tahltan Central Council, Chief Negotiator for the Kaska Nations and held several senior positions in INAC, Government of Canada.

Allen is a member of the Tahltan Nation and a recognized artist with works in several major collections.

Elder Dave Courchene (Anishinaabe First Nation)

The Late Elder Dr. Dave Courchene – Nii Gaani Aki Innini (Leading Earth Man) was a respected Elder and Knowledge Keeper of the Anishinaabe Nation who devoted his life to sharing Indigenous knowledge, carrying a message of hope, peace and environmental stewardship.

Participant

In 2002, he founded the Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education and Wellness, a sacred lodge recognized internationally and by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers as well as the Assembly of First Nations and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs as one of the most important gathering places for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

From lighting the sacred fire at the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992, to sharing the stage with spiritual leaders, including the Dalai Lama, Elder Dr. Courchene's leadership had a global influence. His impact and legacy lives on today through those who were fortunate to hear his voice and the messages and teachings he so willingly shared with all people throughout his life.

Suzanne Simard

Participant

Suzanne Simard is a Professor of Forest Ecology at the University of British Columbia and the author of the book, Finding the Mother Tree.

She is a pioneer on the frontier of plant communication and intelligence; and has been hailed as a scientist who conveys complex, technical ideas in a way that is dazzling and profound. Her work has influenced filmmakers (the Tree of Souls in James Cameron's *Avatar*) and her TED Talks have been viewed by more than 10 million people worldwide.

Suzanne is known for her work on how trees interact and communicate using below-ground fungal networks, which has led to the recognition that forests have hub trees, or Mother Trees, which are large, highly connected trees that play an important role in the flow of information and resources in a forest. Her current research investigates how these complex relationships contribute to forest resiliency, adaptability and recovery and has far-reaching implications for how to manage and heal forests from human impacts, including climate change.

Suzanne has published over 200 peer-reviewed articles and presented at conferences around the world. She has communicated her work to a wide audience through interviews, documentary films and her TED Talk "How trees talk to one another".

Valérie Courtois (Innu First Nation)

Participant

Valérie Courtois is a registered professional forester who specializes in Indigenous issues, forest ecology and ecosystem-based management and planning. She is a member of the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh, located on the shore of Peikukami, or Lac-St-Jean. Courtois holds a degree in forestry sciences from the Université de Moncton. She has served as a forestry advisor for the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador, forestry planner for the Innu Nation, and as a consultant in Aboriginal forestry, including certification and spatial planning, and caribou planning. She has received numerous awards for this work, including the James Kitz award from the Canadian Institute of Forestry and the Distinguished Alumni award from the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Moncton.

Valérie has been the Director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative since 2013, where she has been a leader in the growing movement of Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship in Canada, including the development of the National First Nations Guardians Network. In addition to her work in conservation, stewardship and planning, Courtois is an avid photographer. She is also on the Board of Directors of the Corporation du Mushuau-nipi, a non-profit that encourages cultural and professional exchanges on the George River. She lives in Happy Valley–Goose Bay, Labrador.

**Allen Joe Felix
Elder AJ Felix
(Sturgeon Lake First Nation)**

Participant

Born in Sturgeon Lake, Saskatchewan on December 24, 1945. Assisted by local grandmothers at birth in a one room log cabin made of logs and mud with no power, no running water, a wood heated stove, no phone, no radio and of course, no t.v. There were no cars, no tractors, no schools. We had a team of horses and a barn for them. Wagon for summer travel and sleigh for winter survival. Was picked up by priests, Indian affairs and the RCMP to attend 13 years of residential school. While in residential schools, Felix became an academic, athlete and public speaker, class president, lead trumpet in the band, sergeant in the student militia and First Nation bugler. He won the Tom Longboat Award in 1960 for athletics and academics.

Later in life, Felix became the Grand-Chief of Prince Albert, Regional Vice Chief of Saskatchewan and eventually Vice Chief for the Assembly of First Nations with National Chief Ovide Mercredi. Currently an Elder and spokesperson for national and provincial Truth & Reconciliation engagements and is recognized as a spiritual, traditional Elder.

