



The Mind of a Child (1995) 60 min. Re-released in 2024
 Working with children affected by poverty, racism and war

Filmed in Canada, the United States and Israel
 Winner : Gemini Canada Award
 Available in English, French and Italian
 Directed by Gary Marcuse Produced by Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams, Gary Marcuse and Betsy Carson. Featuring Lettie Battle

In 1985 only two Indigenous children graduated from the Vancouver school district. Many were dropping out as early as grade 5. Why? The school district hired Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams, an Indigenous educator from nearby Mount Currie who had been sent to one of the many residential schools as a child, for help.

Children removed to residential schools are like children orphaned by war
 Lorna turned to Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein, an educator who spent years working with children who lost their families but survived the Holocaust.

" Reuven began his work with children who had lost everything", Lorna recalls: "children who had lost their families, children who had lost their histories, children who had lost their languages."



Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams and Reuven Feuerstein
 Photo: INDSPIRE

Feuerstein's exploration of the fundamental role of the family in cultural transmission and the cognitive development of children meshed with Lorna's desire to help the families of Mount Currie--and teachers generally--to rediscover and celebrate the powerful role they have in the education of children.

"While the background for this film is tragic, filmmaker Gary Marcuse recalls, the story it tells is optimistic as it explores effective ways to assess, treat and heal children affected in similar ways by poverty, racism and war.

View [a 2 minute excerpt from The Mind of a Child](#)



BACKGROUND .`

Overview

Lorna's research led her to Israel and the work of psychologist, Reuven Feuerstein founder of the Hadassah-WIZO-Canada Research Institute which became the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential (ICELP) and is known as the Feuerstein Institute. In the 1940s Feuerstein, at the age of 19, was in charge of thousands of orphaned children arriving in Palestine who had survived the war but were cut off from family and lived on the street

for much of their childhood. Many were troubled. Feuerstein's response was to re-create the support of a family and then, as shown in the documentary, pay close attention to the educational needs of each individual child. He also developed tools to reinforce the abilities of the children by helping them to develop essential cognitive skills that they would otherwise have gained in childhood through cultural transmission.

Lorna brought these tools back to Canada. More than 1000 teachers, psychologists, speech language pathologists and counsellors took workshops led by Lorna which strengthened their ability to assess and support the children in their classrooms. Lorna and the First Nations aides she trained also worked to restore parenting skills and build confidence for adults who had been incarcerated in residential schools during their childhood with few role models.

Lorna's later work at the University of Victoria where she held the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning also focused on the importance of Indigenous languages in the transmission of culture and the development of children.

Widely broadcast, newly archived at the University of Victoria

The film was originally broadcast by SCN, Knowledge Network, TVNC, CBC Newshour, WTN, RVU (Netherlands) and Israel's Open University. The film was produced by Face to Face Media in association with the National Film Board. It has been translated into French, Dutch and Italian. In 2022 the film and more than 100 hours of original interviews, lectures, and demonstrations were deposited at the University of Victoria archives, the Feuerstein Institute, and the Steven Spielberg archives at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Awards

The Mind of a Child received the 1997 Gemini Canada prize and eight international awards for its exploration of the importance of cultural transmission in the healthy development of children. Lorna's work was also noted and recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Biographies in brief

Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams

Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams is Lil'wat from Mount Currie. She held the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning and was an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and Department of Linguistics at the University of Victoria. Throughout her career she has held a number of senior positions, notably as the Director of Aboriginal Education at the University of Victoria and the Director of the Aboriginal Enhancements Branch in the British Columbia Ministry of Education. She received an honorary doctorate from SFU in 2016 and the Order of Canada in 2019.

She is also an educator with many years of experience in Indigenous education, Indigenous language revitalization, effects of colonization on learning, Indigenous ways of knowing, and curriculum design. Within the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria, she created a series of courses known as “Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World.” This program was designed to create a unique pedagogical space in the Faculty of Education where Indigenous wisdom is experienced by students and faculty members alike.

Reuven Feuerstein (1921- 2014) was born in Botosan, Romania and grew up in a family of nine children. His father was a Jewish scholar. Reuven was teaching disturbed children in Bucharest at the beginning of World War II. He later escaped to Palestine where he worked with thousands of children, many of them orphans who had lived on the street during the war. His evolving belief in the critical importance of cultural transmission in the cognitive development of children was further confirmed in his work with Moroccan, Berber and Ethiopian children immigrating to Israel after the war. By the time this documentary was made more than 30,000 teachers worldwide were applying his ideas to education and to autistic spectrum and Down syndrome evaluation and treatment. He founded the Hadassah Wizo Canada research institute in 1965 and at the time of filming was the director of the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential (ICELP) and the Feuerstein Institute in Jerusalem.

Gary Marcuse www.facetofacemedia.ca

Gary Marcuse is an independent writer and director of documentary films based in Vancouver, Canada. With a background in fine arts and environmental planning from Cornell University, he first worked as a radio freelancer, creating more than 100 hours of radio documentaries for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation before turning to film and television. From 1985 onward he produced documentaries for CBC Television *The Nature of Things*, and for the National Film Board of Canada, the Knowledge Network and the Discovery Channel. From 2004-2008 he was a programming executive for CBC Television in Vancouver where he was a liaison for the CBC documentary unit in charge of regional development and local documentary production.

Available for rebroadcast, classroom use and free online viewing

The Mind of a Child / l'Esprit d'un Enfant (59:36) is available in English, French, Dutch and Italian, in digital format ProRes422 preservation copy (50GB), and MP4 viewing copy. It may be viewed online at the Face to Face Media Vimeo site. A 22 minute excerpt and teaching guide is also available. See links, below.

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Links

[2 minute excerpt](https://vimeo.com/744715911) <https://vimeo.com/744715911>

[Website](#)

[View the film English](#)

[View the film with Italian subtitles](#)