STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE
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In Native-Canadian culture, storytelling is an age-old art form designed to share wisdom and history. In today’s world this ancient oral tradition is more meaningful than ever, building bridges between young and old, between regions and cultures around the world.

Produced in English and Cree, *Stories from the Seventh Fire* was inspired by a prophecy from an Ojibway elder who foretold of a time when we would seek out these stories and old teachings to reconnect with Mother Earth. Four half-hour episodes of *Stories from the Seventh Fire* present the seasons, *Spring*, *Summer*, *Fall* and *Winter* combining 2-D, Flash and 3-D animation, live action nature footage and the voices of some of Canada’s best-loved Native performers.

Each episode explores a season with two stories. In the first half of the show the Storyteller (*Gordon Tootoosis*) tells ancient stories about the Cree trickster, Wesakechak (*Johnny Waniandy*), using the animated characters set in motion by Vancouver’s *Bardel Animation* (*Stickin’ Around*, *Prince of Egypt*). The animated characters, creatures and landscapes are based on designs created by shaman and renowned Aboriginal artist, *Norval Morrisseau*. His unique style is famous for its bold, vivid colours and spiritually inspired designs.

In the second half of the program a 3-D digital Mother Wolf (*Tantoo Cardinal*) and her cubs are brought to life by computer-animators *Bioware* (*Baldur’s Gate*, *Winter*) and *AurenyA Entertainment* (*Elfin’s First Christmas*, *Spring*, *Summer* and *Fall*). The animated Mother Wolf recounts a bedtime story to her young cubs about respecting the natural world. Each Wolf Tale is illustrated by live action wildlife footage from cinematographer *Albert Karvonen*.

The characters in each program are voiced by Western Canadian Aboriginal actors in both English and Cree, featuring *Tantoo Cardinal* (*Legends of the Fall*, *Dances With Wolves*) as Mother Wolf and *Gordon Tootoosis* (*North of 60*) as Storyteller.
**WINTER**

**Tales of Wesakechak: Why Rabbit Turns White**

Wesakechak is on holiday instead of teaching the First People. The People forget to give thanks to the creatures who give them their livelihood, so the Creator sends away the Thunder Beings so there is no rain. Then the birds and animals leave so there is no food. Wesakechak is punished too - his special powers are taken away, so he must save the Indian People the hard way. Eventually he finds the animals and persuades them to return. On his way home, he becomes lost in a snowstorm and is saved by Wapoose (Rabbit). Wesakechak regains his special powers and rewards Wapoose with the ability to turn white in the winter, hiding him from enemies. The people learn to give thanks for the gifts of life they receive, Wesakechak is reminded of his duties to the First People as teacher and Wapoose learns that even someone as small as he can make a difference.

**Wolf Tale: Legend of the Spirit Bear**

Mother Wolf tells a story about the neverending winter (the last Ice Age) when all the creatures were starving, including the Wolves. The Wolf Clan learned how to hunt in packs, which helped them run down food, but life remained difficult. A council is called by all the creatures strong enough to attend, and Raven agreed to ask the Creator to send winter away. The Creator listened to Raven and moved the glaciers to the North. As a reminder of the time when it was always winter, the Creator then turned one out of every ten black bears completely white. These bears, now found only in a special place off the Pacific Coast, are called Spirit Bears (Kermode Bears). It is said that if they disappear, the neverending winter will return. Today, there are only a few of these bears remaining. Inspired by a Kitasoo Pacific Coast Legend.

**SUMMER**

**Tales of Wesakechak: How Wesakechak Got His Name**

Wesakechak decides that he dislikes his name. He feels he deserves a more powerful name like ‘Most Handsome’ or ‘Strong One’. So he asks the Creator to give everyone new names. The Creator agrees to have a naming ceremony on the longest day of the year in midsummer. Wesakechak is so concerned about being the first to pick a name that he stays awake most of the night, and then on the following day Wesakechak sleeps in. When he gets there, all the good names are taken. Wesakechak ends up with his old name but a new job from the Creator. He will become the teacher for the first Indian People. This will make his name important, not the other way around.

**Wolf Tale: Legend of the Caribou**

Mother Wolf tells her cubs about the time when Caribou, Deer Clan members who live in large herds in the Barrens, learned an important lesson. The Caribou herd became so large they threatened the existence of all the plants and other creatures who share the Barrens. When the Caribou Clan mothers refused to move, the other animals asked the Creator for help. That summer, Creator sent tiny insects in swarms that outnumbered the Caribou to make their lives miserable. Soon they ran to get away from the biting mosquitoes and flies. So began the longest yearly migration of the four-leggeds on Mother Earth. The cubs learn about animals and the world to the North in the Barrens, and also learn to respect the powers of other creatures - even the smallest. Inspired by the annual migration of the Porcupine Caribou herds.
FALL

Tales of Wesakechak: Wesakechak and the Medicine

One beautiful fall day, Wesakechak overhears two Chickadees singing a medicine song that makes powerful berries. These help the birds float into the air without using their wings. Wesakechak tricks the birds into showing him the secret of the berries. After they give him two, they warn him to take only one at a time and only when he’s really tired. Of course Wesakechak immediately takes too many berries and winds up facedown in a swamp. Later, he spies two Cranes who are tossing their eyes up into the air and catching them in their eye sockets. The Cranes tell Wesakechak that they do this to improve their eyesight. Wesakechak begs for their secret, telling them that he is going blind. Again he abuses the medicine and really is blinded. Eventually, the Creator takes pity on Wesakechak and shows him how to restore his sight, but first makes him promise to be more careful when using any strong medicine.

