

Blood Quantum

Press Summary

Feature Film: Blood Quantum

Writer / Director: Jeff Barnaby

Producer: John Christou

Line Producer: Robert Vroom

Executive Producers: Todd Brown, Nate Bolotin, Nick Spicer, Gabe Scarpelli, Ryan Shoup, Larie May, Noah Segal

Production Company: Prospector Films

Sales Agent: XYZ Films (World)

Canadian Distribution: Elevation Pictures & Entract Films

American Distribution: Shudder

Short Synopsis

The dead are coming back to life outside the isolated Mi'gmaq reserve of Red Crow, except for its Indigenous inhabitants who are immune to the zombie plague. Traylor, the tribal sheriff, must protect his son's pregnant girlfriend, apocalyptic refugees, and reserve riff raff from the hordes of walking white corpses.

Jeff Barnaby – Writer / Director (director's statement below)

Jeff Barnaby was born on a Mi'gmaq reserve in Listuguj, Quebec. His filmmaking paints a stark and scathing portrait of post-colonial indigenous life and culture. After making several award winning short films, he made his debut feature film, the cult hit *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*. *Blood Quantum* is his sophomore feature film.

Main Cast

Traylor – Michael Greyeyes (*True Detective*, *Woman Walks Ahead*, *Fear the Walking Dead*)

Joseph – Forrest Goodluck (*The Revenant*, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*)

Lysol – Kiowa Gordon (*The Twilight Saga*, *Drunktown's Finest*, *Through Black Spruce*)

Joss – Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (*The Body Remembers when the World Broke Open*, *On the Farm*)

Charlie – Olivia Scriven (*Degrassi: Next Class*, and *The Next Generation*, *Giant Little Ones*)

Gisigu – Stonehorse Lone Goeman (*The Ultimate Fighter*, MMA trainer of Jon Jones)

Bumper – Brandon Oakes (*Through Black Spruce*, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*)

Shooker – William Belleau (*Frontier*, *Scalped*)

James – Devery Jacobs (*American Gods*, *The Order*, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*)

Moon – Gary Farmer (*Dead Man*, *Jimmy P*)

Key Crew

Director of Photography: Michel St-Martin (*Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, *Bad Blood*)

Production Designers : Sylvain Lemaitre (*The Lodge*, *Turbo Kid*) & Louisa Schabas (*Félix & Meira*, *Boris Without Béatrice*)

Casting Director: Rene Haynes (*Woman Walks Ahead*, *Hostiles*, *The Twilight Saga*)

Costume Designer: Noemi Poulin (*La Voix de l'Ombre*, *Sarah Prefers to Run*)

Stunt Coordinator: Jean Frenette (*Pet Cemetery*, *Death Wish*, *Room*)

Make-up FX: Erik Gosselin (*The Lodge*, *Ravenous*, *X-Men: Apocalypse*)

Mechanical FX: Blood Brothers (*Ravenous*, *Turbo Kid*, *Small Crimes*, *Game of Death*)

Editor: Jeff Barnaby (*Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, *File Under Miscellaneous*)

Sound Designer / Music Supervisor: Joe Barrucco (*Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, *Stage Fright*, *Cheap Thrills*)

Composers: Jeff Barnaby & Joe Barrucco

Visual FX: The Workshop

Production Details

Country of Origin: Canada

Shooting Locations: Listiguj Mi'gMaq Territory, Kahnawake Mohawk Territory & Montreal, QC
Shoot days: 28
Technical Details: 2.40:1 aspect ratio, Shot on Arri Alexa with Cooke 2x Anamorphic lenses

Financing

Telefilm Canada, SODEC, Canadian Media Fund, Bell Media, XYZ Films, Madrona Drive, Harold Greenberg Fund, Elevation Pictures, Entract Films

ABOUT PROSPECTOR FILMS

Prospector Films is a Montreal based media company founded by award-winning producer John Christou. Recent films include Jeff Barnaby's *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, Wiebke von Carolsfeld's *The Saver*, Juliet Lammers and Lorraine Price's *Inside These Walls* and *Last Woman Standing*. The company is currently developing and producing a diverse slate of fiction, non-fiction and VR projects.

PROSPECTOR FILMS

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MEDIA TALKING POINTS:

- Blood Quantum refers to the American policy of determining indigeneity based on the percentage of your indigenous heritage. If you have 51% indigenous blood quantum, you're considered a status indian. Anything less than 50% and you lose status. This practice is used as a tool of political control and cultural extermination.
- In our film, your indigeneity determines whether or not you are immune to the Zombie plague. (possibly first Zombie film ever where an entire ethnic group is immune)
- Colonialism redux –it's a film that uses the zombie trope to re-examine colonialism and some of the questions faced by indigenous peoples when they first encountered Europeans.
- In the age of Trump and walls and xenophobia, our film examines the consequences of hating the other, and extolls the virtues of opening your doors, and your heart, to help people.
- Back to the political roots of zombie films in the tradition of George Romero
- This is Jeff Barnaby's sophomore film following RHYMES FOR YOUNG GHOULS. From idea to premiere, making this film was a 12 year journey.
- Jeff came up with the idea at TIFF 2007 when he premiered THE COLONY. He pitched it at TIFF pitch this in 2009. Now he will be premiering the film at TIFF 10 years later.
- It's breaking new ground for indigenous filmmakers. It's the biggest budget indigenous directed film made in north America (possibly the world). The combination of indigenous storytelling and genre storytelling is proving a hit with international festivals and buyers. We're creating a blueprint for other indigenous filmmakers to follow.
- All indigenous cast, where the indigenous characters are the heroes and villains of the story.

