



In association with
ARTE FRANCE – La Lucarne

BEING THUNDER



A film by Stéphanie Lamorré

USA / France / 2021 / Color / English / 85 minutes

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Synopsis:

After performing his whole young life as a championship eastern war dancer, following the path of his father, Sherenté Harris, at the age of 15, re-enters the traditional dance circle as someone he had been taught to hide; themselves. Sherenté begins to honor the path of their mother through her style of dance. They are now a fancy shawl dancer. Sherenté is Two Spirit and lives as male and female, asserting the right to present as both.

Wearing female fancy shawl dress, Sherenté performs in dance competitions at various tribes' pow wows. Behind their back tribal leaders manipulate scores or disqualify them outright because of a belief in traditional binary gender roles. In spite of being blindsided by ongoing dishonesty and deception, Sherenté continues to compete in the face of insensitive behavior from some members of the native community. Sherenté's enduring courage and self-respect are met with an outpouring of support from family members, pow wow attendees, and fellow dancers. Their family's support and love present a moving view of what Two Spirit acceptance should look like, and can create a model for others to follow.

Director's Statement

By Stéphanie Lamorré

I have always devoted my work as a director to trying to draw up an inventory of our world by telling singular stories that made visible the complexity of situations and global issues. I found the topic of Two Spirit while researching information about Indigenous women. It is here that I first learned about Two Spirit teenager, Sherenté Harris. After speaking with Sherenté and their family, I decided to visit Rhode Island in the hope that we might learn more about each other; I first met Sherenté when they were 15. As our initial visit came to a close I promised myself and them that I'd return to document the story of Sherente's emerging identity and journey to revive the Two Spirit role in their community.

I saw Sherenté's concurrent challenge of identity as unique and at the same time representative of a larger question indicative of our times regarding what it is to be labeled 'other' within society's increasingly tumultuous atmosphere. Wanting to understand how a person decides to live openly and then does so while actively dismantling falsehoods by replacing them with accurate information, drew me to Sherenté. In this film, with its multi-generational family and following them for more than a year, I talk about the idea of gender through Sherenté's experience and show aspects of the evolution of Native American identity in the United States, an identity that works to survive both by integrating and standing out. Through Sherenté my film tells the desire for memory of a community, the unspoken, its traumas, and most important for the Harris family, not through stereotypes commonly seen as soon as we talk about Native Americans. Sherenté takes us with them to a world of gratitude for their ancestors, and to the challenges from those in their community which judge and discriminate against Sherenté for living openly Two Spirit.

Working alone, I lived with the Harris's and some of their extended family while making this film. My proximity allowed me to reveal a unique environment which continually shapes this remarkable young person. When capturing Sherenté's purposeful life as a Two Spirit teenager I immersed myself in the family's daily life, their culture, and tribal community, which they graciously allowed me to enter.

Bio:

Stéphanie Lamorré (Director/Writer)

Stéphanie Lamorré is a French documentary filmmaker working as an international independent writer/producer/director having produced a diverse array of films for European and American television. Stéphanie spent time alone in Iraq, all Africa, South America and Central America shooting documentaries covering different subjects from modern slavery to illegal immigration. She began her career working in Africa as a writer for GEO magazine. She has lived and traveled extensively throughout Africa and frequently in areas of armed conflict. Stéphanie's style is to spend a great deal of time with her subjects to become an intimate part of their lives, and by gaining their trust and keeping her objectivity, she makes the camera invisible to better tell their story.

Sherenté Mishitashin Harris (Subject)

Sherenté was born face up, looking towards the heavens. From that moment onward they have existed in a place between two worlds, one of earth, one of the celestial, one of man, and one of woman.

Sherenté Mishitashin (“Being Thunder”) Harris is Niantic Narragansett and a citizen of the Narragansett Tribal Nation. They intertwine the stories of their cultural path with Two Spirit identity, to evoke emotion, spark dialogue, and amplify ideologies that are too often silenced. Sherenté’s efforts oppose the prolonged issue of Indigenous Invisibility.

