

THE FRONT

AMANDA STRONG / SPOTTED FAWN PRODUCTIONS

Still frame, *Biidaaban* (2018). Stop motion animation, 19 minutes.

Freely available: <https://gem.cbc.ca/media/cbc-arts-specials/season-1/episode-6/38e815a-0126c6e69c>.

THE STRIKING COVER IMAGE is a frame from the most recent stop-motion animation *Biidaaban* (The Dawn Comes, 2018) by Amanda Strong, an award-winning filmmaker, artist, and writer of Métis, Cree, and Anishinaabe ancestry. The story – powered by the words of Anishinaabe writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson – follows Biidaaban, an Indigenous gender-fluid youth, and Sabe, a 10,000-year-old shape-shifter, who connect with each other in the isolating suburbs of Ontario, Canada. Together, they set out to reclaim and revitalize their ancestors' practice of harvesting sap to produce syrup from the maple trees. As they undertake their task, Biidaaban sees ancestral beings, Ghost Caribou and Ghost Wolf, who inhabit and roam the alienating and gentrified urban landscape that has replaced their natural habitats. This animated story, which interweaves the Indigenous past with contemporary issues – highlighting the plight of threatened species and fragile ecologies – is a call for us all to act, to respect and protect the environment, its precious living beings and original custodians.

Amanda Strong is the owner and director of Spotted Fawn Productions, an animation and media-based studio currently located in Vancouver on unceded Coast Salish territory. Her interdisciplinary, creative, and collaborative practice critically engages with colonial histories, past and present, and through its stunning aesthetics – of visual imagery, multilingual audio, and sound – asserts the power of Indigenous storytelling, cultural resilience, and language reclamation. In recognition of her outstanding work, Amanda has received numerous grants and awards from organizations, including the National Film Board (NFB), Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, BC Arts Council, Creative BC, Telus, and CBC. Her works have been screened internationally at the Festival de Cannes, Toronto International Film

Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, and Ottawa International Animation Festival. Amanda's powerful stop-motion animations including *Four Faces of the Moon* (2016) and *Biidaaban* (2018) and related multimedia artworks and sets have been exhibited in museums and galleries in Canada and the United States.