Jeff Wells

**Participant &
Associate Producer**

Jeff Wells is Vice President for Boreal Conservation at the National Audubon Society, where he leads their work in protecting the Boreal Forest, a place often referred to as “North America’s bird nursery”. Spanning interior Alaska across Canada to Newfoundland, the Boreal includes over one billion acres of northern forests, wetlands, lakes, and rivers. Jeff leads Audubon’s efforts on Boreal-focused applied science and strategic communications to leverage public support for Indigenous-led conservation in Canada including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and Indigenous Guardians programs. Through this work, some of the largest new land protections in modern history are taking place across this globally important biome that supports billions of nesting birds.

Jeff’s current role is a return to Audubon, where he previously served as National Bird Conservation Director and, before that, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon New York. For nearly 20 years, Jeff led science and policy for the Boreal Songbird Initiative and the International Boreal Conservation Campaign. He has also served as Senior Conservation Scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Jeff received his PhD from Cornell University. He has authored and co-authored numerous books, articles, papers, and reports including Important Bird Areas in New York State (Audubon 1998), Birder’s Conservation Handbook (Princeton 2007), Boreal Birds of North America (University of California 2011), Birds of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao (Cornell 2017), and most recently, Birds of Maine (Princeton 2020). Jeff is an avid birder and was part of winning teams from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology on the World Series of Birding in 2001 and 2002.

Nigel Roulet

Participant

Nigel Roulet is the Distinguished James McGill Professor of Biogeoscience and the Departmental Chair in the Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, QC Canada. Nigel's research interests are on the interaction of climate, hydrology and ecosystems. His primary ecosystem of focus is peatlands. His current projects are on the long-term carbon and water balances of continental bogs, the patterning and self-regulation of peatland landscapes (Hudson Bay Lowlands), and the changes in biogeochemistry and ecohydrology of peatlands effected by land-use change. He has published numerous articles on these subjects. Nigel is also a co-author of several United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports.

Nancy Turner

Participant

Nancy Turner is an ethnobotanist, Distinguished Professor Emerita, 2015 Fellow of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation and former Hakai Professor in Ethnoecology with the School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. She has worked with First Nations elders and cultural specialists in northwestern North America for over 50 years, helping to document, retain and promote their traditional knowledge of plants and environments, including Indigenous foods, materials and traditional medicines. She has been formally adopted into Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, Songhees and Nisga'a families. Her two-volume book, *Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America* (July, 2014; McGill-Queen's University Press and winner of The Canada Prize from the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences), represents an integration of her long-term research. She has authored or co-authored/co-edited 30 other books, including: *Plants of Haida Gwaii* (3rd edition published in 2021); *The Earth's Blanket*; "Keeping it Living": *Traditions of Plant Use and Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America* (with Doug Deur); *Saanich Ethnobotany: Culturally Important Plants of the WSÁNEC' People* (with Richard Hebda), and *Food Plants of Coastal First Peoples*, and over 150 book chapters and papers. Her recent edited volume, *Plants, People, and Places: the Roles of Ethnobotany and Ethnoecology in Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights in Canada and Beyond* (2020), was awarded the Daniel Austin Book award by the American Botanical Council. Her latest book is coauthored with Quwut'sun Elder Dr. Luschiim Arvid Charlie: *Luschiim's Plants: Traditional Indigenous Foods, Materials and Medicines* (2021). She has received a number of awards for her work, including membership in Order of British Columbia (1999) and the Order of Canada (2009), honorary degrees from Vancouver Island University, University of British Columbia, University of Northern British Columbia and Simon Fraser University; the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences' Canada Prize in the Social Sciences for Ancient Pathways, and The Royal Society of Canada's Innis-Gérin medal (2020).

