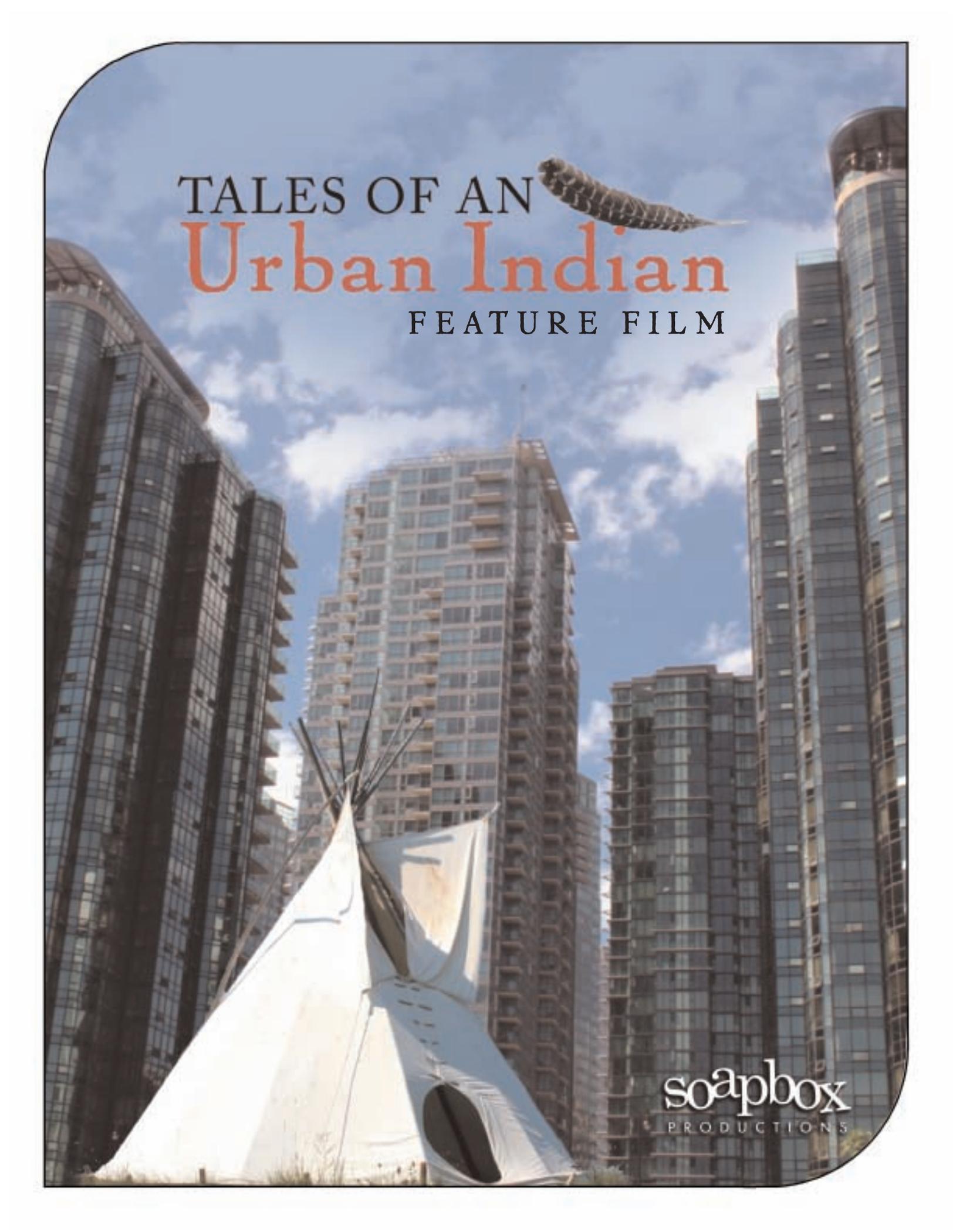




TALES OF AN
Urban Indian
FEATURE FILM



soapbox
PRODUCTIONS



TALES OF AN Urban Indian

TALES OF AN URBAN INDIAN – FEATURE FILM

SMOKE SIGNALS MEETS TRAINSPOTTING!!