Sherenté works to create change within their Indigenous world, and part of these efforts has been focused in revitalizing Indigenous language which resulted in an invitation to the White House’s first ever National Tribal Youth Gather Conference. They also attended the UNITY conference, where they sat at the 1st ever Two Spirit workshop run by them. In 2018, Sherenté was named a Carter Roger Williams Scholar through the Rhode Island Foundation, and was a 2018 United States Department of Education Presidential Scholar. They have become a 1st place champion Fancy Shawl dancer, and even been honored as a head person dancer at Dartmouth University’s Annual Spring Thaw Powwow, where they danced both Eastern War and Fancy Shawl. Performing the fancy shawl dance has acted as a liberating dance for Sherenté, breaking barriers within the Indigenous LGBTQ+ community, honoring those that have walked this path before them, and creating change for those that will walk that path in the generations to come. Sherenté has chosen to make this change, for their dance is their prayer. By dancing this way they are able to give thanks for living as themselves as opposed to hiding that half they were gifted at birth.

Sherenté has explored gender roles within indigenous communities through project work, and an internship at Tomaquag Museum, which is Rhode Island’s only Indigenous museum, Sherenté’s visual arts have been showcased at the Hera Gallery, the University of Rhode Island Gallery, The

Dirt Palace, Unpolished Legacies Exhibition, and the Atrium Gallery, and Sherenté was featured in the RISD Museum's *Polished Legacies* exhibition. Sherenté's work speaks to their Niantic Narragansett and Two Spirit identity, often redefining gender norms and roles through their art.

Sherenté was a 2019 TEDx speaker sharing their "Complete the Circle" talk and a 2019 LGBT+ History Month Icon. Sherenté's work as an LGBT+ activist has been featured in Teen Vogue and in LGBT+ magazines and publications around the world.

During the pandemic, Sherenté collaborated with the fashion brand Club Monaco for Pride 2020. They have been a guest speaker on countless LGBT+ and Indigenous forums including the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and The Center for Native Youth, and they serve on Rhode Island's LGBTQ+ Community Archives Advisor Board. Sherenté was nominated as a 2021 Advocate Magazine Champion of Pride.

Sherenté is a fourth year dual degree student at Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design.

Ael Dallier Vega (Editor)

Ael Dallier Vega grew up between Guyana, Mali, the West Indies, France and England. She studied film theory in Paris and filmmaking in Cuba, where she learned film editing at the EICTV in San Antonio de los Baños. Since 2004, she's been editing short, feature, fiction and documentary films; music, fashion, dance videos and video art. Choosing multidisciplinary form has been part of her ongoing commitment to believing in life encounters with directors, artists and producers of all genders. She has accompanied films by Mati Diop (*Atlantics* - 2019), Daniele Luchetti (*Lacci* - 2020), Benjamin Crotty, Jérôme Clément-Wilz, Marie Losier (*Cassandro, the Exotico!* - 2018), Gabriel Abrantes, Julien Prévieux, among others. She has edited numerous award-winning and nominated films at international film festivals such as Cannes, the Venice Mostra, Locarno, Toronto, BFI London, Cinéma du Réel, IDFA, FIPA, Rotterdam, Viennale, Mar del Plata, Ficunam, Morelia, Dubai, Busan, Doc Lisboa, MoMa, Tate Modern, Prix Marcel Duchamp 2014, Palazzo Grassi, NYFF, and New Films New Directors.

Credits

A film written and directed by Stéphanie Lamorré

Producers

Marc Berdugo

Barbara Conforti

Mae Gammino

Video and sound

Stéphanie Lamorré / Pumpernickel Films

Editing

Ael Dallier Vega

Original Music

Composed by Nicolas Baby

Performed by Nicolas Baby and Rebecca Baby

Color correction

Sasha Savic

Audio mixing and sound effects

Vincent Pateau - Cinq sur Sync

Additional music

“Appât”

Composed by Nicolas Baby

From the film original soundtrack “Pseudonyme” directed by Thierry Sebban

(p) 2014 Diabolo films

© 2014 Tuvache Music / Statica

Post-production

Isabelle Bocquet

Denis Waldburger

Production

Frédérique Pittau

Félix Le Cornec

Special thanks to

The Harris Family
The Spears family
Tomaquag museum
Reign Man and Brent
The Rhode Island Narragansett community
Aude Corai-Lopez
Susan Rittscher
Nolan Ryan
Suzanne Richiardone
Sasha Tsakirides
Alican Taylan
Tracie Wiliams
Mani Mortazavi
Andrea Queralt Lange
David Mathieu-Mathias
Lauren Janos
Alain Garcia
Rafael Torres
Christophe Laurans

A production

Magneto prod
Marc Berdugo
Elfriede Leca
Serge Khalfon

&

Gammino Creative Group
Mae Gammino

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Fabrice Puchault

Commissioning editor
Rasha Salti

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