Melody Lepine
(Mikisew Cree First Nation)

Participant

Melody Lepine was raised in the community of Fort Chipewayn, Alberta, and is a member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation. Her family and community traditional teachings in environmental stewardship motivated her to obtain a bachelor of science in environmental conservation at the University of Alberta and pursue advanced studies on environmental management at Royal Roads University. For the past 18 years she has worked for the Mikisew Cree First Nation Government where she oversees and manages complex and challenging environmental, social, and cultural issues. She leads consultation on all matters pertaining to natural resource management within the Mikisew Cree's traditional territory and has extensive experience in strategic planning, regulatory intervention, benefit agreements, Indigenous knowledge studies, land use planning, and community-based research and environmental monitoring programs.

Melody was one of the driving forces behind the establishment and recent expansion of the Kitaskino-Nuwenene Wildland Park, which is one of Alberta's first Indigenous-led conservation areas as well as one of the largest new conservation areas created in decades. Kitaskino-Nuwenene embraces the Mikisew's stewardship vision for their lands, waters, and iconic species such as woodland caribou and wood bison. Melody has also served as co-chair of the Alberta Oil Sands Advisory Group, as a member on the Alberta Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, and as a board member on the Cumulative Environment Management Association.

Nicole Rycroft

Founder and Executive
Director, Canopy

Participant

Born in Australia, Nicole Rycroft is the Founder and Executive Director of award winning environmental not-for-profit, Canopy. A former physiotherapist and elite level athlete, she is an ardent surfer and enthusiast of life. One of Nicole's guiding philosophies in life, "ask for what you want, you might just get it", is foundational to her work in guiding Canopy's team to transform unsustainable supply chains and advance forest conservation and community rights.

In addition to being a member of the UBS Global Visionaries Program, Nicole is an Ashoka Fellow, the recipient of a Canadian Environment Award Gold Medal, winner of the 2020 Climate Breakthrough Award, and a recipient of the Meritorious Service Cross of Canada.

**Todd J. Paglia,
J.D., L.L.M.**

Executive Director

Participant

When Todd Paglia joined Stand.earth in 1999, he had a vision of transforming the environmental impact of something so ubiquitous that it's often forgotten – paper. He saw that major corporations in the office supply and catalog industries were purchasing and selling millions of tons of paper with no accountability for, or even knowledge of, the environmental devastation that paper caused. As Executive Director of Stand.earth, Todd can be credited with transforming the paper policies of multi-billion-dollar Fortune 500 companies, including Staples, Office Depot, Williams-Sonoma, Dell, Victoria's Secret, 3M and many more. Under Todd's leadership, Stand.earth has saved more than 65 million acres of endangered forests. In addition, recycled pulp mills have seen major companies requesting more sustainable fiber as a result of Stand's campaigns.

Todd's work has been recognized with his selection to the annual "Hot 20 Under 40" list published by 7x7 Magazine, San Francisco's glamour and culture publication. Todd was the only environmental leader selected, as the article noted, because "few activists have succeeded in the practical business of hitting earth abusers where it really hurts—their wallets." Todd was also chosen as one of Ethisphere magazine's one hundred most influential people in business ethics. Todd has publicly challenged some of the largest companies in the world to become environmental leaders on the Today Show, NPR's Marketplace as well in stories in the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Time Magazine, Business Week, and many other publications. In March 2007, he was a featured speaker at San Francisco's Commonwealth Club, the nation's oldest and largest public affairs forum.

Before joining Stand.earth, Todd was an attorney for Ralph Nader, focusing on consumer protection issues such as environmental purchasing by governmental agencies to spur alternative markets, enforcement of antitrust laws, corporate welfare issues and corporate accountability. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Binghamton University, SUNY, his J.D. from the New England School of Law, and his LL.M. from George Washington University, National Law Center, in Environmental Law and Policy.

He lives in Bellingham, Washington, with his wife Shannon and two sons, Nico and Luca.