The feature film version of “**TALES OF AN URBAN INDIAN**” will be a fast paced, hilarious, and often poignant adaptation of the hit one- man show. The movie will focus on three primary stages of Simon Douglas’ life: Simon as a child (age 7-10), Simon as a teenager (age 15- 18), and Simon as a young adult (age 20-25). The film will remain loyal to the story and essence of the play but instead of a one- man show, a separate performer will play each of the characters. Different actors will also play the secondary characters and the recurring characters will be aged through the magic of makeup and acting prowess.

The film version must have an authentic look so it will be shot primarily on location: The Coyote Lake Reservation and the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. In addition, the look of the film will reflect the styles and music of the eras in which they take place: the 1970’s, the 1980’s, and the 1990’s.

The narration that is an integral part of the stage version of “Tales” will also figure prominently in the film adaptation. However, the focus of the film will be on showing the

The stage version of TALES OF AN URBAN Indian has been heralded as a wildly emotional roller coaster” and the film adaptation should match the tone of the stage play.

actions that unfold so the narrative will be used as sparingly as possible. When Narration is utilized it will be presented in one of two ways:

First, at the start of the movie, Simon Douglas (25) will be seen bathed in light and surrounded by a mysterious fog. He will begin to tell his story which will lead into a series of flashbacks. Each time we cut back from the flashbacks we will see that Simon is speaking to a small audience. The fog is actually cigarette smoke and the light is crude auditorium lighting. At the end of the movie it is revealed that Simon is standing before

his fellow addicts and alcoholics. It is their last day of treatment and they are giving their final testimonials before starting their new lives of sobriety. This reveal will happen gradually and will be used to punctuate the more serious moments of the film.

Second, and most common, the narration will be delivered as a voice over during the flashback sequences for comedic effect or to reveal information that cannot easily be shown on screen. The voice over will also be used for transitions between ages and locations to maintain the quick pace of the movie.

Although these narrative devices are integral to the film they will be only used sporadically to reveal important information or to highlight Simon's sardonic and self-deprecating memory of events.

The stage version of "TALES OF AN URBAN INDIAN" has been heralded as a "wildly emotional roller coaster" and the film adaptation should match the tone of the stage play. The broad characterizations and exaggerated events in "Tales" are a product of the memory and imagination of a twenty five year old Simon Douglas. These memories will be equally grandiose in the film adaptation, i.e. Father Jerry's cabaret number, Fluffy, the talking cockroach, God, as Jackie Mason, etc. These scenes should have a Monty Python feel to them, albeit with a decidedly darker edge. In contrast, the moments of dramatic significance will be presented as they would in any dramatic film, i.e. Daniel's suicide, the murder of Walter and Edna, Simon's descent into drug addiction, etc. Establishing the theme of the inaccurate nature of memory at the beginning of the movie will enable us to take the audience on a journey that encompasses every extreme.

TALES OF AN URBAN INDIAN: FEATURE OUTLINE

Written by Darrell Dennis

PRESENT DAY: In semi- darkness, SIMON DOUGLAS (25) stands in front of a group of unseen spectators. A light murmur of voices is heard. A mist of smoke fills the air. Is this a play? A trial? Judgment day? Heaven or Hell? Simon is holding a bucket of rocks, which he places in front of himself. He informs his listeners that he is a self proclaimed Urban Indian: "I wasn't forced to go to residential school. I wasn't adopted out. I never got sick from a Hudson Bay Blanket... I like concrete! I get lost when I'm in the woods. I can't shape shift. I've never had a vision. Never heard the owl call my name. And I've never cried when I saw someone litter. I can't even make it rain for god sakes!" He reveals that he is about to tell a story that is based on memory, so it is not entirely accurate or fair. History never is. It is a story that needs to be told, not because it is extraordinary but because it is common and it is not told enough. Simon then begins the narration of his life.

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the early 1900's. Catholic missionaries hold a Sunday service for a congregation of SECWPEMC (Shuswap) NATIVES. As the PRIEST leads the Natives in a hymn, the howling of Coyotes is heard off in the distance. The Natives start to snicker, which flusters the priest, so he sings louder. The coyotes also howl louder. The Natives erupt into laughter. Later, we see various Missionaries at dinner, getting ready for bed, working in their gardens, etc. Coyotes howl constantly throughout their activities. The missionaries are obviously shaken.

SIMON (V.O.) explains that when the missionaries first came to the reserve, the coyotes would gather down at the lake to howl. It used to scare the shit out of the missionaries.

