

Hockey and Horror

An Illustrated Analysis of Stephen Campanelli's *Indian Horse*

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IN STEPHEN CAMPANELLI'S film *Indian Horse* (2017), an Indigenous boy named Saul (Sladen Peltier, Forrest Goodluck, and Ajuawak Kapashesit) is taken away from his grandmother (Edna Manitowabi) and his home and forced into the St. Jerome's Indian Residential School. Although this film is a redemption/coming-of-age story, for a large portion of the film it feels more like a thriller or a horror movie. Blue covers every object and dulls any warmth, especially in the scenes which take place within the school. Cinematic voyeurism is applied as the audience follows Saul's story through the traumatic moments in his life which continued to haunt him into his early adulthood. The traumatic moments highlighted in the film act as ghosts which follow Saul throughout his life, such as when Father Leboutilier (Michiel Huisman) appears years after Saul had left the school and his presence triggers a form of PTSD in Saul. This initiates the falling action of the plot as Saul quits hockey and struggles with alcoholism.

In my illustration, I wanted emulate a horror movie poster. I used a monochromatic colour palette to create heavy shadows and soft lights. There are three levels to the image: background, middle ground, and foreground. The boy in the lower centre of the image is meant to resemble a young Saul, the details in his face and hair are in focus, and around him is a glowing fog

alluding to his innocence as well as the fog that hovers over the hockey rinks. The middle ground features three dark figures, two nuns and a priest; because the nuns seemed to be more interchangeable throughout the film, I covered their faces in a blanketing shadow and only included luminated eyes for facial detail giving them a demonic appearance. In between the nuns a priest hovers over Saul; his features are not in focus but are exaggerated to show that he is glaring down towards Saul with a twisted look on his face. I included facial features in the priest's design because perhaps the most sickening part of the film was the realization that the priest that seemed to show Saul kindness was sexually abusing him. In the background I used a reference image of a residential school and placed it on top of a hill as a nod to the horror trope of the haunted house.

Campanelli's film *Indian Horse*, had an uplifting ending where Saul is given support, recognition, and was reunited with his people. However, in events in Saul's life represent a very reality for the Indigenous survivors of Canadian residential schools and unfortunately not all found an escape through hockey. This film is chilling, and the abuse depicted forces the audience through cinematic voyeurism to view some of the horrifying traumas that the Indigenous peoples of Canada faced in the residential schools. ■

WORKS CITED

Indian Horse. Director by Stephen Campanelli, performances by Sladen Peltier, Forrest Goodluck, and Ajuawak Kapashesit, Elevation Pictures, 2017.

