

## ***THE BALLAD***

*The Ballad* is a work by Pilobolus and Darlene Kascak, traditional Storyteller and member of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation. The word Schaghticoke means “Gathered Waters” or where two waters or rivers meet.

The dance features the stories and storytelling by Darlene Kascak. We have woven different story lines together in the narration for this piece. The atmosphere and action in the dance changes along with changes in the soundscore. I believe this makes it difficult to read the transcript without a key for what lines go with which story and timeline.

Some of the lines have been treated in production to create effects. For example, the word history repeats several times to evoke the idea that history repeats itself and goes way back.

[Listen along on YouTube](#)

### **Transcript Key**

The Opening and Closing sections are blue. It is lyrical and relaxed. We are painting a picture for the audience. Nature is all around us. It is the opening and the end of *The Ballad*. Blue coded text is hopeful and compassionate. It is an antidote to the Wendigo nature.

The Wendigo section is rose. This is a scary story. It describes the attributes and qualities of the Wendigo monster. This section begins with a big shift in energy. Things get dark. It is the storm that was mentioned in the opening.

The Boarding Schools and Foster Homes Section is yellow. It talks about the atrocities of boarding schools on native children, and it also tells Darlene’s story of being sent to foster care. Its verbal tone is like...how did this happen? “It doesn’t make any sense.”

## Color Coded Transcript:

There's many ways to tell stories.

And you learn lessons from those stories, valuable lessons. And that's how you teach children from one generation to the next is by sharing those stories.

I'm just in awe thinking about the thousands of years that my ancestors have been walking on the same lands that I've been walking on, you know, it just, it gives me a sense of place. You know, it gives me a sense of where I stand in history as well.

Our creation story is of SkyWoman falling and all the animals below aid her in her flight down and out of respect and gratitude. She uses the dirt that they bring back up to cover the back of a turtle to create the turtle island that we live on today. And she shares those seeds from the sky world. And that's how we got all these beautiful plants and trees and things that we have today.

So the, so it brings me to the power of living beings, living things, trees, plants, and such. You could learn so much just by observing and watching,

***FOREBODING SOUND EFFECT...the sense that a storm is coming from somewhere. Something ominous is in the air. Something wicked this way comes, kind of feeling.***

You could tell when a storm is coming, by the way the animals are behaving, like everything is interconnected, even though they may not speak the same language to each other, you know, they understand the same things.

You know, we're so caught up in our own worlds that we're not looking at all of that around us. Losing an opportunity to help each other, you know, and, and bring people back together and to balance again,

They're just worried about their needs right now.

During the Hunger Moon. When a season of famine and extreme need was common during the harsh winters in North America our people told a story of the Wendigo.

The legend of the Wendigo is in fact, one of the oldest manifestations of a taboo to most native societies, **cannibalism**, it was forbidden to resort to this practice.

Even out of desperation, this dishonorable act eating human flesh was a way of invoking the wind to go and having its spirit possess you.

Wendigo are not born. They are made. Wendigo is a human being who has become a cannibal monster. And its bite will transform victims into cannibals too.

(The words “screeching sound” have an effect on the dancers, and Darlene did a separate take of this word to emphasize it. After the phrase “dead in their tracks,” it's like the air goes out of the room.)

It had a **screeching sound** that would stop people dead in their tracks.

it was just so blood curdling,

Paralyze you. Yeah. Making it easier for him to catch you.

So they came up with these boarding schools where they would take children from native communities, place them in these boarding schools where they wouldn't see their families until they were 21.

As soon as they got there, they would cut their hair, take away their clothing, de-lice them with kerosene or, you know if they spoke their language, they were beaten.

There was rapes, there were murders. There was - - -testing.

If a girl went in for appendicitis, she came out sterilized like, you know, and that happened over and over again.

Also separating children from their families was a big issue as well. Once again, the more you separate the next generation from the land, the quicker you could steal the land.

So those children for sometimes no reason at all were taken from their families  
and put into non-native foster homes.

It is said that the Wendigo grows each time it eats.

I was seven,

It could be 10 feet tall

We were raised with my grandmother, my entire life.

That was our home.

That was our address.

with frost white hair,

My mother got arrested,

its arms are like tree trunks

She was on that list of activists that.

feet as big as snow shoes,

one step over the line

giving it the ability to travel during blizzards of the hunger moon stalking us.

they took my sister away and myself,

Its heart is made of ice.

and they put us in foster homes.

and Its breath is hideous

Didn't make any sense.

yellow fangs hang from the mouth.

It's not like we were orphans because my mother got arrested.

Its mouth is raw where it had chewed its lips off from hunger.

Actually bounced from a few stranger families.

The more the windigo eats, the more ravenous it becomes.

Was about a year and a half or so.

The Wendigo will never enter the spirit world  
 and will suffer eternal pain of need and hunger that will never be satisfied.

So the native community banded together and helped get the lawyers and such  
 to get us, you know, put back into my grandmother's home.  
 With each family, I would go to a different church.

Everyone, whatever your color, whatever your race,  
 you know you know, we're all in this together,  
 you know, we are all Americans now, right?

You know, it, it exposed me to something that,  
 you know, I'd never been exposed to before,

once again, looking at the positive,

Wendigo was a human who selfishness has overpowered their self control to the point  
 that satisfaction is no longer possible.

How you got here to be an American, you know, it might be different, but  
 we all share that same common love for this country.

So now my life is this blend of native, traditional beliefs and Christianity.  
 And it's what I'm comfortable with.  
 I've taken little bits and pieces here and there.  
 And, you know, that's how I define myself, you know?

The Wendigo is **still alive** and is part of our society. Today.

Some people were here since time immortal. Like my ancestors,

Multi international corporations have spawned a new breed of Windigo

others came here escaping horrible conditions, someplace else, wanting to start a new life for themselves and their families.

that insatiably devours the earth and its natural resources, not for need, but for greed

And it was no Disney cruise to get over here. You know, it took a lot of courage and faith and resilience to survive those journeys. And then there's other people that came here against their will being used as slaves, never to see their homelands again.

Our people sometimes perform a ceremony, ceremonial dance during times of famine to reinforce the seriousness of the Windigo taboo

the trees, the plants, the animals, the fish, the bugs, they were all here before us.

We're the newcomers.

the ceremony involved wearing a mask

in the, the web of life,

and dancing backwards

we are not more important than anything else that we are equal.

around the drum.

And we need to find our place in that web.

Perhaps it is time for us humans to take some steps backwards

And each and every living thing can teach you a lesson.

From our insatiable hunger and greed

in order to restore balance in mother earth.

So things come full Circle.

Once again.

So I think we have to take care of everyone in order to also take care of ourselves. And that includes the animal people, the plants, the trees, the land, you know, we have to take care of it all, so it can take care of us.