

Film about Indigenous justice screened at the Glenbow Museum

[Lucas Taylor](#) October 26, 2017 at 11:42 am

The Glenbow Museum will host a screening of *Tribal Justice*, by documentary film-maker Anne Makepeace on Sept. 28.

Tribal Justice tells the story of two indigenous judges, Abby Abinanti and Claudette White, from different regions of California who helped their communities through traditional concepts of justice, rather than conventional law and order.

“State court is about numbers and punishment,” Makepeace said.

“Tribal court is tough love, but it is love.”

In many First Nations cultures, justice is focused on restoration and healing, and the judges in the film were faced with people who weren't bad, but who had made mistakes and were products of “intergenerational trauma,” Makepeace explained.

“It's all about casting,” she said. “Who are the people we're going to follow?”

According to her, a good documentary relies heavily on the strength of the main characters, and the judges Abinanti and White fit the protagonist role perfectly.

“It was inspiring to see these strong women,” Makepeace said.

She noted that both Abinanti and White had worked against the “tide of history” and had the incredible strength of character to be able to rise above their own trauma.

Talking about the struggles of First Nations people and European descended settlers' role in them can be uncomfortable, but Joanne Schmidt, Indigenous Studies curator with the Glenbow, thinks that's why the museum is the perfect place to talk about them.

“People don't want to be kept in the dark,” Schmidt said, adding that people really want to have challenging conversations that expand their views.

“The museum is that neutral space where we can do that.”

Regarding the film, Schmidt said that themes of Indigenous people who are victims of trauma and come from broken homes *are* not unique to California, and can be found in Calgary as well.

“It's hopeful to think that there are programs...to facilitate healing,” Schmidt said.

“This is their land, they are from here, their culture exists only here.”

To build a better relationship with the Indigenous community, the Glenbow Museum has made efforts to ensure that First Nations' artifacts are displayed appropriately and respectfully by consulting with elders from local communities.

The best example of this dedication is in the Blackfoot Gallery, where four years of consultations with an advisory group who chose every artifact displayed, culminated in a beautiful showcase of Blackfoot culture.

Schmidt said the film will appeal to a wide audience and isn't just intended for Indigenous people.

“If you're interested in social work, psychology, indigenous studies, or justice of any kind, the film will appeal to you.”

Makepeace had similar sentiments.



Soul Masks: These masks were made by local children to express their feelings as part of a First Nations cultural display at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary on Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2017. The Blackfoot Gallery was created through a cultural advisory committee to ensure that every piece is respectful and accurate. (Photo by Lucas Taylor/The Press)