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the early 1900's. One morning, an OLD NATIVE MAN walks along the banks of Coyote Lake and finds the shore littered with the carcasses of poisoned coyotes.

SIMON (V.O.) relates that his Kye7e (Grandmother) Josie used to say, "That's what happens when White people get scared. Things disappear."

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the early 1970's. KYE7E JOSIE (60) sits in her favourite chair, swatting flies, and staring out her living room window. In the B.G. her son TOM DOUGLAS (25) and her nine-month pregnant, daughter in law, TINA

DOUGLAS, are engaged in a heated argument. Tom is leaving for South Dakota to join the Native uprising at Wounded Knee. He storms out of the house and hops into the car of a waiting NATIVE GIRL. Tina breaks down in tears. JOSIE assures her that she is still a member of the family and a welcome part of the community.

Shortly afterwards, Tina gives birth to a baby boy named "Robert". The local branch of the Department of Indian Affairs, however, registers him as "Simon." Tina confronts a D.I.A. official who has been with the department a long time, "Since before there were Indians!" He tells her that the baby's name must be Simon Douglas because the Canadian government does not make mistakes. He warns Tina that nobody calls, "Pierre Elliot Trudeau a liar!" and then throws her out of the office. "Robert Douglas" officially becomes "Simon Douglas".

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the mid 1970's. Simon is three years old when his father returns to Coyote Lake for a brief visit. Tom has now become a full-fledged A.I.M. militant, espousing every conspiracy theory under the sun, "When you cross the street, the symbol to stop is a red hand! A red hand of a red man! Don't move forward red man. Wait for the symbol of the man walking to tell you when to move. And what colour is he? He's white!" During his visit, Tina discovers that Tom has a baby on the way, somewhere in the American Midwest. Apparently Tom's mission is to single-handedly replenish the Indian nation. Tom beats a hasty retreat back to the U.S. and Tina has Simon baptized to exact revenge on her cheating husband. At the reservation church, the Catholic priest, FATHER MURRAY, sings an outrageous Las Vegas style number about the inevitable rejection of Native traditionalism and the complete conversion of all Indian people. Sexy nuns in showgirl outfits perform a Catholic dance revue. Simon is then dunked into the baptismal waters and forced to renounce Satan.

PRESENT DAY: Simon (25), the narrator, describes his life as a seven-year-old boy on the Coyote Lake Reservation. The unseen audience becomes slightly more visible and it is apparent that they are seated in a circle surrounding Simon.

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: The late 1970's. A seven-year-old Simon Douglas is swimming in Coyote Lake with his two best friends: NICK and DANIEL. Nick is a chronic overeater with an inhuman metabolism and Daniel is noticeably more "gentle" than the other boys on the reserve. They are pulling the leeches off each other's backs. It is obvious that Simon is living a contented life.

In town, on that same day, Tina is working at her waitress job when she meets ALISTAIR: a Caucasian, Marxist- Leninist, Pseudo- Anarchist, Lacto- Ovo,

Vegetarian, tree planter. They immediately start dating. Alistair is uber P.C. and makes every effort to use correct terminology in referring to “people of pigment”. At a family dinner, Alistair surprises Simon and Kye7e Josie with the news that they are moving to Vancouver so Simon can be in a more progressive environment. Kye7e Josie is heartbroken and Simon is horrified that he has to leave.

A few days later, Tom returns to the reservation for another brief visit and Simon initiates a plan to have his father come and rescue him. Tom does not show up and Simon is forced to move to Vancouver. Before he leaves, Kye7e Josie hands Simon a CANISTER of reservation dirt to remind him that he always has a home.

EAST VANCOUVER: the early 1980’s. Simon, Tina, and Alistair move into the basement suite of Alistair’s mother’s house, HILDA. She is an older German woman who is obsessed with civilizing her new Native tenants. Immediately, Simon and Tina are thrown into a world of stifling political correctness and constant drug and alcohol parties with Alistair’s leftist friends. Tina slips into a depression and begins binge drinking as well. Shocked by her declining appearance as an “Indian princess”, Alistair berates Tina who explodes in a fit of rage listing all of Alistair’s hypocrisies, “How did you expect me to be close to mother earth? She’s covered in fucking concrete!” With nowhere to go, Tina and Simon return to Coyote Lake.