Martin-Hugues St-Laurent

Participant

Martin-Hugues St-Laurent is a Professor at the Université du Québec à Rimouski, where he teaches and conducts research in animal ecology, wildlife management and conservation. He holds a PhD in biology (UQÀM); his PhD dissertation focused on responses of birds and mammals to the loss and fragmentation of mature boreal forest. His current research program focuses on the impacts of habitat alteration and climate change on mammal conservation in the boreal forest, using tools as behavior, physiology, population dynamics, trophic interactions, landscape ecology and modeling, focusing on woodland caribou, gray wolf, black bear, coyote, moose and white-tailed deer as biological models. He was a member of the Terrestrial Mammals – Specialist Subcommittee of the COSEWIC for 8 years, and has been an active member of the Québec Boreal Caribou Recovery Team and of the Québec Atlantic-Gaspésie Caribou Recovery Team since 2008. He is also a scientific adviser for several Indigenous Communities to support their efforts in the protection of caribou in Québec.

Chief Darrell Bob (St’at’imc Nation)

Participant

I feel fortunate to have been raised by my grandparents on a small farmhouse in St’at’imc Nation (Lillooet, BC) with the teachings of the language, traditional knowledge, and our way of life. We had no electricity or running water, everything was done by hand or with a very small tractor which we used for transportation at the best of times. We had five gardens, many fruit trees, hay fields located in several different areas on Xaxli’p reserves. This kept our family very busy year round. We did our canning, storing and drying of our fish as well for winter, catching no less than 700 fish in a summer.

In 2006 I became a chief of the Xaxli’p community for a four year term, then again in 2014 to 2018, and currently from 2022 to 2026, where I received my most significant political teachings about the importance of the land and people. I was taught by Elders, “look at the whole territory when you’re making a decision” not just the narrow scope of an initiative. The Elders always reminded me “what you do to one you do to all” which includes our Mother Earth! “Being stewards of the land, it is our responsibility to look after Her and nurture Her to the best of our ability, so she can continue to provide for us!”

In 2009, I was honoured by the St’at’imc Nation Chiefs to help initiate the International Indigenous Leadership Gathering in Lillooet, BC. For eight years, I continued working on this gathering of indigenous spiritual leaders, Elders, healers, and educators, sharing their Sacred Teachings and Traditional ways with the human family. Each year this gathering has doubled in attendance, peaking at about 2,500 people.

It is an absolute honour to work for our nation at the traditional, spiritual, and leadership level. I am looking forward to meeting you in our travels of Turtle Island and possibly beyond.

All my relations.

Anna Baggio

**Conservation Director,
Wildlands League**

For two decades Anna has worked with Indigenous leaders, governments, industry and communities to protect Canada's incredible ecosystems and to co-create solutions for people and the planet. Anna is a graduate of York University's Master in Environmental Studies Program. She also holds a Hon. B.Sc. in Biology from McMaster University. Her passion for conservation was sparked at a national park in Georgian Bay where she studied spotted turtles and reptiles.

Participant

For her Master's research, she worked with communities outside two small protected areas in Southern Costa Rica, examining land use and ecologically sustainable practices in agriculture. She is a conservation expert who specializes in strategic campaigning, Indigenous and government relations, policy and law reform, media relations/communications, negotiation, and creative solutions based on science and Indigenous knowledge.

Anna is currently working on two Indigenous Protected Areas in northern Ontario and is helping to safeguard the Hudson Bay Lowland, one of the world's most important terrestrial carbon stores. She continues to fight for caribou habitat conservation. She advises on protected areas establishment across the country and is also leading new exciting work to establish a national marine conservation area in southern Hudson Bay.

Janet Sumner

**Executive Director,
Wildlands League**

Janet is the Executive Director of Wildlands League and has more than 30 years' experience working as an environmental leader. In 2017, Janet was appointed co-chair of the National Advisory Panel (NAP) with a mandate to provide recommendations on how to protect 17% of Canada's terrestrial lands and inland waters by 2020 and in 2019 Janet was appointed the Special Representative on Nature for Canada. She has slept with Polar Bears, walked in herds of caribou, and flown millions of hectares by helicopter over Boreal Forests and logging. She believes there is no more beautiful place than Canada.

