



WHERE THE RIVERS FLOW NORTH PRESS QUOTES (1994)

“A story we should hear more about. An unusual independent film that managed to get made and distributed against the odds. This critically acclaimed, low-budget film is unique because it’s an entirely regional production — a kind of “little engine that could” of the film industry.”

–Matt Lauer, *The Today Show*

“Tantoo Cardinal gives Bangor a freshness rarely seen on screen. She is so tough and blunt that when she begins to cry about the children she never had it becomes clear that emotion has been a luxury in her hardscrabble life.”

–Caryn James, *The New York Times*

“Exquisite” **–Scott Foundas, *LA Weekly***

“Powerful and unconventional.” **–Geoff Gilmore, Director, *Sundance Film Festival***

“Breathtakingly beautiful.” **–Bob Mondello, *National Public Radio***

“Where the Rivers Flow North affords Rip Torn with one of the best roles of his screen career and Native Canadian actress Tantoo Cardinal an equally fine opportunity to shine in this modest, beautiful, deeply felt film about a strong man who finally cannot bring himself to accept the inevitability of change. In director Jay Craven and co-writer Don Bredes’ skillful adaptation of Howard Frank Mosher’s novel, Torn plays Noel Lord, a long-haired, aging logger, living with a hearty, middle-aged Native American called Bangor (Cardinal) in the gorgeous Vermont wilderness.”

“True to its period, the film wisely steers clear of highly contemporary environmental issues. The dam builders may be tough but they’re not presented as truly evil. Where the Rivers Flow North refreshingly does not evolve into a predictable David vs. Goliath struggle. The conflict is instead really within Lord himself.

*This may represent Torn’s best work since the similarly rural **Heartland** and **Payday**, in which he so unforgettably played a doomed country music star based on Hank Williams. The film is an evocative, painstaking piece enhanced stunningly by a spare, pulsating score by the Horse Flies.”*

–Kevin Thomas, *Los Angeles Times*

*“...treasurable little first-time indie that features a spirited performance of a complex female character courtesy of the transcendent Tantoo Cardinal. **Rivers** has the atmosphere and sumptuous look of John Sayles’ **Matewan** and a plot that plays like a classic 60’s western. See this film for Tantoo Cardinal!”*

–Devon Jackson, *Village Voice*

“Possibly the best small picture of 1994.” — **KTLA-TV (Los Angeles)**



“Tantoo Cardinal nails her part with such astonishing grace that Oscars should rain from the heavens and fall at her feet.”

–Henry Cabot Beck, Interview Magazine

“Exquisite” – **Scott Foundas, LA Weekly**

“It’s a heartfelt, rustic charmer.” – **TV Guide**

“Powerful and unconventional, this is a remarkable portrait of another time and place. Apart from fine direction and writing, the unique relationship between Torn and Cardinal makes the film memorable, a real testimony to the strength of Indian women.”

– Geoff Gilmore, Director, Sundance Film Festival

*“Set amid the austere beauty of northern Vermont circa 1927, the unusually thoughtful film, **Where the Rivers Flow North** moves at its own serenely picturesque pace. It seeps, it eddies, it trickles. Flavored by a unique, offbeat sense of humor ... director Jay Craven — helped immeasurably by the pungent and poignant performances of Torn and Cardinal — invests **Rivers** with Yankee integrity and tangy, frontier wit.”*

–Joe Brown, The Washington Post

*“...filmmaking at its most authentic. (Tantoo Cardinal’s) eyes speak volumes. Her face is a map of the film’s emotions, providing counterpoint to Torn’s rocklike steadfastness. **Where the Rivers Flow North** is not a big-budget proposition, but you’d never know it from the gorgeous visuals, which manage to be both panoramic and intimately tactile.”*

–Jay Carr, The Boston Globe

“The embodiment of New England’s distinctive brand of feisty independence played against a magnificent background of Vermont valleys in full autumn fire...A handsome production shot with an admirable resistance to postcard beauty.”