Wolf Tale: Legend of the First Thanksgiving

To explain the season of the Falling Leaves to her cubs, Mother Wolf tells a story about Raven and how she once tricked all the creatures into providing her with a great feast, before winter arrived. The idea worked so well that the two-leggeds borrowed it. In the NorthWest, it is called a Potlatch. In other places, the feast day is called the Harvest or Thanksgiving. To this day, animals like Bear and Wolf allow Raven to share some of their leftovers in memory of that great feast. From this story, the wolf cubs learn about what other creatures do in the Boreal Forest to prepare for winter. Inspired by a story from the Salish of the Pacific Coast.

SPRING

Tales of Wesakechak: The First Spring Flood

In the beginning before there were any people on Turtle Island, the Creator put Wesakechak, the Shape-shifter, on the earth to take care of all the creatures. This made Maci Manito, an evil spirit, very angry. Maci Manito was envious of how all of the creatures on earth loved Wesakechak. Wesakechak is tricked by this jealous spirit, who tries to drown him in a spring flood. Jackfish, Niska (Canada Goose) and Amisk (Beaver) come to the aid of their friend who has helped them in the past. The story deals with the negative effects of envy and the power of friendship and old favours repaid in times of trouble.

Wolf Tale: Legend of the Giant Beaver

Mother Wolf tells her cubs a story about an ancient time when the great plains were covered by water. In those days, there were giant Beaver the size of Grizzly Bears, and it said that they constructed land and created smaller lakes and ponds for the other creatures. As the waters shrank so did the Beaver, until they were the size we see them today. But they still have the ability given to them by Creator to make a bridge between water and land called wetland. We see how these special areas created by Beaver attract all kinds of other birds, animals, frogs and insects. Inspired by a story from the Peace River Dene.
Brighter than TV-Safe Colours

It’s not every day in television you have a shaman in the studio. But when animators at Vancouver’s Bardel production house finally got to meet Ojibway artist Norval Morrisseau they had already spent months with him and the power of his healing spirit, in the form of the vivid canvasses covering the tables of the studio. These paintings inspired the animation for the Cree legend segment half of the Stories from the Seventh Fire, a four part unique half-hour television series.

“I had this sense that I was working on something that was more important than anything else I had done,” says Ron Crown, the animation director of the Morrisseau-designed Wesakechak legend segments. “There was this atmosphere in the studio. Animators can be quite detached, but all the guys were excited to meet him. This wasn’t something to make a couple of bucks — it was more than just cartoons. We approached it with reverence.” This sense of respect helped them to overcome the frustration of working with designs that were often difficult to animate.

“Norval doesn’t follow rules,” Crown explains. “There’s no perspective, he’s got animals floating — things just appear wherever he thinks they should. It just flows out of him… The hardest thing was ignoring the rules and learning to adapt.”

This statement certainly applied to the producers as well, as they faced the challenges of getting the series to air. Raising the financing took many long years. The producers all said that having a sense of meaning and vision about the project kept them going. “The quality of some kid’s content out there is quite depressing,” says producer Ava Karvonen. “But kids are really smart. They love these stories and the different layers of meaning.”

After completing the award-winning pilot, Stories From the Seventh Fire - Winter, in late 1998, Storytellers Productions Inc. began developing Spring, Summer and Fall, the three follow-up episodes featuring each season. They wanted to improve on the animation and storytelling in the pilot episode, while retaining the experimental style and approach.

Producer-director Greg Coyes said a strong respect for the material guided the process. “In maintaining the cultural integrity, it was important not to go over the top with slapstick gags. The humour isn’t forced, but it’s there, in the language, in the characters. I was laughing out loud in the studio every day.”

Coyes praised the Bardel animators for achieving this balance. Animation director Ron Crown believes the material gave lots of room for fun. “Just because things have a certain reverence, it doesn’t mean they should be boring,” he comments. “These stories have a wonderful humor, and humour is a teaching tool.”
The Bardel team played with technology to enrich the quality of animation in the follow-up episodes. They took Flash animation, which had not traditionally been used for broadcast, and developed its TV applications for 2-D use in the Morrisseau segments, with excellent results.

Meanwhile over in Calgary, the Wolf Tales segments got their 3-D computer animation for the Mother Wolf stories spruced up by new animators. Inter-cutting with live-action nature footage meant the AurenyA Entertainment Group animators had to go for an ultra-realistic look. Edmonton-based writer-producer Gerri Cook, who created the Wolf Tales segments, said it was a challenging but rewarding process. “It was hard getting the fur right. But they managed to make Mother Wolf even look a bit like Tantoo Cardinal who inspired and is the voice behind this character!”

Cook was also thrilled to see how well the live-action elements turned out, applauding editor Andrew Manske for finding lots of great little moments from the huge Karvonen Films wildlife library to illustrate Mother Wolf’s nature stories. She also credits the wonderful original music by composer Michael Becker and the layered sound track as crucial for bringing these stories to life.

“We needed to provide an emotional expression for the live action animals,” she notes, calling the Foley and other sound effects for all the segments “ingenious”. Sound designer John Blerot is modest, saying he and his team “had fun playing in the mud.” Their “mud” was part of a virtual ecosystem recreated in the recording studio. They hauled in logs, trees, and soil, made a pond out of a large round cattle feeder, and even ran outside to get real snow for making footstep sounds – freezing foley artist Mike Sander’s hands. Sanders got even colder splashing around in the unheated “pond” as he made beaver tail noises, slapping the water and mud, as they recreated a prehistoric world of giant beaver and fierce saber tooth tigers.

In animation, all the different members of the creative team are actors, from the animators with their pencils to the Foley artist with his noises. But the voice actors are still a huge part of the production. The producers hunted for Aboriginal actors who could voice the roles in both Cree and English. They came up with a lively mix of big names and surprise finds, both young and old.