Participant

Crew

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Michael Zelniker

Director, Producer, Writer, Cinematographer & Editor

Having starred in more than 20 feature films and on television countless times, Zelniker is perhaps best known for his portrayal of trumpeter Red Rodney in Clint Eastwood's award winning bio-pic BIRD; and for his Canadian Academy Award (Genie Award) winning performance in THE TERRY FOX STORY, with Robert Duvall.

Zelniker was born and raised in Montreal where he received his professional training as an actor at Dawson College's Dome Theatre School. After graduating, he began working in theaters all across Canada doing everything from Shakespeare to David Mamet, appearing in numerous Equity productions, including AMADEUS, HENRY V, MOTHER COURAGE, TOTAL ECLIPSE and AMERICAN BUFFALO. During this period, he also co-starred in several award winning feature films including TICKET TO HEAVEN, HEARTACHES and THE TERRY FOX STORY.

Since moving to Los Angeles, Zelniker has worked extensively in both movies and television including co-starring with Peter Weller in David Cronenberg's NAKED LUNCH; QUEENS LOGIC with John Malkovich and Kevin Bacon; TOUCH AND GO with Michael Keaton; and BIRD with Forest Whitaker. Some notable television movies include the Showtime mini-series THE NEON EMPIRE; Masterpiece Theatre's GLORY ENOUGH FOR ALL for PBS; and the ABC mini-series CROSSINGS with Christopher Plummer. Zelniker guest starred numerous times on series such as THE DEAD ZONE, CHICAGO HOPE, MILLENNIUM, PROFILER, THE INSIDE, STRONG MEDICINE, VERITAS THE QUEST, FOR THE PEOPLE, IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT and MURDER SHE WROTE.

Zelniker starred in a number of independent films including, SNIDE AND PREJUDICE, directed by Philippe Mora; AIR TIME, directed by Gary Fleder that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival; and the Sundance Lab developed feature, AFTER IMAGE.

Zelniker's theater directing credits include the critically acclaimed CHILD'S PLAY, at the John Anson Ford Theatre, the sketch comedy show, WHITE HOUSE CHICKS at the HBO Workspace, MOONCHILDREN and WAITING FOR LEFTY at the Lillian Theater, and ONE LOVE and LOVE AND DEATH AND OTHER TRIVIAL MATTERS at the Artworks.

As a filmmaker, Zelniker co-wrote, produced, and played the title character in the critically acclaimed, multi-festival award winning feature, STUART BLISS. He also directed, co-wrote and produced the experimental feature, FALLING... that premiered at Indie Fest USA International Film Festival, winning their Best of Festival Award.

Zelniker taught Acting for Film, Chekhov Technique and Performing Shakespeare at the Los Angeles campus of the New York Film Academy between 2013 and 2018 after working at AMDA for nine years where he taught Acting for the Camera, Acting Technique and Playing Shakespeare. Zelniker is a member of the Climate Reality Project Leadership Corps, (Vice President Al Gore's organization), serving as the Co-Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter from 2018 - 2021 and as a mentor at numerous climate leader trainings.

THE ISSUE WITH TISSUE marks Zelniker's first foray into documentary filmmaking.

Paul Cadieux

Executive Producer

Paul Cadieux is one of Canada's leading and most active film and television producers. Among numerous other accolades, he has won a Genie Award for Best Motion Picture for the two-time Oscar nominated *Les Triplettes de Belleville* (Cannes Film Festival).

In his more than three decades as a producer, co-producer, executive producer and distributor, Paul has often preferred to operate out of the limelight while remaining centrally involved in dozens of major Canadian and international projects ranging from children's animation series, thriller feature films, romantic comedies, travel shows, reality programming, international co-productions, feature documentaries and TV series in both English and French.