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the early 1980’s. Simon becomes a ten-year-old tribal storyteller, regaling the community with wondrous stories of the white world: “When white people eat dinner, they don’t put out a plate for you, they ask you to come back later.” ... “White people can live their whole lives living next door to someone and never crash out on their neighbours couch!”... Etc. Simon’s cousin SCOTTY becomes jealous of the attention that Simon receives especially when rumors develop that Scotty’s girlfriend has a crush on Simon. In retaliation, Scotty starts his own rumor that Simon is GAY, a natural consequence of living in the city.

Simon is immediately forced to find a girlfriend in order to quell the rumors, so he starts going out with BECKY, one of the few girls that he isn’t related to. Eventually the rumors cease but Simon is still forced to explain his relationship with his “gentle” friend Daniel. Rather than contend with further gossip, Simon turns on Daniel with a barrage of merciless public teasing. Eventually, this becomes too much for Daniel who commits suicide by hanging himself from a tree. Daniel’s death prompts the suicide of a young girl named LISA, who turns out to be more than just a “tom boy” like everybody thought.

PRESENT DAY: Simon (25) takes two rocks from the bucket and places them on the ground in symbolic remembrance of Daniel and Lisa.

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the early 1980's. Despite Simon's shame, he still attends Lisa's funeral where he overhears his Kye7e Josie argue with an OLD MAN about homosexuality being respected in traditional Native society. It is at this moment that Simon understands the difference between being an elder and just being old.

PRESENT DAY: Simon (25) relays the tale of his first sexual encounter to his audience, which can now be discerned as all native.

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: The mid 1980's. Simon Douglas is in his early teens and on the prowl for girls. He and Nick find one in the form of a young girl named JANINE, who is staying with her uncle due to some undisclosed trouble on her own reserve. She is 13 going on 30 and has those "long legs that go all the way up and make an ass of themselves". The two boys lose their virginity to her in the basement of the community hall. The next day she is gone. Nobody ever asks where she is or even mentions her name.

Simon is now a teenager and being bussed in to the local town to attend Junior High where he becomes sensitive to the segregation between Native and non-native students. Simon develops a crush on "the forbidden fruit" a beautiful white girl named KIM and calls her up to ask for a date. KIM politely declines on the grounds that he is Indian. Simon vows never to be associated with anything Aboriginal again! In a fit of rage he opens the lid on the canister of dirt that Kye7e Josie gave him and scatters the soil on the ground.

Back at school, Simon sets himself apart from the other Native students by becoming a class clown. He develops a reputation as a troublemaker so the school councilors enroll him in the drama program as an alternative form of Ritalin. Despite a disastrous performance in the school play, Simon is bitten by the acting bug and tells his reservation buddies about his thespianism. They all tease him mercilessly, except for Nick, who encourages Simon to follow his dreams, "We're going to be broke anyways, you might as well be poor doing something you like."

COYOTE LAKE RESERVATION: the late 1980's. Despite Simon's new goal in life, he still struggles with identity issues and embarrassment of his Native heritage. In order to feel invincible, Simon is seduced by the lure of alcohol. One night, Simon and Nick go on a drunken road trip with the chief's son, GORDON, which ends in a near fatality for the three boys. Fearing for Simon's life, Tina decides to move Simon off the reserve and back to Vancouver. Just as they are about to leave, Kye7e Josie passes away. At her funeral, Simon takes some dirt from her grave and refills the empty canister that she gave him many years ago.

PRESENT DAY: Simon (25) places a rock in the middle of the circle.

EAST VANCOUVER: The early 1990's. Simon is back in the city, this time attending High School. Unable to fit in to big city life, Simon seeks out companionship at the Native Friendship Center but the Natives turn out to be very unfriendly. Simon wanders the streets of Vancouver and winds up on Hastings Street. The skid row community instantly seduces him. There are Natives everywhere, and they are so "friendly", they keep asking him if he "needs anything?" if he "has anything?" if he's "looking for anything?" Eventually, he finds himself in a skid row bar where he meets Walter and Edna: twenty-year veterans of the downtown East Side. Simon parties with them in a skid row hotel room until the needles come out which prompts Simon to make a hasty exit. When Simon returns home, Tina is waiting for him with news that Nick has died from suffocating on his own vomit after a night of hard drinking. Simon is now completely alone.