“The series is funny in English,” says Cree language consultant and the voice of Wesakechak, Johnny Waniandy, “But it is even funnier in Cree. The Cree language has a life of its own so these versions are even richer than the English versions”. “It encourages young people to maintain their language,” comments Karvonen. She also added that hearing role models like Tantoo Cardinal who directed and voiced the Mother Wolf segment speaking in Cree is an inspiration for young people.
Cardinal is not only a mentor to the audience, but also to the child actors she worked with in the studio. “The kids adore Tantoo,” Karvonen shares. “Even during casting, she was so positive with everyone who came in. She took a long time with each person.”

This mentoring spirit was at the core of the series, and in the messages of the stories. They are uplifting, revealing the challenges and blessings of friendship, family and nature, without shying away from serious environmental issues. The Wesakechak segment of the Fall episode deals with medicine, and how its power for good can turn into substance abuse if not dealt with carefully.

“These are stories that help us live better,” says Coyes, explaining how the mythic Cree character Wesakechak, the Trickster, represents our human foibles and contradictions. The Trickster character comes up in the folk tales of many cultures, and the lessons and humour of his mishaps are universal. The Winter half-hour produced as a pilot for the series in 1998 was enthusiastically received by audiences from Guatemala to the high north of Finland - where the show was projected onto a wall of ice. It has won animation and story telling awards in Canada and internationally.

“These stories are a wonderful resource to share… It’s a children’s show but it has a much wider appeal for different ages and cultures. There’s just a magic and a medicine that happens,” says Coyes.

Cook and Karvonen are also pleased that the stories encourage respect for our planet. “It’s gratifying to present environmental messages through the point of view of a Wolf telling bedtime stories to her cubs,” says Cook.

“We are living in the time of the Seventh Fire,” adds Karvonen. “We’re looking back on our mistakes and looking forward, giving kids an appreciation of the earth. These are the kind of messages I would like to see my young daughter get out of her television experiences.”

It may have taken many more than the four seasons represented in the series to complete the shows, but the producers say it was worth the effort. “You look at Norval’s work, and it’s just pulsing with colour; it’s so inspiring and satisfying,” says Ava Karvonen. “We just had to do this.” Perhaps it should be noted that the vibrancy of the colours was actually a challenge for the animators. “Norval doesn’t use TV-safe colours!” Ron Crown says with a smile.

Certainly, a sense of magic and destiny from the Aboriginal community has galvanized Stories from the Seventh Fire since the beginning, and even before that. Associate producer, Tantoo Cardinal provided encouragement and creative input on the Wolf Tales segment from its inception. When producer Coyes first approached Morrisseau about a TV series concept that would adapt his artwork into contemporary animation, his response sent shivers down Coyes’ spine. “I’ve been waiting a long time for you to come, to see my art in a new form,” was the reply that Coyes received from this great artist.
Gregory Coyes is a Metis filmmaker with Cree and Mohawk ancestry. His films explore the modern Native experience, seeking to build bridges between communities and cultures.

“This was a special project in a lot of ways,” says Coyes of Stories From The Seventh Fire. “When I first met Norval Morrisseau, we sat and talked for over three hours. As I was leaving, he said, “I’ve been waiting for you. I’ve been waiting ten years for a Native writer to come.” I felt really honoured but I also recognized that this project is very special and I must take care with it. I have to say that I prayed that the right people would come into the circle and I think we have been blessed with the right people to handle this very precious gift we’re working with.”

Along with his partners in Storytellers Productions, Coyes co-created and co-produced four episodes of Stories from the Seventh Fire, an animated and live action series featuring the art of Norval Morrisseau. Coyes also wrote and directed the companion documentary Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling.

Greg Coyes was born and raised in central Alberta. After graduating from Yale University with a Bachelor of Science and lettering in hockey, he was about to pursue a career in geology when his life’s path took a serious detour. He landed a principal role in the feature film Running Brave, a dramatized biography of Billy Mills, a Lakota Sioux who won the 10,000 meters race at the 1964 Olympics.

Bitten by the film bug, Coyes then got behind-the-camera experience working on some of the biggest films to come out of Western Canada during the 1980s, including My American Cousin, Cowboys Don’t Cry and Life After Hockey. He formed a partnership with Gil Cardinal at Great Plains Productions, where Coyes worked as a writer/director on the ground-breaking Native documentary series, My Partners, My People. He also worked in the roles of producer, production coordinator and writer/director on a number of award winning feature length documentaries, including Our Home and Native Land, Learning With Love and Healing Journey. He was also the executive producer of All My Relations, the nationally broadcast Native news magazine series for CBC television.

Coyes most recently wrote and directed How the Fiddle Flows, a one hour documentary special on Metis fiddle music and dance airing on Bravo!, APTN, SCN, ACCESS and Knowledge. Coyes was the Creative Director for the audiovisual components of The Aboriginal Peoples’ Gallery permanent exhibit at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, and has written for the Smithsonian Institution in preparation for their opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 2004. He is currently completing Medicine Walker, an hour-long documentary pilot featuring Dr. Dale Auger, and developing another documentary project on the covert nature of male depression for the National Film Board. He is the past-president of the Dreamspeakers Festival, the international celebration and conference of First Nations film, art and culture.

Gregory Coyes
With over 25 years experience as a project developer, scriptwriter, producer and investment fund manager, Cook’s career spans a wide section of the industry. *Stories From the Seventh Fire* offered Cook a unique opportunity to combine children’s stories, live action footage from nature documentaries, and cutting-edge animation. “Originally, we were looking at doing something that would be appealing to younger children,” explains Cook, “but when I look at the show now, I think it has a much broader appeal and it resonates beyond being a series for children.”