Through his umbrellas, Megafun Productions Inc. and Filmoption International Inc., along with his extensive in house equipment rental company and state-of-the-art post-production facilities, Paul has long prided himself on being well-positioned to be able to have a significant impact on projects he feels are both creatively and commercially viable and to provide the missing elements to advance a worthy production.

Among his many productions, we can find Danae Elon's award-winning documentaries *P.S. Jerusalem* (TIFF and Berlin), *The Patriarch's Room* (Doc Aviv) and *A Sister's Song* (Doc Aviv, Dok Leipzig and Berlin), as well as Shimon Dotan's *The Settlers* (Sundance) and, more recently, *Left Behind America* for PBS/Frontline, as well as *Advocate and Gaza*; both screened at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival.

Anyone looking for a pattern in Paul Cadieux's varied production and distribution work will invariably note that quality, high production value, respecting budgets and matching the marketplace's needs are consistent qualities of his overall creative and commercial output.

In a field where the dual elements of creative passion and experienced production know-how almost always go hand-in-hand, Paul Cadieux brings a wealth of both to any and all productions he puts his full commitment, heart, experience and resources behind.

Victoria Yeh

Composer

Canadian composer and violinist, Victoria Yeh, has performed across Canada from coast-to-coast-to-coast. Classically trained since age four under Ronald Shean (founder, ESO), Martin Riseley (New Zealand School of Music, former Concertmaster, ESO), Broderyck Olsen (former Associate Concertmaster, ESO) and Frank Ho (Alberta College), Victoria continued her studies in improv and contemporary styles with American jazz violinist, Christian Howes while launching her performance career in Toronto.

Victoria's unique style has been described as dynamic and progressive, combining the purity of her musical heritage with the edginess of prog fusion. She performs both acoustically and with her brilliant red electric violin, appearing as both a solo artist and with various groups including her original band The Spirit Awakens, jazz fusion band Paul DeLong's ONE WORD and Art Griffin's Sound Chaser. You may even see her periodically as a featured orchestral soloist. No matter the setting, Yeh's haunting, daring and electrifying sound presents the violin as it's rarely seen. Her latest album, Spirit Awakens, features original music and some of Canada's most respected musicians. Composed during her year as Artist-in-Residence for the Heliconian Club, the album is suffused with Victoria's passion for fusion jazz and classical.

A musical chameleon, Victoria has recorded on countless film, television and music projects in genres ranging from atmospheric avant-garde to hip-hop and electronica; folk and fiddle to ethno-world and rock. She is the sole composer and performer in the original soundtrack for Michael Zelniker's The Issue With Tissue documentary about the Boreal forest and its defining role in our battle against climate change.

A devoted educator, Yeh also teaches internationally as a faculty member for Christian Howes' Creative Strings Workshop in addition to running her own private studio and the Singing Strings youth music outreach program. Recently named the top 2021 Platinum Winner for Best Music Lessons in Grey County, Yeh helps musicians aged 5 to 75 breakthrough personal barriers to find their creative voices.

www.victoriayeh.com

Credits

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Credits

Filmoption International presents
An Aion Pictures film

Written, directed & produced by Michael Zelniker

Executive Producers Paul Cadieux
Michèle Audette
Dave Porter
Allen Edzerza

Cinematographer Michael Zelniker

Composer Victoria Yeh

Editor Michael Zelniker

Participants Michèle Audette · Innu First Nation
Suzanne Simard
Valérie Courtois · Innu First Nation
Elder Dave Courchene · Anishinabe First Nation
Elder AJ Felix · Sturgeon Lake First Nation
Nigel Roulet
Dave Porter · Kaska First Nation
Allen Edzerza · Tahltan First Nation
Jeff Wells
Nancy Turner
Melody Lepine · Mikisew Cree First Nation
Nicole Rycroft
Todd Paglia
Martin-Hugues St-Laurent
Chief Darrell Bob · St'at'imc Nation
Chief Keeter Corston · Chapleau Cree First Nation
Anna Baggio
Janet Sumner

**THE
ISSUE
WITH
TISSUE**
a boreal love story