

LOGLINE

Beyond the typical music video images of girls, guns, and gold, *ALIAS* follows aspiring rappers trying to escape the gangster life. *ALIAS* is an in-depth look into the world of street hip-hop and the hustle known as the rap-trap.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In recent years, controversy surrounding rap music has been at the forefront of North American media. From the hype of the East Coast-West Coast rivalry that shadowed the murders of rappers Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G., to the demonization of the music in the wake of a string of shootings at Toronto recording studios, it seems that political and media groups have been quick to place blame on rap for a seeming trend in youth violence. However, just as rap music is vilified, there is no denying that it has become the main form of expression signifying the voice of a growing Canadian underclass. Raw and uncompromising, *ALIAS* tells the story of aspiring rappers trying to escape the gangster life, while illuminating a side of urban Canada rarely seen before.

LONG SYNOPSIS

The feature documentary *ALIAS* takes us behind the scenes into the internal workings of a world where life and death are defined by the rules of the street.

Often associated with American cities, the presence of Canadian gangsta rap remains largely unreferenced. However, in Toronto's Regent Park, Don Mills, and Jane & Finch neighbourhoods, the rise of rap music has brought increasing focus to Canada. For many who grow up here, rap is the only viable way out – a means to an end.

The struggling artists inside *ALIAS* hope to defy the 'trap' with lyricism, and an in-your-face attitude, but the hard facts remain; they're living a life too close to the streets where shootings, criminal convictions and death are an everyday reality. Through *ALIAS*, we put a human face onto this phenomenon.

Raw and uncompromising, *ALIAS* reflects upon the prevailing social conditions of poverty, black-on-black violence and apathy in Toronto's most marginalized communities as aspiring artists struggle to rap their way out of the hood.

PRODUCTION NOTES

THEMES & IDEAS EXPLORED IN ALIAS

“Every generation needs to be stronger. Music, basketball, even hustling, these are all forms of hope that we can see something better. And that’s what we have, so that’s what we do.” ~ Alkatraz

◆ ALIAS explores how marginalized groups can internalize social expectations (or lack of expectations), and how we function within our own perceptions of self or our ‘place’ in society. For example, lead character Alkatraz says repeatedly that you only have a few options to get out of the hood – sports, music, or drug dealing/hustling. Through the film, we want to see how each character tackles life based on their own perception of what their “options” are.

◆ Every generation gains strength from the generation that has come before. I think this is best exemplified in how we see our characters striving to survive and break out through music so that they can provide for their children. However, they are working within limitations (financial, education, lack of familial support, police profiling, violence).

“Society needs crack-heads and junkies. You need the lower level. Without them, the top can’t survive. You need someone to step on to get up.” ~ Alkatraz

◆ Alkatraz philosophizes that "society is built on the backs of addicts". His analogy is that corporate America is all about selling and serving a need, right down to the lowly crack addict who pays for his fix. If we break it down, all of us have desires that propel us forward through life and look to serve our individual needs. Furthermore, the commodification of rap is just another example of the prevalence of capitalism within modern society.

◆ There is a duality that is explored in the idea of “alias”. We play on the word “alias” as each of our lead characters is introduced in the film through their street name. This represents the duality present in one’s public and private life, and suggests how each person constructs a persona based on their own dreams of who they want to be, even when that might conflict with who they actually are.

◆ Political and media groups have been quick to place blame on rap for a seeming trend in youth violence. However, just as Rap music is vilified, there is no denying that it has become the main form of expression signifying the voice of a growing Canadian underclass.

◆ Stories embodied in hip-hop lyrics perpetuate the infamous “rags-to-riches” myth, and have created a generation of young men with blind aspirations of hip-hop stardom.

◆ Through the film we are interested in creating a true-life reflection of the themes, attitudes, and dreams that are mythologized in countless rap songs. Through the eyes of the artists we explore issues of poverty, violence, brotherhood and street affiliation in an attempt to shed light on the seduction of the great hip-hop myth.