Cook is a partner in *Storytellers Productions* and co-created and produced the four episodes of *Stories From the Seventh Fire* and the companion documentary *Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling*. *Stories From the Seventh Fire* drew on Cook’s experiences developing children’s television and working with Aboriginal filmmakers. As head of ACCESS Television’s first script development office, Cook co-developed or co-wrote a number of award-winning children’s television series, including *The Magic Ring*, *Harriet’s Magic Hats* and *The Garage Gazette*, winner of an Award of Excellence from the *Alliance of Children and Television* (ACT). She was also the in-house producer of *The Person’s Case*, a one-hour docu-drama that won four awards at the *Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival*, including Best Overall Production.

Leaving ACCESS, Cook moved on to Saskatchewan, where she was a media consultant and professional development officer for Aboriginal filmmakers with the *Saskatchewan Native Communications Corporation*. She also initiated a number of First Nations-produced television programs, including *Tales of Wesakechak* for CBC Regina and *My Partners, My People* for BBS and CFRN, before returning to Alberta to work for what is now The Movie Network.

As the Western Canada Script Development officer for *Superchannel*, Cook assisted with the development of many quality Canadian feature films, including the award-winning *Bye Bye Blues* and *The Last Winter*. She then became Executive Director of the newly established *SaskFilm*, the agency that laid the foundations for today’s Saskatchewan film industry. She returned to Alberta to design and administer the *Shaw Children’s Programming Initiative* and the *Geoffrey R. Conway Fund*, which supported quality children’s television shows like *Dudley The Dragon*, *Groundling Marsh*, *Reboot* and *The Song Spinner*. In 1995, she returned to the private sector to establish her production company, *Dinosaur Soup Productions Inc.*, with husband and partner, Steve Moore.

Since that time, Cook has written and produced the children’s animation/live action special, *A Bee Thankful Day*; co-produced the half-hour 3D animated Christmas CTV special *The Elfkins First Christmas* for *Elfkins Productions Inc*; produced two one-hour documentaries for the CTV network, *Ghost Whales* and *Tracking Stolen Horses*; wrote and produced *Pure Adventure-Race To The Arctic Circle* for the Global Network and associate produced the multiple award winning French and English language arts documentary, *Sharing Visions* with *Patenaude Communications*. Currently in production is a half hour animated Yukon legend, *Two Winters*, in partnership with Aboriginal filmmaker, Carol Geddes. Gerri is the author of three children’s books, *A Penny For Albert*, *Where The Buffalo Jump* and *Christmas in the Badlands*, as part of a on going series for *Dinosaur Soup Books Inc.*, the *Alberta Books Collective* and *Couteau Books*. She is also the recipient of the *Alberta Motion Picture Industry Association*’s 2002 Friend of the Industry Award.
Ava Karvonen has been an active member of the Alberta film community for over 15 years. Her Edmonton-based production company, Reel Girls Media Inc., specializes in producing documentaries, children’s television series and new media that explore the human relationship with the natural world, celebrate the arts and examine social issues.

Ava’s most recent credits include producing the one-hour TV documentaries, Return of the Peregrine and How the Fiddle Flows, the entertaining kids CD-ROM series, Zoology Zone: Bears, Raptors and Spiders, and 7 award-winning episodes for Karvonen Film’s television series, Treasures of the Wild. Ava also recently wrote, directed, and produced Up Close and Palaeo, a one-hour live webcast and TV broadcast special on paleontology, and she has directed and produced six segments for CBC’s kids series Street Cents.

With her partners in Storytellers Productions Inc., she produced the four part, half-hour animated and live action children’s series, Stories from the Seventh Fire, based on the four seasons, and the companion documentary Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling. To date, these award-winning programs have been selected for screening at 40 international festivals and received a total of 13 awards including “Best Animation” at the San Francisco American Indian Film Festival and the 2003 Japan Wildlife Film Festival in Tokyo.

Ava was producer, co-host and story editor of WildFiles.tv, a 13-part half-hour interactive TV series for children, exploring mysteries of the animal kingdom. As a companion to this series, Reel Girls Media has completed production of www.wildfiles.tv, an interactive version of the series where kids conduct their own explorations of the science and the 13 animals featured in the TV series.

Karvonen has been an active volunteer since the age of fourteen. She currently is on the international board of Filmmakers for Conservation and the provincial board of Alberta New Media – Edmonton. She is a past Board member of the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC), Women in Film and TV Alberta, the Alberta Motion Pictures Industry Association of Alberta (AMPIA) and the Edmonton Arts Council. She is a producer member of AMPIA, DOC, and the Canadian Film and Television Production Association.

Ava thrives on keeping busy, so when she’s not multi-tasking you may find her breaking her own travel record of over 30 countries as she explores the globe with her partner Shannon and their daughter, Hannah.
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER • VOICE OF MOTHER WOLF

One of North America’s best-loved aboriginal actors, Tantoo Cardinal has appeared in numerous films, plays, TV and radio programs. Hailing from northern Alberta, Cardinal’s ancestry includes Metis-Cree, Chipewyan, Lakota and French, resulting in a wealth of voices that inspire her work and guide her life. Cree was spoken both in her home and in the community. She was thrilled with the opportunity to voice her role as Mother Wolf in Cree in addition to the English version, as she finds it deeply satisfying to express her craft in this language close to her heart.

Her feature film credits include Dances with Wolves, Legends of the Fall, Smoke Signals, Black Robe, Where the Rivers Flow North, Edge of Madness, Sioux City and Loyalties. Her TV series work includes roles in North of 60, Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman, and Lonesome Dove. She has also appeared in TV movies such as Lost Child, and her respected theatre work includes the plays Widows, All My Relations and Jessica. She has lent her voice to documentaries, most recently narrating How the Fiddle Flows, animated TV series and radio dramas.

