

Eco-Feminism and Indigenous Cultural Resurgence: *Wakening*

By Bernadette V. Russo

Indigenous cultural resurgence and empowerment has found a voice through eco-feminism, adaptation of cultural icons, and subversion of institutions of hegemony. The film *Wakening*, produced in 2013 and directed by Cree director Danis Goulet, was awarded Outstanding Canadian [Film] at Reel World Film Festival 2014, and received among other recognition, official selection by the Sundance Film Festival of 2014. However, *Wakening* has gone essentially unexplored by the academic community. Beyond Sophie Mayer's brief mention in one paragraph of her text *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema*, I was unable to find any scholarship regarding this film.

In a review of the video, the National Film Institute of Canada states: "The awakening of these two characters is a metaphor for Cree cultural resurgence." In concurrence with this assertion, I contend that the movie is in fact a metaphor for Cree efforts to overcome the oppressive legacy of hegemony and subjugation through an adaptation of a Cree legend and is achieved by the altered gender representation of two significant traditionally male cultural icons to female and the eruption of nature through the confines of concrete and decay, as well as the transformation of a legendary creature known as Weetigo from the role of cultural boogeyman to savior. Through a an exploration of recent developments within the Cree cultural context such as the 2007 First Nations Women's Conference and a close reading of an excerpt from the film that illustrates, I will substantiate my argument.