The smoking gun seems ubiquitous in hip-hop culture

Hip hop and guns share a long history. Here are some examples:

Jadakiss (Jason Phillips)
Arrested in Yonkers, N.Y., last October for allegedly having a loaded .38-calibre in his car. Two years earlier was convicted on gun charges.

Snoop Dog (Calvin Broadus)
Arrested last October for possession of drugs and a firearm.



Snoop Dog

Master P (Percy Miller) and Silkk the Shocker (Vyshonn Miller) Both pleaded no contest last March after being charged for carrying unregistered firearms.

Beanie Sigel (Dwight Grant)
Sentenced on gun charges in Philadelphia in 2004.



Beanie Sigel

Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace) Gunned down in a drive-by shooting after a party in Los Angeles on March 9, 1997, at age 24.

50 Cent (Curtis Jackson)
At 24, he was shot nine times in Queens, N.Y., before he catapulted to stardom.



50 Cent

Sean Combs (P. Diddy)
Was acquitted after a two-month trial in 2001 on gun and bribery charges related to a shooting in a Manhattan nightclub that left three people injured in December 1999.



Sean Combs

Earl Simmons (DMX)
Cited for carrying a concealed handgun in Arizona last June.

Tupac Shakur (2Pac): Died on Sept. 13, 1996, succumbing to wounds from a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas. He was 25.



Tupac Shakur

Alias pays price

'Lawless' hip-hop scene forced rapper Donmillion to carry gun, lawyer says. Now he'll spend 2 years-plus in jail

BETSY POWELL
CRIME REPORTER

Toronto rapper Alias Donmillion's success, the "lawless" nature of the hip-hop culture and "extreme regionalization" of city neighbourhoods left him with no choice but to carry a gun and as a result he's now paying the consequences, his lawyer says.

Just before Christmas, Alias, whose name appears on court documents as Randolph Scott, pleaded guilty in Old City Hall to three fire-arm-related charges, possessing crack for the purposes of trafficking and breach of probation related to a conviction in 2002 for assault. He was sentenced to two years and three months, after taking into account time he's served in custody since Caribana.

He was arrested last August at a time when he was riding high.

He had released a new album, had a single on radio, opened for some major names in hip hop such as Mobb Deep and was nominated for best rap

grams of crack. Alias, 31, said he'd been out celebrating with friends when he let off a "West Indian salute," caught up in the exuberance of finishing the video shoot.

It was unquestionably a "dumb" thing to do. "It's not like it was in the woods." He cites a lack of sleep, and pressure. He'd also recently attended the funeral of a close friend killed by gun violence.

"Negative attention" also comes with achievement, he added.

Several weeks earlier, Alias was driving his SUV in the east end when another vehicle pulled up and gunmen opened fire. He ducked and a bullet just missed his head. He didn't tell police because he was worried he'd be turned into a suspect. And if the shooters got wind, "next they're looking for my family."

Police examined the vehicle after his arrest and found bullet holes. When someone offered him a handgun, Alias said yes.

He's not sure why he was targeted but said success has made others envious of his attempt to "do something progressive, especially when you come from a

struggle, a rough upbringing." Alias rapped his way out of the Allenbury housing complex, behind Fairview Mall, with a combination of hard work and tenacity, his supporters say.

His lawyer, John Struthers, told court last month his client was carrying the gun because he believed it was the only way he could protect himself in the "degenerating and deteriorating" culture he lives in. This week he elaborated.

"Unfortunately this guy who grew up in the neighbourhood, tried to write and sing music a little bit more positive in nature (and) ended up being targeted as a result of what amounts to an unfortunate ex-

'Hey, you're that rapper guy . . . what are you doing in here?'

Alias Donmillion recalls a typical jailhouse reaction.

video at the MuchMusic Video Awards. He also performed at anti-violence events.

But just 30 hours later, after recording a follow-up video in the presidential suite of a downtown hotel, Alias "made a dumb mistake," he explained last week by phone from Toronto's Don Jail.