Known as a strong campaigner for more realistic portrayals of First Nations peoples, she works to correct inaccuracies regarding North American Natives. She has a strong vision of what her work means.

“With acting I have found a way to do my own part to tell my peoples’ story,” she says. “Right away I knew this was the way to get ideas into people’s hearts and minds. I felt that acting could send a powerful message, particularly for my community because we are an oral society, and that pictures, song, movement, and storytelling could help to bring about some kind of understanding between all peoples.”

She has been honoured both in the aboriginal and mainstream film communities for her work on and off camera. She won a Gemini for Best Actress in a Guest Role (North of 60). She received much critical acclaim for her performance as Bangor in Jay Craven’s Where the Rivers Flows North co-starring Rip Torn. Louis Parks of the Houston Post described her role as “one of the most distinctive film characters in recent memory... a truly unusual and spirited reality;” Joyce Kulhawik of WBZ-TV Boston called her “magnificent and mesmerizing.” For this performance she won the first Rudy Martin Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Native American in Film (1994) as well as the American Indian Film Festival’s Best Actress Award (1993). The A.I.F.F. festival had also honoured her work in Anne Wheeler’s groundbreaking Loyalties. This heartbreaking performance also garnered her the People’s choice Award at the Toronto Film Festival, an Alberta Motion Picture Best Actress award and Best Actress awards at festivals in Zimbabwe and Portugal. Other awards include an Elizabeth Sterling Award in Theatre (Best Actress - All My Relations), two First Americans in the Arts Awards (Widows, Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman), an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Toronto Women in Film and Television, honourary doctorates of Fine Arts from the University of Rochester and St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY, and an Eagle Spirit Award for lifetime achievement.
Johnny Waniandy was born and raised in northern Alberta in the Fort McMurray area. His education began in the home of his paternal grandparents where Cree was his first language. Johnny learned the ways of the bush on their trapline on the Firebag River, and he was taught to read and write Cree syllabics prior to beginning his grade one English education in Fort McMurray. The curriculum in his grandparents’ cabin included Cree arts and crafts such as hide tanning, porcupine quill work, fish scale sequins, birch bark basket making, and snow shoe making.

All of these crafts were accompanied by long winter evenings of storytelling featuring the traditional stories and characters of the Cree and Metis. Wesakechak the trickster and teacher was a favourite, as were the stories of the frightening, cannibalistic Witago who lived deep in the surrounding boreal forest. The Wesakechak stories were rich parables for northern life that provided entertainment as well as education. Waniandy says, “Everything we needed to know to live well together as Cree people was in the Wesakechak stories.” He also voiced the role of Storyteller in the Winter episode.

Music was another great interest of Waniandy’s as he grew up, and he developed into a celebrated player in the Cree/Metis community. He began directing music at the Lac St. Anne Pilgrimage (now the largest annual gathering of Native people in Canada) when he was just 13 years old. In recent years he has recorded four albums documenting Cree hymns. In addition to the organ he plays eight other instruments including the fiddle, mandolin, and accordion.

Currently, Waniandy lives in Edmonton, Alberta and he makes his living working as a professional musician and translator. In addition to Cree and English he also speaks Chipweyan. He regularly leads workshops focusing on Cree and Metis music, dance, and culture.
Gordon Tootoosis was born in Saskatchewan on the Poundmaker Indian Reserve. Brought up in the Cree traditions, he would become an accomplished native dancer, singer and pow-wow announcer, touring throughout North and South America and Europe. He is also a cowboy — a champion calf and team roper — as well as a social worker specializing in work with children and young offenders. These life experiences offer much for Tootoosis to draw upon in his acting work. Getting the chance to narrate in Cree and work with children was particularly special for him in his role in Stories From the Seventh Fire.

Tootoosis made his film debut in 1972 in Alien Thunder with Donald Sutherland. He has since appeared in numerous film, television, radio and theatre productions. His feature film credits include Legends of the Fall, Nobody’s Baby, Reindeer Games, Lone Star, Black Robe, Alaska, Pocahontas: The Legend, and Leaving Normal; TV movies Big Bear, The Promise, Call of the Wild, Blood River, Last Train Home and Stone Fox; and TV series Due South, North of 60, Lonesome Dove and Hawkeye.
As Canada’s premier native artist, Norval Morrisseau has been a soulful force in Canadian art since the early 1960s. A defining figure of the Woodland style while likened to master abstract painter Pablo Picasso, Morrisseau brings his subjects to life with brilliant color and a deep sense of spiritualism.

Morrisseau was born in 1931 and raised by his grandfather, a sixth-generation Ojibway-speaking shaman. In 1962, he held his first art exhibit in Toronto, and became an immediate success. With his unique blend of Ojibway culture and modern European-style use of color and texture, Morrisseau’s work reached a broad audience. Bringing native culture to life in the art world, he has inspired three generations of First Nations artists.

Morrisseau has said that his art is a reflection of his own spiritual personality. There is a sense of youthful passion in all of his work, despite being a respected elder who has weathered many ups and downs in a long professional career. Morrisseau has stayed resilient through the last 35 years and continues to create breathtaking works.

*Stories from the Seventh Fire* introduces Morrisseau’s vivid and energetic images to a whole new generation. The 2-D animation in the *Tales of Wesakechak* segments are based entirely on new works by Morrisseau.

