

Media Review

Film Title: *The Nitinaht Chronicles*

Produced by: National Film Board of Canada, 1998

Director: Marice Bulbulian

Producer: Jacques Vallee

143 minutes

Review by: Schuyler Webster, M.S.W.
Editor, Native Social Work Journal

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Students, Native Human Services
Programme

Comment: *The Nitinaht Chronicles* contains strong language, including graphic sexual detail. Please preview before showing. This video is accompanied by a comprehensive user's guide. (National Film Board of Canada, 1998)

Compelling, moving and courageous are words that best describe this extraordinary documentary. This film effectively chronicles the disruption and fear that grips a small village on the BC coast after disclosures of sexual abuse are made and the community's struggles to come to terms with the aftermath. The access afforded by film maker Maurice Bulbulian into the lives of the community offers a riveting and compassionate account of the private and public turmoil that often accompanies sexual abuse disclosures. The quality of award-winning director Maurice Bulbulian's film is enhanced by powerful scenes that record the tensions that erupt between family members and the community. As the community takes those first steps at breaking through the denial, they begin to explore the phenomenon of culture loss and residential school trauma as playing a significant role in creating many of the conditions that plague the community.

As more revelations begin to involve other members of the community, a critical moment in the film emerges as the Chief, who is also charged with sexual abuse, takes the first steps to acknowledge that as a leader, he must face the consequences of his actions and begin his own healing journey. The Ditidaht First Nation turns to the healing powers of their traditions as a primary vehicle through which the community can mend the lives disrupted by sexual abuse. Anger, denial, acceptance, and a commitment to right the wrongs inflicted upon victims is undertaken over the course of seven years. What is at the heart of this story is the long term dedication that is required of any community that chooses to embark upon a healing journey. The film accurately communicates that while utilizing traditional healing approaches may be effective, it cannot guarantee that resolution or closure will always occur. This reality is the film's most important message: healing from sexual abuse is a complex and long term journey. Victims, perpetrators, their families and communities are all critical aspects of the support that is needed to regain the balance lost to sexual abuse.

The lives of those who participated in this film were forever changed by sharing their story. For those Aboriginal communities who are faced with similar circumstances, *The Nitinaht Chronicles* offers courage and hope.

This film is an important resource for social work education and community-based practice. As Aboriginal based healing approaches gain greater visibility, films such as *The Nitinaht Chronicles* can be used as an effective educational tool for the helping profession.

To order or purchase a copy of *The Nitinaht Chronicles* and other video or multimedia resources, contact the National Film Board of Canada. A free 1998-99 catalogue of the National Film Board's library of films can be ordered by writing or calling the following:

The National Film Board of Canada
Sales & Customer Services, D10
P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville
Montreal, QC H3C 3H5

Phone: 1-800-267-7710
Fax: 1-514-283-7564
Website: www.nfb.ca

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