

Tomson Highway: Permanent Astonishment

A THEATRICAL DOCUMENTARY

Author, composer, two-spirit, playwright, pianist, world traveller. Defining Tomson Highway is like chasing a coyote. One moment you see him up ahead on the trail, the next he disappears into the shadows of a spruce forest.

Tomson Highway is arguably Canada's most prolific and celebrated Indigenous playwright, author and performer. His numerous award-winning plays, books, cabarets and albums are based on the people, places, and experiences amassed during his 70+ years on earth. Despite his distinguished career and revered stature, a theatrical documentary has never been made about Tomson's life—until now. White Pine Pictures (*Once Were Brothers, Plastic People*) and Acimow Media (*Leaving Beringia, Truth Dance & Reconciliation*) have joined forces to produce a seminal documentary on the life of Tomson Highway, based on his best-selling book, *Permanent Astonishment*.

Infused with two of Tomson's superpowers—laughter and his Cree language—the documentary will follow Tomson to northern Manitoba, where he was born in a snowstorm, to rehearsals for his latest play, and his home by the Ottawa River that he shares with his partner.

The documentary will reveal Tomson's creative journey through reunions with some of the prominent Indigenous writers, actors and musicians he's worked with over the past 50 years. There will be intimate moments where Tomson performs one of his compositions on a grand piano in a forest, canoes between islands on Reindeer Lake, and visits the theatre where his first play was performed. The documentary will be filmed in the spring and summer of 2025 in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. A trip to Reindeer Lake in northern Manitoba will inspire Tomson to share stories of his childhood from two seasons: winters at residential school and summers spent exploring islands with brother Rene and his father, a fishing guide. The film will reveal how experiences like hearing country music for the first time, going to funerals in Brochet, and hiking through the spellbinding landscape of his childhood continue to influence his plays, books and music today.

Cree/Metis director Barbara Todd Hager will draw on the first 18 years of Tomson's life covered in his memoir, but like one of Tomson's plays, the story only begins there.



**Peter Raymont / Barbara Todd Hager
PRODUCERS**

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WRITER / DIRECTOR**

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