His work continues to appeal to a broad audience, and is celebrated internationally. In the book *The Art of Norval Morrisseau*, the artist states, “My art speaks and will continue to speak, transcending barriers of nationality, of languages and of other forces that may be divisive, fortifying the greatness of the spirit which has always been the foundation of the Great Ojibway.”
• **Best Short Film** at the 2004 Flicks International Film Festival for Young People, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

• **Best Animation** at the 2003 Japan Wildlife Festival, Tokyo, Japan

• **Best Animation** award at the 2003 Yorkton Short Film Festival, Saskatchewan

• **Best Program** for Children Award at the Telenatura 2002 Awards, Pamplona, Spain

• **Programmers’ Choice Award** (one of only two awards presented) at the 2001 International Planet in Focus Environmental Film Festival, Toronto, Ontario

• **Best Animation** at the 1999 American Indian Film Festival, San Francisco, USA

• **Best Storytelling & Best Communication to a Young Audience** at the 1999 International Wildlife Film Festival, Missoula, USA

• **Best Animation** at the 1999 Canadian Association of Broadcasters Can Pro Awards, Ottawa, Ontario

• **Best Children’s Programming** at the 1999 Alberta Film and Television Awards, Alberta

• **Honorable Mention** in the Native American Voices category at the 2004 Fargo Film Festival, Fargo, USA

• **Finalist award** and **Merit award** for **Children’s Animation** at the 2003 International Wildlife Film Festival, Missoula, USA

• **Finalist** for Best Children’s Program at the 2003 Alberta Film and Television Awards, Alberta

• **Finalist** for an Award of Excellence in Animation at the 2003 Alliance for Children and Television (ACT) Awards

• **Finalist** at the 2000 **ANNECY** World Animation Festival, France

• **Finalist** at the 2000 **Association du Festival International du Film Animalier d’Albert**, France

• **1999 Telefilm Canada/Television Northern Canada award** for “Best Canadian English-Language Television Program Produced by an Aboriginal Person” at the Banff Television Festival, Banff, Alberta

• **Finalist** for a 1999 **Alliance for Children and Television Award of Excellence in Animation (school age)**, Toronto, Ontario

• **Finalist** at the 1999 **Chicago International Children’s Festival**, Chicago, USA

• **Finalist** for “**Best Animated Program**” at the 1999 **Leos (B.C. Film Awards)**, Vancouver, British Colombia
STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE

Flicks International Film Festival for Young People, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
  Summer, 2004

Indigenous Arts Service Organization’s Media Arts Exhibition
  Winter, 2004

Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival, Nevada City, California
  Summer, 2004

Siskiyou Environmental Film Festival, Ashland, Oregon
  Summer: Legend of the Caribou Segment, 2004
  Winter: Legend of the Spirit Bear Segment, 2003

Cine Las Americas Film Festival, Texas
  Spring, 2003

ECOCINEMA Festival, Greece
  Summer, 2003

Freeze Frame Film Festival, Winnipeg, Manitoba
  Summer, 2003  Spring, 2003

Planet in Focus Film Festival, Toronto, Ontario
  Spring, 2003  Spring, 2002

Native American Film and Video Festival, hosted by the Smithsonian, New York City
  Summer, 2003  Winter, 2000

Global Visions Film Festival, Edmonton, Alberta
  Spring, 2002  Fall, 2002

ImageNation Film Festival, Vancouver, British Columbia (Opening Night screening)
  Spring, 2002  Fall, 2002

B.C. Festival of the Arts
  Spring, 2002

NaturVision Film Festival, Germany
  Spring, 2002

Ozark Mountain Film Festival, Arkansas
  Summer, 2002

Queer by Nature Festival, Ottawa, Ontario
  Winter: Why the Rabbit Turns White Segment, 2002
Washington D.C. Environmental Film Festival  
Winter: Why the Rabbit Turns White Segment, 2002

Les Terres en Vues, Montreal, Quebec  
Spring, 2002  
Winter, 1999  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling, 1999

Les Terres en Vues, Montreal, Quebec  
Summer, 2002  
Winter, 1999  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling, 1999

Native Visions - Native Voices Film Festival hosted by Seminole Broadcasting and Eckerd College, Florida  
Winter, 2001  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling, 2001

ANNECY World Animation Festival, France (screening and competition)  
Winter, 2000

Association du Festival International du Film Animalier d’Albert, France (screening and competition)  
Winter, 2000

Calgary International Film Festival, Alberta  
Winter, 2000

ImagiNative Aboriginal Media Arts Festival, Toronto, Ontario  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling (Cree Version), 2000

Sami Film Festival, Reflections of Endless Night, held above the Arctic Circle, Finland  
Winter, 2000

6th American Indigenous Peoples and First Nations Film and Video Festival, Guatemala  
Winter, 1999  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling, 1999

Aboriginal Voices, Toronto, Ontario  
Winter, 1999  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling, 1999

American Indian Film Festival, San Francisco (screening and award for best animation)  
Winter, 1999

Hawaiian International Film Festival  
Winter, 1999  
Shared Visions: The Art of Storytelling, 1999
Concept inspired by the Anishnabe Seventh Fire Prophecy told by Wawahtehsey, an Ojibway from Georgina Island, Ontario, Canada

WINTER

Wesakechak Cree story and B.C. Coast Spirit Bear legend
Adapted for Television by

Gregory Coyes
Gerri Cook

Featuring the Voices of
Tantoo Cardinal as Mother Wolf
Johnny Waniandy as Storyteller and Wesakechak

Executive Producers
Gerri Cook
Albert Karvonen

Producers
Gregory Coyes
Ava Karvonen
Gerri Cook

Associate Producer
Tantoo Cardinal

Music Composed by
Becker & Phillips

Singers
Laura Vinson
Ryan Arcand

"Kira’s Song" by
Ryan Arcand

Voice Directors
Gregory Coyes Why the Rabbit Turns White
Tantoo Cardinal Legend of the Spirit Bear