Last August, Alias walked over to his parked SUV in downtown Toronto, pulled out a silver .380-calibre semi-automatic handgun and fired several shots into the air, before popping off three more as he climbed inside the vehicle around 1:30 a.m. Fortunately, no one was injured. Police caught up with him a short time later. They found the gun, spent shell casings and 10.9



Toronto rapper Alias Donmillion's once high-flying career has been stalled since his arrest in August for shooting his gun off in public. He's been sentenced to two years and three months in jail.

> Please see **Rapper, R9**

'He was the best artist I had,' manager says

► **Rapper** From R1

treme regionalization," the defence lawyer said, adding his client has been the subject of an extortion attempt.

"Different neighbourhoods (are) shooting each other up on a regular basis and everybody who speaks about it, raps about it or performs about it is found to align themselves with one side or the other and they become a target."

While the U.S. once had violent rivalries between East Coast and West Coast rappers, here "it's Rexdale versus Allenbury... versus the Jungle and every housing project seems to have their own team and we're not talking about basketball."

David Kines, vice-president of MuchMusic and several of its affiliated music channels, said he couldn't recall any other instance where a hip-hop performer or otherwise in Toronto has been targeted because of their fame or success.

Donmillion's latest video, *It Ain't Trickin'*, has been in heavy rotation on MuchVibe and on RapCity.

"I'm sure all performers of all genres run into jealousy issues, from... neighbours, friends, relatives, fellow performers in that genre. Who knows what form the green-eyed monster will take for anyone's success?"

But not everyone will shoot you over it.

And there is a minority element of people out there who are hostile and willing to pull out a gun as if it was the Wild



STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

Sales of the latest CD by Alias Donmillion, above, are not where they should be, says his manager, who regrets that the rapper's career has been "put on pause."

West, said Mr. Knia, a recording engineer and producer/manager who works with Donmillion and doesn't disagree with Struthers' take.

"It's true and it's so hard to explain if you're not in it," he said. "If you were to spend a day with us, with me and the other guys I record with, go out to a club one night, you would understand. Once you enter the club, (there's) a lot of cold stares... a lot of groups of guys together.

You have to keep your head about you."

For instance, last summer he, Donmillion and others stopped by a club after a performance "to see what's up there." Mr. Knia overheard some guys talking about robbing Donmillion. Mr. Knia and company shot a look back and they backed off.

Struthers said his client was a class act who took his punishment "like a man."

Last week Alias was waiting to

get "shipped" to Millhaven Penitentiary in Bath, Ont. There, prison authorities will determine where he'll serve the rest of his sentence.

"He was the best artist I had, the most focused, the most intelligent, ready to roll with the videos, everything else, but it's just been put on pause," said Mr. Knia. The pair planned to push hard to cross-over into mainstream with a lot of promotion and performing — none of it

possible now. "Right now it's not where it should be," Mr. Knia said, referring to sales of the CD *Music Money*. "Luckily I still record (other) artists... and I manage some other groups, so it's always going; it's just he had everything going."

Instead, Alias has only ever seen his latest video *It Ain't Trickin'* on TV inside jail, where he is recognized by fellow inmates. "Hey, you're that rapper guy... what are you doing in here?" he said, recalling a typical reaction.

To those cynics who might think this is something Alias would have wanted, either for publicity or street credibility, he's quick to respond.

"I don't see it as a positive," said the 31-year-old. Being locked up prevents him from promoting the album. "Time is money and now I'm losing out on time."

His only previous trouble with the law was an assault charge after "a fist fight with a friend."

While American gangsta rappers are often criticized for glorifying violence, that was not what Alias was about, Mr. Knia said.

"Alias's music career I think from the get-go was an attempt not to fall into that whole street thing and fall into the gang thing and he's made the extra effort in the past few years to really make sure he doesn't fall victim to that," he said. "This is a guy who grew up around the areas and made a valid attempt to use his skills as an artist to make a life for himself in a positive way."

Michelle Latimer – Filmography

I Still Remember ('13) – Director/Writer

Music video for artist, Jayli Wolf. Produced by Big Soul Productions for APTN.