–Dave Kehr, New York Daily News

*“With vistas and tableaux alternately glowing and hued icy, **Rivers** is soothing and splendid. The acting is exceptional. As Noel, Rip Torn does his role a service — no one-note noble victim, Torn plays with restraint. His grim and acerbic lumber man is as exasperating as he is sympathetic. Native American actress Tantoo Cardinal is luminous as Bangor, his childlike soulmate. The pair’s relationship makes the film, and Vermont filmmaker Jay Craven is wise to let the plot ride in favor of focusing on the nuance the two generate.”*

–LA Weekly

*“A western set in northern Vermont, **Where the Rivers Flow North** moves confidently and slowly, like water rising, until you’re up to your chin and don’t want to escape. Torn is at his best...Cardinal is the perfect condiment to Torn’s sinewy old logger.”*

–John Anderson, New York Newsday



*“I’ve been talking about movies on this radio station since the summer of 1976, and never in all that time — in all my born days — have I seen so many terrible movies. So I don’t know if Jay Craven’s **Where the Rivers Flow North** is anywhere near as good a movie as I think it is, but it certainly came as a relief. With **Where the Rivers Flow North** you can settle into incredibly peaceful, gentle locations, characters who talk softly and a storyline that respects the characters’ connection to humanity as well as the humanity of the audience. It’s quite remarkable.”*

–Howie Movshovitz, Colorado Public Radio

“Rip Torn is at his bearded rustic best as a Vermont logdriver being forced off his land in 1927 by fat cat developer Michael J. Fox. The relationship between Torn and his common-law wife (Tantoo Cardinal) is unusually rich.”

–Mike Clark, USA Today

*“**Where the Rivers Flow North** is a true regional film, and possibly the purest American example of the genre.... The performances of the two principals are blessed. Rip Torn has played this basic character before (in his Oscar-nominated “Cross Creek” and as Walt Whitman in “Beautiful Dreamers”) but he keeps refining it with inspired details. And Tantoo Cardinal gives an irresistible, Oscar-sized performance as his devoted, long-suffering housekeeper/lover.”*

*“The movie is also a sumptuous visual evocation of a vanishing backwoods Vermont. Director Jay Craven and cameraman Paul Ryan communicate the beauty of this part of the country in gorgeous, spectacular, intoxicating images. This movie is worth the price of admission for its cinematography alone. And **Where the Rivers Flow North** communicates the special character of Vermont at a pivotal point in its history so effectively that it ends up being a strong argument for regional cinema: the idea that an area of the country is best interpreted on film by those who know and love it.”*

–William Arnold, Seattle Post Intelligencer

“The film has a pastoral verisimilitude that rings deep within your bones. It feels as old and wise as the pine trees that dot this film. Credit must be shared equally with the actors and filmmakers. The former — Rip Torn as Lord and Cree/Metis actress Tantoo Cardinal as Bangor — deliver such sympathetic and richly detailed performances that it really feels like these two have shared a house together for years. Cardinal is absolutely transfixing as Bangor. She plays the character as a playful innocent who has surprising amounts of sense and affection.”

–Tim Carman, Houston Post

*“Its shaping of the two lead characters is extraordinary. Cardinal’s Bangor is like Guilietta Masina, a miracle in guileless energy. **Rivers** ought to open the eyes of viewers anywhere to the possibilities of drawing inspiration and expression from their own rivers.”*

–Steven Kellman, The Texas Observer

“When Rip Torn barrels off a cabin porch into a downpour and rages at the sky, or the gods, or fate, “Rain goddamn you, rain!” it will not escape some viewers’ notice that he would make a grand, course Lear. Torn has elements of the mad king in him, not to mention the constancy of a faithful, adoring fool — his gap-toothed Native American housekeeper and mate, Bangor (Tantoo Cardinal), an eccentric soul who provides Noel with running commentary on his harebrained schemes and



balmy behavior. The movie's satisfactions come from watching Torn and the fearlessly inventive Cardinal work together. In their matching Oakie hats and outrageous outlooks, their continual bickering softened by an occasional small tenderness, they make an unforgettable movie couple."

-Joanna Conners, Cleveland Plain Dealer

*"Craven and Bredes' script showcases a knack for unpredictable dialogue... Torn and Cardinal's oil and vinegar chemistry is what makes the coupling so memorable. His stubborn ways are perfectly offset by her childlike manner. [Their] union is colored by poignance and humor. More than enough assets to warrant an immediate excursion to **Where the Rivers Flow North**."*

-Larry Worth, The New York Post

"Achingly beautiful." — Entertainment Weekly

*"... authentic performances. Torn plays Noel Lord, a stalwart logger. Cardinal is Bangor a gap-toothed, feisty Indian woman who shacks with him. Their frontier relationship, an extended conversation of backwoodspeak, is increasingly winning. What counts most in **Rivers** is its organic, languid mood. There's also an undeniably heartfelt power behind the production."*