Why the Rabbit Turns White Based on Original Characters Designed by
Norval Morrisseau

Creative and Technical Consultants
Tantoo Cardinal
Annie Frazier Henry
Johnny Waniandy
George Johnson

Cree Language Consultant
Johnny Waniandy

STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE

PRODUCTION CREDITS
Wolf Tales - Legend of the Spirit Bear 3D Animation
3D backgrounds for Storyteller segments
3D Space Opening/Closing
Produced by Bioware Active Media

Executive Producer  Dr. Ray Muzyka
Director of Animation  David Hibbeln
Concepts & Storyboards  Kelly Goodine
Senior Modeler  Cass Scott
Modeler  Elben Schafer
Texture, Lead Scene setup  Tobyn Manthrope
Lead Texturer, Scene setup  Russell Rice
Texturer, Scene setup  Marcia Tofer
Concept & Storyboard, Lead Technical Animation, Animation  Larry Stevens
Animation  Steve Gilmour
Animation  Henrik Vasquez

Voices

Why the Rabbit Turns White

Storyteller/Wesakechak  Johnny Waniandy
Creator  “Sky Blue” Morin
Muskwa (Bear)  Darrell “Osaw Maskwa” Gerrits
Woman  Tantoo Cardinal
Man  Darrell Gerrits
Girl  Christina Auger
Old Man  Johnny Waniandy
Wapoose (Rabbit)  Teneil Whiskeyjack
Magpie  Christina Auger (English Version)
          Kelly Nogskie (Cree Version)

Legend of the Spirit Bear

Mother Wolf  Tantoo Cardinal
Cub #1  Daley Worthing
Cub #2  Teneil Whiskeyjack
Cub #3  Franklin “Jay Jay” Tootoosis

Voice Casting  Geraldine Carr, Carr Casting
Voice Recording  Beta Sound Recorders Ltd.

Post Production Audio Supervisor and Sound Editor/Dialogue Cutter  Downy Karvonon
STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE

Sound Mix John Blerot, Wolf Willow Sound

Post Production Picture Coordinator and Picture Editor, Wolf Tales Andrew Manske

2D/3D Composite Marv Coburn, Virtual Access, Vancouver

Title Design Kim Clegg, Rat Creek Design

Publicity Larissa Banting, Ava Karvonen
Lava Communications

Production Coordinators Lisa Byrne
Pati Olson
Steve Moore

Production Assistants Jacqueline Thomas
Beth Rosser
Michelle Gougeon

Legal Linda Callahan

Production Assistant Darin Clausen

Post Production Facilities Studio Post and Transfer
Karvonen Films Ltd.
Wolf Willow Sound

Stock Footage Karvonen Films Ltd.
BBC Worldwide Americas Inc.
Bob Landis
Steve Kroschel

Interim Financing Pirkko and Albert Karvonen
CIBC, Sherwood Park

Produced with the participation of the Canadian Television Fund
created by the Government of Canada and the Canadian cable industry

Telefilm Canada: Equity Investment Program
CTF: Licence Fee Program

CFRN TV FUND, Edmonton, Alberta
A Division of CTV Television, Inc.
STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE

The CFCN Production Fund
A Division of CTV Television, Inc.

The Shaw Children’s Programming Initiative

The National Film Board of Canada
Pacific Centre & Northwest Centre

Television Northern Canada

Developed with the participation of
The COGECO Program Development Fund
The National Film Board of Canada

Special Thanks to:

Albert and Pirkko Karvonen, Annie Frazier Henry, George Henry, Norval and Gabe, George Johnson, Svend-Erik Eriksen, Graydon McCrea, Al Brooks, Louise Clarke, Wendy Sulzle, Jerry Giberson, Delna and Barry, the Bioware ‘Docs’, Andra and Claire, Gail Yakemchuk, Terry Coyes, Kandice, Jackson and Sam, Shannon, all those hardworking people at Telefilm West and the CTF

and our welcome to

Baby Hannah ‘Wapoose’ born November 1st, 1998

Storytellers Productions Inc. (1998)

Distributed by Filmoption International Inc.
STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE

Concept inspired by the Anishnabe Seventh Fire Prophecy told by Wawahtehsey, an Ojibway from Georgina Island, Ontario, Canada

SPRING, SUMMER, FALL

Producers
Gerri Cook
Greg Coyes
Ava Karvonen
George Johnson

Featuring the Voices of
Tantoo Cardinal as Mother Wolf
Gordon Tootoosis as Storyteller
Johnny Waniandy as Wesakechak

Executive Producers
Albert Karvonen
Pirkko Karvonen
Pati Olson

Associate Producer
Tantoo Cardinal

Music Composed by
Becker & Phillips

Creative and Cultural Consultants
Tantoo Cardinal
Johnny Waniandy
George Johnson
Carol Geddes
Chris Fisher

Cree Language Consultant
Johnny Waniandy

Based on Original Characters
Designed by
Norval Morrisseau

Adapted for Television by
Gregory Coyes

Voice Director
Gregory Coyes

Wesakechak 2D Animation by
Bardel Entertainment Inc.

3D Backgrounds for Storyteller Segments & 3D Space
Opening/Closing by
Bioware Animation Ltd.

