



## The Wind Blows The Border (Vento Na Fronteira)

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**Laura Faerman & Marina Weis • 1h 17m • Brazil • 2022 • Guarani, Portuguese**

This story takes place on the violent and devastated border between Brazil and Paraguay, in the Ñande Ru Marangatu Indigenous Territory - land disputed by Guarani-Kaiowá Indigenous people, who have inhabited the region for at least 1500 years, and farmers who arrived there in the 1940s. Starting from this dispute, the film closely follows the growth of ruralist political power and its ties to the president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro. At the same time, it portrays the intimacy of Indigenous female resistance, with their collective ideals and struggle for the planet. The process recorded by the documentary culminates now, with the possible loss of Indigenous constitutional rights, thanks to the political power of agribusiness.

@ Ottawa Art Gallery (Alma Duncan Salon) Wednesday August 10, 3:15pm

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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How did you come up with the idea for the movie?**

In 2016, we researched agrarian conflicts in Mato Grosso do Sul. We interviewed Indigenous elders and leaders, anthropologists, Federal Public Ministry's prosecutors, church members and farmers who had land overlapping Indigenous Territories (already demarcated) and were in judicial conflict. Then, we interviewed the Silva family for the first time. And little by little the idea of making a documentary that had both points of view emerged. So, in addition to accompanying the Guarani-Kaiowá leadership Alenir Aquino Ximendes, we recorded the lawyer and land heiress Luana Ruiz Silva.

### **Why did you choose to work with the Guarani-Kaiowá Indigenous People?**

The Guarani-Kaiowá are the second largest Indigenous population in Brazil. They live in Mato Grosso do Sul, the state with the highest concentration of private lands in the country (92%). 83% of these private lands are large estates. Due to massive deforestation and evictions, they live in areas very close to urban centres, sometimes camped on roadsides that flank their ancestral lands. Thus, they assimilated habits and use products from non indigenous society, without feeling less Indigenous. They are frequent targets of prejudice both because they are Indigenous and because they do not correspond to the image of the idealized Indigenous, having their identity, as well as their rights, constantly questioned. We chose to work with them to question the stereotype that Indigenous peoples are only found in Brazilian forests. More than a half of the approximately 1 million Brazilian Indigenous peoples inhabit areas close to urban centres.

### **How was your relationship with Indigenous and farmers characters?**

Over the course of the years, we built a close relationship with the protagonist Alenir Aquino Ximendes, her family and community. This allowed an intimate portrait of her life and her struggle for the ancestral lands of her people. In a less intimate and more formal way, over the years our team has gained ground with the family of non- Indigenous landowners. This allowed us to record testimonials that go beyond what they often say to the cameras.

### **Why two women as main characters?**

This is a story that features two central female characters, who lead the narrative and confront their world-views. With two female directors, this choice is not casual: We intend to take a different look at a universe often portrayed by men and about men.

### **What is at stake in the film?**

The film clearly opposes the points of view of the two characters: More than a land in conflict, what is in dispute are two opposing proposals for the world. On the one hand, the idea of life in community, of the common good and respect for all beings. On the other hand, the right to private property above all other rights, and the use of land in the service of profit, even if it means destroying

### **Could you tell us more about the Guarani-Kaiowá struggle?**

The Guarani-Kaiowá are one of the 8 Indigenous Peoples of Mato Grosso do Sul, a Brazilian state that has 36 million hectares, 92% of which are private lands. Only 2.2% of the state's territory corresponds to Indigenous Territories. The process of expulsion of the Guarani-Kaiowá from their sacred lands began at the end of the Paraguayan War (1864-1870), and more markedly during the "March to the West" (1937-1945), when the Brazilian dictator Getúlio Vargas called for the colonization of that region.

The Guarani-Kaiowá were expelled from their ancestral territories and transferred to government concentration camps for Indigenous Peoples, called "reservations". The "reservations" were headed by non-Indigenous government officials who repressed Indigenous' customs and languages and had the mission of turning the Indigenous Peoples into "civilized" working class members. The Indigenous could not leave those spaces, under penalty of imprisonment and torture, and their lands were taken by farmers - who today are the political and economic elite of the state. Many Guarani-Kaiowá managed to stay close to their sacred lands by hiding in the forests, or working for those farmers, who became the owners of their lands and their bosses.

They were silent victims of the 1964-1985 dictatorship in Brazil, when many Indigenous peoples in Mato Grosso do Sul - this account has not yet been made - were tortured, imprisoned and murdered for escaping the "reservations" and returning to their traditional lands. A strategy the Guarani-Kaiowá have been using since the return of democracy in Brazil (1985) is the reoccupation of the lands that have already been officially identified as part of their territory, but that are still in possession of farmers.

The reoccupations have generated three types of reaction from the farmers: First, they hired gunslingers, who evicted Indigenous peoples from the reoccupied sites, open torturing and murdering them. Second, they obtained Federal Justice eviction orders, to be carried out by the police force. Third, they lobby strongly for legislative changes to undermine Indigenous land rights.

### **What are the main threats that the Guarani-Kaiowá face now?**

The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 recognizes the Indigenous' social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions - and their inherent original right to the land which they traditionally occupied. Although it contains specific guidelines on the five-year timeframe for the demarcation of all traditional Territories, two-thirds of the demarcation processes have not been completed to date. This means that of the 1306 Indigenous lands in the country, there are currently 847 with legal disputes that need to be resolved by the State before they can receive titling.

Today, in addition to the anti-Indigenous government of president Jair Bolsonaro, the Brazilian Congress is dominated by anti-Indigenous politicians. Elected with funding from global agribusiness giants (such as Syngenta, Bayer, Bunge and Cargill), they work to eliminate clauses in the Brazilian Constitution that protect environmental rights and Indigenous Peoples. The proximity of presidential and legislative elections (both will happen in October, 2022) increased the rush of ruralists. The order is to vote as much as possible. In June 2021, the "Constitution, Justice and Citizenship committee" of the Chamber of Deputies approved Bill 490/2007, which amends the legislation on the demarcation of Indigenous lands. The bill provides that only those lands that were already in possession of Indigenous Peoples on the date of promulgation of the Constitution (October 5, 1988) can be considered Indigenous lands. This is the so-called "Milestone Thesis". The law also makes contact with isolated Indigenous Peoples more flexible, prohibits the expansion of

Indigenous lands that have already been demarcated and allows the construction of hydroelectric dams, mining operations, and deforestation of Indigenous lands. It would legalize operations that greatly impact Indigenous territories without their Free, Prior and Informed Consent nor benefit-sharing, and represents a new wave of colonization. The bill will be voted on in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate at any time.

On the other hand, the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court began, in August 2021, to judge the “Milestone Thesis”, but the trial was suspended and will resume in June 2022. President Jair Bolsonaro spoke of the trial as a “war” and said that “Brazil will end” if Brazilian Supreme Court reaffirms the original character of Indigenous rights, expressed in the Constitution. The “Milestone Thesis” disregards the countless cases in which Indigenous Peoples were violently expelled from the territories they traditionally occupied and, for that reason alone, did not occupy them in October 5, 1988. Its application may affect 748 demarcation processes in progress in Brazil. One of them refers to the Nãnde Ru Marangatu Indigenous Territory, portrayed in the documentary “The Wind Blows the Border”.

