

# First Haida-language feature film previewed on home turf ahead of TIFF



Haida cast speaks only in the Haida language in *Edge of the Knife*

Laura Sciarpetti · Posted: Sep 02, 2018 6:58 PM PT | Last Updated: September 2, 2018



Traditional Haida carvers arrive ahead of a ceremonial Totem Pole raising. While Haida art has made a resurgence, the Haida language is endangered and fewer than 20 people speak it fluently. (Glen Kugelstadt/CBC)

The first feature film to be made entirely in the Haida language will be shown at the Toronto International Film Festival next week. But one of the directors says the film's Haida Gwaii debut will mean more.

"Toronto is quite a world away from Haida Gwaii. And we wanted the people that were involved in putting it together to get a chance to preview the film before the wide world got to see it," *Edge of the Knife* co-director Gwaai Edenshaw told [Daybreak North](#) guest host Andrew Kurjata.

- [Haida goes Hollywood: Making a film — and trying to save a language](#)

The film stars a Haida cast, speaking in dialects of the Haida language. Edenshaw showed the film this weekend on Haida Gwaii. Family members were to attend some of those screenings, who Edenshaw describes as the critics who matter most.

"If the Toronto Sun says they don't like it, I can live with that. But if [my aunt] is coming at me, well then I'll be running scared."

The film is inspired by a traditional Haida legend about a man who becomes stranded on an island after being washed up at sea. He transforms into the character Gaagiid, or Wildman.



The script for the film was translated to include various Haida dialects. (Glen Kugelstadt/CBC)

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# All Haida

Having a Haida cast was extremely important to Edenshaw.

"I just don't know if other people would have the same kind of commitment and desire to see this thing done right," he said.

"The idea of creating this film was also about creating some capacity within our community for filmmaking ... getting Haidas seen and working within all aspects of this movie."

- [\*\*TIFF 2018: CBC Indigenous lists 6 films to watch\*\*](#)

While many Haida people will be able to relate to the heroes in *Edge of the Knife*, Edenshaw says that anyone can find something in the film to relate to.

"I think there are universalities in the Gaagiid stories."



The \$1.8-million film was shot during the summer on Haida Gwaii after locals went through intensive language training. (Glen Kugelstadt/CBC)

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West Coast Indigenous peoples are not often depicted in film, says Edenshaw. He is looking forward to audiences being exposed to the coastal landscape and its Haida peoples.

***Listen to the full interview:***

CBC's Andrew Kurjata speaks to Gwaii Edenshaw, the co-director of 'Edge of the Knife' about making a movie with a Haida cast, in the Haida language and why he's more nervous about showing it to his aunties than he is about the Toronto International Film Festival. 13:08

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