Post Production
Mary Coburn, Mindmill Studios

PRODUCTION CREDITS 6
Voices - *Wesakechak and the First Spring Flood* (Spring)

Storyteller: Gordon Tootooosis  
Wesakechak: Johnny Waniandy  
Amisk #1: Josie Auger  
Amisk #2: Ted Ross  
Maci Manito: Darrell Gerrits  
Kiwetin: Gerald Auger  
Birch Tree #1: Ashley Callingbull  
Birch Tree #2: Brett Tourangeau  
Leaves: Niesa Lazaruk  
Mooswa: Bill Chalifoux  
Wapoose: Niesa Lazaruk  
Big Jackfish: Gerald Auger  
Goose: Sylvia Gambler  
Little Boy: Brett Tourangeau

Voices - *How Wesakechak Got his Name* (Summer)

Storyteller: Gordon Tootooosis  
Wesakechak: Johnny Waniandy  
Creator: Leisha Worthing  
Apakosis: Darlene Olson  
Beaver: Helen Callahasen  
Bear: Darrell Gerrits  
Moose: Bill Chalifoux  
Coyote: Ted Ross  
Magpie: Ley Anne LaRocque  
Little Girl: Niesa Lazaruk

Voices - *Wesakechak and the Medicine* (Summer)

Storyteller: Gordon Tootooosis  
Wesakechak: Johnny Waniandy  
Chickadee #1: Tantoo Cardinal  
Chickadee #2: Ted Ross  
Crane #1: Sylvia Gambler  
Crane #2: Ted Ross  
Stone: Gerald Auger  
Spruce Tree: Bill Chalifoux  
Little Boy: Brett Tourangeau
Wolf Tales: Legend of the Giant Beaver (Spring), Legend of the Caribou (Summer), Legend of the First Thanksgiving (Fall)

Written by Gerri Cook
Voice Director Tantoo Cardinal
3d Animation Bioware Corporation (Winter)
AurenyA Entertainment Group (Spring, Summer, Fall)
3D Composite, Post Production White Iron Digital Studios
Visionworks

Voices - Wolf Tales (Spring, Summer, Fall)
Mother Wolf Tantoo Cardinal
Cub #1 Brett Tourangeau
Cub #2 Niesa Lazaruk
Cub #3 Kolton Lazaruk

Voice Casting Geralding Carr, Carr Casting
Casting Assistant Colleen Mellott

Post Production Sound Wolf Willow Sound
Re-recording Mixers John Blerot
Ian Armstrong
Sound Editors/Foley John Blerot
Mike Sanders

Picture Editor, Wolf Tales Andrew Manske
Title Design Kim Clegg, Rat Creek Design
Publicity Reel Girls Media

Production Stills Dan Powers
David Cooper

Project Manager/Accountant Pati Olson
Bookkeeper Anita Rolston
Production Coordinator, Intern Ley Anne LaRocque
Auditor Donna Weis, Chartered Accountant
STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE

Post Production Facilities  Karvonen Films Ltd.
                        Studio Post

Stock Footage            Karvonen Films Ltd.
                        Global Television Network (Summer - Wolf Tales)
                        Bob Landis (Summer)

Interim Financing        Albert and Pirkko Karvonen
                        Bill and Pati Gordon
                        Beaumont Credit Union

Legal                    Linda Callaghan
                        Robert Neufeld
                        William Page

Produced by Storytellers Productions Inc.
in association with the
National Film Board of Canada

Produced with the financial participation of

the Canadian Television Fund
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The Shaw Children’s Programming Initiative
through the Dr. Geoffrey R. Conway Fund
and the Shaw Television Broadcast Fund

The CFCN Production Fund, in association with CTV Television, Inc.

Alberta Film Development Program of the Alberta Foundation of the Arts

Independent Production Fund - Videon Program

CanWest Western Independent Producers Fund

Developed with the financial participation of

COGECO Program Development Fund

The Shaw Children’s Programming Initiative
through the Dr. Geoffrey R. Conway Fund

TELUS Television Development Fund

PRODUCTION CREDITS 9
Produced in association with

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
TV Children’s Youth & Daytime Programming, Creative Head, Cheryl Hassen

Canadian Learning Television
Alberta Learning
ACCESS - The Education Station

Produced with the support of

the CFCN-TV FUND Edmonton, Alberta
(a Division of CTV Television Inc.)

VISION TV

With the participation of

The Province of British Columbia Production Services Tax Credit
The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit
Dolby Surround

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Storyteller Productions Inc. ©2002
"Technically and artistically wonderful... Greatest strength is simplicity."
The Jury, Missoula International Wildlife Film Festival

"This is not Television ... the three dimensional elements allow the viewer to be drawn in, to want to sit closer, like the child in Poltergeist who could see through the ‘tube’ to the world beyond. Your program actively invites the viewer to ride the story.”
Murray Bruce, New York City

"Nowhere will you find the magic and mystery of myth as exquisitely presented ... the collaboration achieves perfect harmony between the art of Norval and the medium of animation.”
Stephanie Farwell, Seattle Washington

"Stories From the Seventh Fire radiates the powerful work of Norval Morrisseau. With a sensitive talent and technique these tales deliver to young children the wisdom and wonder of the old stories of the Woodland Cree. Funny, profound and richly colourful they both entertain and provide an authentic feel for First Nations mythology.
Penny Joy, Victoria, British Columbia

"The time for Stories from the Seventh Fire is now! These fantastic, traditional tales bring the natural wisdom and humour of North American native folklore to the hearts of kids and adults ... promising universal appeal".
Michael Clark and Patricia Sims - Toronto, Ontario

"A stunning achievement - a brilliant collaboration among talents that has really delivered...films of real impact...a strong frontrunner.”
W. Paterson Ferns, President and CEO Banff Television Festival

“This remarkable animated short film by Canadians Tantoo Cardinal, Greg Coyes and Gerri Cook uses the magical art of Norval Morrisseau to bring to life an Aboriginal legend about how Wasakechak saved the world from a terrible drought.”
Anne Mark, Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival

QUOTABLES
For more information about *Stories from the Seventh Fire*, please contact Reel Girls Media.

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