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## Now is the Time

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## Now is the Time

### Abstract

This is a film review of *Now is the Time* (2019) directed by Christopher Auchter.

### Keywords

Cultural Genocide, Totem Poles, Indigenous communities, Haida

### Author Notes

Jodi McDavid is an instructor in folklore and gender and women's studies at Cape Breton University.



**Now is the Time (2019) dir. Christopher Auchter**

This 16-minute short is a statement on tradition, loss, and reclamation. It can be viewed as a moment in time that captures an important cultural event, the raising of the first totem pole in 100 years in the Indigenous community of Massett, on Canada's west coast.. But, for anyone thinking critically, the event responds to a cultural genocide against the Haida specifically, and Indigenous people in Canada in general. Robert Davidson, a Haida youth, had gone to museums and seen totem poles, and wondered why he had never seen one in his community. The lack of these material artefacts created a void in the community, especially among the elders. The elders taught him the songs and dances (and engineering) required for the process, but the practice of carving and erecting totem poles had been prohibited by religious leaders and the Indian Act. These sanctions impacted the importance of all cultural practices, and specifically ceremony, song and dance in the community.

The reason that this short, largely based in 1969, is still relevant is because Indigenous people in Canada are still fighting this battle today. Many were removed from their home

communities and put in Residential Schools where they were tortured (starved, sexually abused, beaten), separated from their culture and forced to reject their heritage through social pressure, law, and abuse. The content of this film is very relevant today, and the story is told in an important way that shows the empowerment of the community and its willingness to work together, across clans and intergenerationally.

The artistic choices made by Auchter (also a member of the Haida community) honor the subject matter and will appeal to various audiences. The 1969 film is hyper colour-saturated, and the film uses “quirky” animation and traditional language in parts for emphasis. Overall this would be a great introduction to some of these topics in a classroom setting.