PRESENT DAY: Simon places a rock in the middle of the circle.

EAST VANCOUVER: the early 1990's. Back at school, Simon is living a double life. During the day, he disassociates himself from being Native by acting as "white" as possible. At nights, he spends all his time down on Hastings Street. We see Tina arrive home one night after a long shift at her new waitress job. She goes straight for Simon's bedroom and pulls back the covers. There are pillows shaped into a body. From the look on Tina's face it is obvious that this is not the first time Simon has pulled this stunt. Simon continues to struggle with his identity crisis until the arrival of the 1990's when Canada is swept up in the energy of Native fever.

PRESENT DAY: Simon (25) describes the "Summer of Discontent" in Canada. There are roadblocks at OKA and across the country. Medicine Wheels are spray painted on buildings in East Vancouver. Natives come together across Canada.

EAST VANCOUVER: the early 1990's. Simon sits in a bar on Hastings Street surrounded by other Native people. They watch the standoff on TV, and discuss their plans in the eventuality that the Mohawks are massacred and a revolution erupts. Simon is forced to ask himself what side of the fence he is ready to stand on?

SIMON (V.O.) describes the entertainment industry at the time. Television shows and movies all have Natives in them. Indians are hot! Images of movie posters and Native productions are flashed across the screen. Simon begins to reclaim his Native Pride.

EAST VANCOUVER: the early 1990's. In class, Simon engages in a yelling match regarding OKA with a white classmate named GERALD, who spends all his spare time in the Canadian Army reserves. Immediately following his cathartic outburst, Simon hears a coyote howling in the distance. Simon is once again an outcast, so he turns his back on school and devotes himself to the Native cause by attempting to become a movie star. Simon lands himself a sleazy agent and starts to work on the many buckskin themed, period pieces, shooting around Vancouver. His audition pieces are literally nothing more than a series of "ughs" and "yips". We see Simon on various film sets, degraded by numerous producers, directors, hair and make up people.

With the money from his film work, Simon quits school and gets an apartment just off Hastings Street. He ends up spending most of his money on alcohol and pot and eventually sinks so low that he develops a relationship with FLUFFY, a talking cockroach and gang leader of a crew called "The Cucarachas." During this time, Simon somehow manages to start dating a beautiful white woman named Brenda. Simon suspects that she is only with him because he is Native and vice versa. However, when Brenda tells Simon that she will stay by his side no matter what, Simon makes her prove it...

Back on Hastings Street, Simon becomes involved in the world of Cocaine. One night, he stumbles across Walter and Edna, standing with a man that was just released from prison. They all chip in to get some coke and head up to Walter and Edna's room. A dispute occurs over the drugs and the man stabs Walter and Edna. Simon narrowly escapes with his life, but instead of calling the police, he runs home to solace himself in some early morning drinking. After twenty years on Hastings Street, Walter and Edna are dead.

PRESENT DAY: Simon places two rocks in the middle of the circle.

WEST POINT GREY: the early 1990's. Soon afterwards, Simon goes to Brenda's house to meet her WASP parents. After suffering through an evening of racist comments, Simon explodes and verbally attacks the parents. He leaves the house to return to his own people on Hastings Street.

EAST VANCOUVER: the early 1990's. Back on skid row, Simon and a young Native prostitute rent a room to do some coke. She offers Simon her needle and he finally succumbs by injecting the coke into his veins. After stirring from his blackened haze, Simon realizes that the girl has stolen all of his money. He runs to an ATM that speaks to him in the voice of H.A.L. from 2001: A Space Odyssey. All the money in Simon's account is gone. Revenue Canada has taken everything for unpaid back taxes.

EAST VANCOUVER: the mid 1990's. Simon has now hit rock bottom. With Native Indians no longer trendy in film, Simon is unemployed and on welfare. He becomes an expert in conning the welfare system to get extra money for coke and booze. We see the comically elaborate deceptions that Simon goes through everyday in order to get more money to feed his addictions.

Suddenly, there is a shift in welfare offices and Simon is transferred to a new welfare agent: STEPHANIE DANIELS, the epitome of Aboriginal, First Nations, Native Canadian, Indian beauty. Stephanie is unsympathetic to Simon's plight and immediately cuts off his welfare payments. She orders him to go to an Aboriginal employment agency to find a job. Simon is immediately smitten and sets out to court Stephanie. Eventually, they become a couple and Simon becomes the perfect liar in order to keep her around. Stephanie is unable to deal with Simon's lies and chronic drunkenness and gives him an ultimatum: Stop drinking or lose her forever. Simon agrees and Stephanie signs him up in a Native treatment center.