- Film was partially shot in Jeff's hometown of Listiguj QC where Alanis Obomsowain also filmed her seminal documentary "Incident at Restigouche". Alanis's work has been a big inspiration for Jeff. A couple of the films characters are inspired by characters featured in Alanis's film.

Director's Statement – Jeff Barnaby

I was born a Mi'gMaq Indian on a reserve called Listuguj in Quebec in 1976. I have known racism and violent conflict my entire life. In 1981, before I got put into the system, I still lived in Listuguj with my mother and watched from our dumpy basement apartment as 800 plus Quebec Provincial Police and Department of Fisheries officers flooded the reserve, blocking off the only 3 entrance points. I remember it distinctly; I had my superman pajamas on with the burn hole in the arm that I had gotten from an iron, it was the first time I had seen a helicopter. They had come to kick the shit out of some fishermen for not listening after being told when, where, and how much to fish. During the raid, I was sitting on the back of a pick up truck when one of the S.Q. agents smashed me in the face with the barrel of his rifle while running down my uncle. I was four years old and it's the first thing I can remember in my life: someone I've never met busting my mouth for what I represented. They seemed to have really enjoyed themselves.

A native filmmaker named Alanis Obomsawin made a film about the raid called *Incident at Restigouche*. In the film there's a man named John Vicaire that says in Mi'gMaq: *pugumaqan wesua'tu, telimgig nmit'un temapa'qm awti, mut piam siewa'si gi'll na'tel*. "I took my axe and I drew a line in the road and I told them not to come any farther." That old man outlined in 5 seconds what it meant to be native in Canada for the past 500 years. To exist is to hold a line. That has a romantic, noble savage shine to it, like an Edward S Curtis photo come to life to cry at the side of the road because of some garbage. But the truth is, you're not holding that line so much as that line is holding you, and you get held there until you hate the world for treating you differently or hate yourself for being different. You swallow that grief in ways that break you, you're going to drink yourself to death or kill yourself or self immolate in violence or not care long enough and just wilt away. Being native is a world of shit where you pay taxes to the people shitting on you.

Since the Trump election win I have never felt less welcome here in my life, in this time and place, hate for the *other* is at a premium. The bitterest paradox to being native in the 21st century is knowing that you're going to have to embrace the culture that has tried to exterminate you in order to guarantee your own survival. Being Mi'gMaq and knowing the history of the Americas, and having to live in the aftermath of colonialism, there is a vicious hypocrisy to modern xenophobia: the immigrants that came here and murdered the original inhabitants are scared that immigrants are going to come here to murder them. In the interim, native people and new immigrants are getting murdered.

I had a cousin who disappeared, just gone. No body, no explanation, like he never existed. Just a number in the stat line. When I sat down to write *Blood Quantum* I asked if I would trade his life for this idea of multiculturalism, embrace all the aforementioned ugliness that comes with it for this “cat poster” concept of *together is better than apart*. It’s a bitter pill to swallow, and I don’t know if I believe it so much as I need it to be true. My entire existence, the good and the bad, hinges on the idea of integrating into other cultures. The love of my life is Navajo, our son is the world’s first Nava’Maq. With less than 5000 speakers my language is disappearing, as what’s left of the Mi’gMaq nation assimilates into the new world. The ideas behind *Blood Quantum* are more than just plot points to a horror film. The Mi’gMaq are in extinction protocol.

I’ve based my entire life around the truth that art can transcend hate and alter perceptions; I know this for fact because art has done this for me more than once. I believe in the spectacle of film, the pervasiveness of the medium and it’s ability to bring people together and to get a message out there. I wanted the themes in *Blood Quantum* to be a bare knuckled look into the frustrations of racism, to put these taboo topics into the public consciousness in a way that wasn’t partisan. There is no other genre better equipped to keep pace with the anxiety of race of *this* reality than horror, no better trope than a zombie to better personify a culture that consumes itself. Race is a twisted matter; it needs levity and hyperbole to make it digestible. That was the main idea: temper the vitriol of discussing xenophobia with the fun of a zombie film, all the while treating the content with weight and gravity.

I’m a Mi’gMaq artist, man, father, embittered by the new world, and hailing from a legacy of shit at the hands of settler culture. I know that there will be loss and tragedy in the grand pursuit of equality. I know that the survival of being Mi’gMaq, of being Navajo, Nava’Maq, is synonymous with cultural synergy. I don’t know what I’ll lose in this pursuit of the idea of harmony, but I know wanting to take the journey makes holding onto my humanity, understanding forgiveness, and grief, and love and hate, and never slipping into despair, mandatory. *Blood Quantum* is a blood-splattered message of unity from a person that shouldn’t have any in a time of when the world needs it the most.