Toronto Revealed: 5 Short Films about Toronto ('13) – Producer

504 – director Caitriona Cantillon

All the Same Place – director Tess Girard

Remembering Arthur Goss – director Jason Charters & Liam Romalis

Repercussions – director Terril Calder

The Structure of the Future – director Mark Ellam

iThentic Canada & City of Toronto

The End of Time ('12) – Editorial Consultant

Feature length documentary directed by Peter Mettler, exploring the idea of 'Time'.
Grimthorpe Films, Maximage & NFB

Choke ('11) – Director/Writer/Producer/Cinematographer

Stop motion animated experimental short. An examination of the processes of cultural assimilation and the search for identity in First Nations populations.

This is My Time ('11) – Director/Writer

Music video for Inuit artist Saali. Produced by Big Soul Productions for APTN.

Real Injun ('10) – Additional Directing

Feature documentary – Hollywood's representation of Indigenous cinema & the evolution of First Nations storytelling in contemporary media.

Produced by Rezolution Pictures & NFB

Surviving ('10) – Director/Writer/Producer

Mid-length outreach video educating on Hepatitis C and HIV infection with relation to needle exchange programs in Canada. Included 5 episodes for internet.

Jackpot ('09) – Producer/Writer

Mid length documentary looking at poverty and urban isolation through the eyes of bingo players.

Produced by Streeel Films in association with Global Television & APTN

Encourage the Heart ('08) – Director/Writer/Producer

Documentary mid-length – Educational film about challenges faced by people living with HIV/AIDS. Commissioned by the Ontario AIDS Network.

Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma ('07) – Researcher/Writer

Feature documentary examining medical efforts during the Rwandan genocide.

Directed by Patrick Reed, Produced by White Pine Pictures & NFB

Tomorrow ('07) – Director/Producer/Writer

Experimental narrative short. An examination of transcendence and escape.

Produced by Streeel Films in association with LIFT and ImagineNATIVE Film Festival.

NIDA MARJI - Filmography

Supervising Producer
2013

Flying Solo (now filming)
60-minute documentary
Director/Producer: Scott Harper
Sunday Night Ent, CBC, Rogers Doc Fund, Canada Media Fund

Line-Producer
2012

Khoya (now in post-production)
Feature Narrative – Writer/Director: Sami Khan
Producer: Karen Shaw
Filmed in India

Producer / Business Affairs
2012

L'Adolimentation
60-minute documentary - Director/Exec Producer: Bruno Moynié
(filmed in 5 locations around the world)
Monde Moderne, TV5 Québec Canada, Canada Media Fund

Producer
2010

Am I Beautiful?
5-minute X 11 webisodes (filmed in Uganda)
Director: Simonee Chichester for World Vision Canada

Business Affairs
2009

Jackpot
60-minute documentary – Producer: Michelle Latimer
Streel Films, Global Television, APTN, The National Film Board
**Official Selection Hot Docs Intl Film Festival 2009,
ImagineNATIVE 2009, Yorkton Film Festival**

Business Affairs
2009

Lost Adventures of Childhood
60-minute documentary – Producer: Scott Harper
Sunday Night Entertainment, CTV

Business Affairs
2008

Let Him Be
60-minute dramatic film – Executive Producers: Martin Katz
Director/Writer/Producer: Peter McNamee
Abracadabra Productions, Telefilm Canada

Business Affairs
2008

Radical Dreamer: The Passionate Journey of Graham Spry
60-minute documentary – Exec Producer: Peter Raymont
White Pine Pictures, TVO, SCN, CLT, Knowledge, Canada Council

Business Affairs
2007

Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma
90-minute documentary – Exec Producer: Peter Raymont
White Pine Pictures, CanWest Global, NFB Official Selection:
Sundance, IDFA, Hot Docs, CIDA Deborah Fletcher Award

Producer / Business Affairs
2006

In My Backyard
30-minute documentary
Wonder Jar, OMNI TV

Producer
2004

Career Moves
30-minute X 13 lifestyle series
Take One Film & TV, SCN, CLT

MICHELLE LATIMER – Bio

A Métis/Algonquin filmmaker, actor, and curator, Michelle's goal is to use film & new media as a tool for social change. She is interested in exploring how sound and image can transform space to create a visceral experience that lends itself to greater cultural awareness and understanding. Her films have been described as "visual poems exploring humanity", and are often experiments of creative form expressed from a personal point of view. While her work is informed by her own Indigenous heritage, she is most concerned with how global communities express views of individual, collective and other, and how cultural identity is articulated through these evolving perceptions.