As the check in date for the treatment center draws close, Simon panics and snorts some coke. He reasons that Stephanie insisted he quit drinking but she didn't say anything about snorting. Simon does too much coke that night and has to drink a lot of beer to even out his buzz. When Simon misses work the next day his employer fires him and calls Stephanie. That night, Stephanie goes to see Simon at his apartment but he isn't there. She walks around the corner to Simon's favourite bar and catches him in the bathroom with a skid row prostitute. She storms out of the bar and Simon drinks more than he ever has in his life.

Simon finally stumbles home and passes out. He is awoken an hour later to find himself staring into the face of God. Simon is relieved to find that God looks and sounds exactly like Jackie Mason. God berates Simon for turning his back on his Native teachings and insists that he stop trying to be something else. God disappears in a puff of smoke and Simon makes the decision to get clean and go to treatment.

For three days, Simon detoxifies on his couch by himself. He shakes, he dry heaves, he lives on coffee and cigarettes, but on the plus side he gets to experience what it's like to be a fashion model. He even believes that the ghosts of those that have passed before him are haunting him: Walter, Edna, Nick, KyeZe, Lisa, and Daniel. Dead coyotes seem to scurry through his apartment at all times of the night. By the fourth day, Stephanie comes to visit and tells Simon that she will not be around when he gets out of treatment. She assures Simon that she loves him but he must go to treatment solely for himself. Stephanie walks out of Simon's life forever but he resolves to go to treatment anyway.

On Halloween Day, Tina drives Simon from Vancouver to the treatment center. Tina warns him not to spend his time bitching that his mother didn't hug him enough, or his mother never cut the crust off his sandwiches, or his mother never bought him a pony. She reminds Simon that he made his own choices in life and cannot blame his situation on anyone but himself. Simon kisses his mother goodbye and walks into the ROUND LAKE TREATMENT CENTER.

PRESENT DAY: The audience is now completely visible. They are an assortment of well-dressed Native men and women, all wearing some form of leather pouch around their necks. Some of them are smoking cigarettes; some of them are drinking coffee. They are all listening intently. Simon relates his experience of his first day of treatment.

ROUND LAKE TREATMENT CENTER: Present day. Simon is herded into a sharing circle with a group of other Native addicts and alcoholics. It is the same group of Natives from Simon's present day audience, but more haggard and guarded. As the group introduce themselves in the circle, Simon hears a voice he recognizes from his youth. It is Janine, the girl that Simon lost his virginity to.

Janine tells the group that this is her sixth treatment center and she has been on the street since she was a young girl. She has a three-year-old daughter who was taken away by social services and she really wants her back. Janine also has full blown AIDS. When she is finished speaking, Simon and Janine share a moment and realize they are not alone in the world. They have each other... friends.

PRESENT DAY: The last day of treatment. Simon stands in front of the circle of rocks. The present day audience continues to listen intently. Simon is speaking under a banner that reads "Round Lake Treatment Center Graduation." Simon tells the group that just before this final circle, he went down to the lake to get some rocks and made a wish.

ROUND LAKE: Simon stands on the shores of the lake. Mist is rising off the surface of the water. Simon makes his wish, a hope really, that someday a Native child will be born. A child that will live it's entire life without ever once feeling ashamed. A child that will live it's entire life without ever once spitting on its own reflection. Simon hopes that on that child's last day it will hold it's head high and shout towards the creator, in the child's own language, a prayer of thanks for the honor of being born an Indian!

ROUND LAKE TREATMENT CENTRE: Present day. For a moment, the audience disappears and Simon sees himself as little boy sitting in his chair in the circle. The boy smiles for what seems like the very first time. Simon blinks back a tear and the treatment center group reappears. Simon returns to his seat and a middle-aged Native woman stands in front of the circle to tell her story. A story based on memory. A story that is too common but not told enough. Simon settles into his seat and prepares for the rest of his life.

Outside, the treatment center, a COYOTE runs into frame and stops for a brief moment, then it scurries off into the night. A symphony of howls is heard echoing in the distance.

THE END