-Desson Howe, The Washington Post

Critics' Choice — *"In a season of positively dreadful movies, **Where the Rivers Flow North** comes along like a sweet, cozy, refuge. The film is understated, modest, and imbedded in the land and eccentricities of northern Vermont."*

-Howie Movshovitz, The Denver Post

*"**Where the Rivers Flow North** marks the first-ever featured performance by a Native American actress (Tantoo Cardinal). We're very happy about that."*

-Robert Redford, founder, Sundance Film Festival

"This heartwrenching story of unlikely love and stubborn pride was one of the most popular movies in last spring's St. Louis Film festival. Lovingly filmed in the beautiful yet unforgiving Northeast Kingdom by Vermonter Jay Craven. Craven has stirringly evoked the independent spirit that was a key part of the American Dream."

-Harper Barnes, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

*"Stunning. **Where the Rivers Flow North** reminds us that we don't need exploding buses, slobbering dinosaurs, reread Westerns or Fred Flintstone to have a good time at the movies. **Where the Rivers Flow North** has none of the flash of those movies. But it does have a lot of the soul that's missing from them. It's characters will grab you."*

-Michael Janusonis, Providence Journal-Bulletin

**** At the heart of this story and what gives this finely wrought pictorially stunning film its strength — are two people: Noel Lord, the timber cutter and Bangor, the Indian woman who is, in effect if not in law, his wife. An extremely handsome production but not so pretty as to undermine the story's depiction of the harsh forces of nature at work. Cardinal brings a salty grace and poignancy to her performance. It's nothing short of delightful to watch this actress as she burrows deep down*



*into this colorful, crabby, sweet, and tough woman. An unfashionably “traditional” but nevertheless accomplished piece of filmmaking, **Where the Rivers Flow North** is anchored by two rich, wonderful performances.”*

–Steven Rea, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Completely original and fresh. The scenery is breathtaking. Mr. Torn and Ms. Cardinal should be considered awards contenders for their performances.”

–The Washington Times

“A most original emotional blow to the last frame.” — Sam Fuller

*“**Where the Rivers Flow North** proves a vastly entertaining saga, with sublime characterizations at its woodsy center. Watching Torn’s logger and Cardinal’s squaw go at it recalls the eccentric humor of Bogart and Katherine Hepburn heading down the river in the immortal **African Queen**. And the elegiac ending, with Cardinal all alone under a battered hat, feels like the floppy, Chaplinesque conclusion of Fellini’s **LaStrada**. Am I comparing Cardinal, enormously affecting, to Fellini’s waif, Giulietta Masina? I am.”*

–Gerald Peary, *The Improper Bostonian*

*“**Where the Rivers Flow North** is one reason to give thanks for independent filmmaking. No studio would make a film like this one. No one out to make a bundle of money would have any interest in it. Its value lies in itself and in the pleasure of seeing it. This is a wonderful film.”*

“The film has a lovely sense of mood and atmosphere, a fascinating grounding in place and an appreciation of eccentric character. It’s a particular kind of place the movie makes palpable and vivid. The working out of events is like a quiet subtle dance. The film’s spirit is more western than the New England of the popular imagination.”

– Howie Movshovitz, *The Denver Post*

“An intelligent engagement with themes that American narratives have been exploring since the end of the 18th century - what value should the rest of us place on the lives of self-sufficient woodsmen? Do we ignore them or romanticize them? Craven’s film, set in 1920s Vermont, demonstrates that it’s very difficult to do either and keep a clear conscience. Rip Torn’s wilderness man is no cute coon-skin-capped trapper. He’s a man who is both at war with and the guardian of the landscape in which he lives. It’s probably the best performance of the actor’s career. Even so, Tantoo Cardinal outshines him.”

–Film Four, *London*

*“The plot, set in 1927, recalls Elia Kazan’s 1960 **Wild River**—a recalcitrant Vermont log driver (Rip Torn) refuses to sell his property lease so that the region’s first big hydroelectric dam can be built—but this sincere, carefully made independent feature by Jay Craven, adapted by him and Don Bredes from a novel by Howard Frank Mosher, has plenty of distinctive elements. The most impressive is a wonderful, richly detailed performance by Tantoo Cardinal (**Dances With Wolves**) as the eccentric Native American woman who lives with the log driver. “*

–Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*