




April 2022

Long Line of Ladies

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Recommended Citation

Blizek, William L. (2022) "Long Line of Ladies," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 26: Iss. 1, Article 26.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.26.01.016>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol26/iss1/26>

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Long Line of Ladies

Abstract

This is a film review of *Long Line of Ladies* (2022), directed by Rayka Zehtabchi and Shaandiin Tome.

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Author Notes

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of the *Continuum Companion to Religion and Film* (2009).



Long Line of Ladies (2022), dir. Rayka Zehtabchi,¹ Shaandiin Tome

The Flower Dance Ceremony was given to the Karuk people² by the creator as a way of publicly celebrating a young girl's first period. The ceremony was practiced for generations, until the Gold Rush, when Native American women and girls became victims of sexual violence. Miners were thought to have come to the ceremony only to kidnap and rape the young Native girls.

After years, the Flower Dance was again practiced, but not in public. Then in the 1990s, a group of Karuk people began practicing the Flower Dance Ceremony again as a public celebration. This film shows the path of one young girl on her way to womanhood. This young lady is the next in a long line of ladies (who are one part river, one part land) and she will not be the last.

The ceremony lasts four days. The young girl is blindfolded and taken into the woods by her guide where she is to reflect upon herself, upon who she is. The blindfold allows her to feel the world, to feel what the earth feels. The young girl finds strength in herself, strength that she

can call on throughout her life. The guide indicates that someone from the family or community will always be with the young girl. The dancer enters the woods a young girl and is reborn as a woman. The public nature of the ceremony means that the transition from girl to woman is acknowledged by her family and the community, including the men.

The movie shows once again how badly Native peoples have been treated over many years. It also shows the power of a ritual to strengthen a young girl and to bring a family and a community together.

¹ One of the directors of the film, Rayka Zehtabchi, is the first Iranian woman to win an Oscar, for her Netflix film *Period. End of Sentence.*

² The Karuk Tribe is a federally recognized Indian tribe. These indigenous people are located in the northwest corner of California.