Most recently she directed and produced the short stop-motion animated film *Choke*. *Choke* premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and received the Special Jury Honorable Mention for Best International Short Film before going on to screen at such festivals as Cannes, Rotterdam, and Oberhausen. The film was named by Toronto Film Festival as one of Canada's Top Ten films of 2011 and was nominated for a 2012 Genie Award.

Michelle is the recipient of a 2013 CAFKA/Christie Digital Projectors Artist Residency where she will be applying her filmmaking knowledge towards developing installations in the form of live video mixing and improvisational performance.

Previously, Michelle produced the documentary *Jackpot* (2011 Gemini Nomination: Donald Britton Award for Best Social/Political Documentary), and is currently collaborating with acclaimed filmmaker Peter Mettler to develop a hybrid-genre feature film about Canada's only female dangerous offender. In 2009/10 she participated in the Toronto International Film Festival's Talent Lab where she mentored under filmmakers, Danny Boyle, Don McKellar and Miranda July. She is the recipient of a Yorkton Festival: *Golden Sheaf Award for Outstanding Emerging Filmmaker*, as well as the *2008 National Astral Media Award* presented by Women In Film & Television Canada. In September 2012, she was among 16 producer/filmmakers selected by the Toronto Film Festival to participate in the inaugural year-long professional program Tiff STUDIO.

As an actor Michelle specializes in contemporary movement and has performed in groundbreaking new works with companies such as: Crow's Theatre, Theatre Smith-Gilmour & Modern Times. In 2011 she starred in Theatrefront's theatrical repertory production *The Mill* that went on to win 4 Dora Awards, including one for Best Independent Production. Most recently Michelle is playing a recurring role on Season 2 of APTN's critically acclaimed drama *Blackstone*, and is an industry panelist for CBC's *Short Film Faceoff*, a nationally televised series celebrating innovations in short filmmaking.

As a curator, Michelle is the senior programmer for the ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Arts Festival. She has also programmed for the Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival and is a programming advisor for Winnipeg Film Group's Cinematheque and Regent Park Film Festival. Her curatorial focus has been on Indigenous New Media & Cinema from a global perspective. She has curated special programs for the Taiwan Indigenous Festival, The Indigenous Film Archive of Nepal and ImagineNATIVE's Spotlight on South Africa's First People, the Khoi-San.

NIDA MARJI - Bio

Nida Marji is a Toronto based producer who is dedicated to working on projects that explore social, cultural, environmental and sometimes whimsical stories.

Her current producing credits include the documentary film *Flying Solo* (CBC) which is currently filming, the one-hour documentary, *L'Adolimentation* (TV5 Québec Canada) and seasons 1 through 4 of the series *J'aime les mots*, a French word game shot around the world (TV5 Québec Canada).

She recently completed line producing her first narrative feature, *KHOYA*, for writer/director Sami Khan.

Nida has also produced *En vie*, a series of 24 vignettes (TV5 Québec Canada), the pilot episode *In My Backyard* (Omni TV) and *Career Moves*, a series of thirteen half-hour shows (CLT and SCN).

In October 2010, Nida completed production in Uganda as Co-producer for the webisodes, *AM I BEAUTIFUL?* The webisodes were commissioned by World Vision Canada and directed by Simonee Chichester.

In addition to producing, Nida's company WONDER JAR provides business affairs services to filmmakers and production companies. Her services were contracted on the dramatic film *Let Him Be* and several documentaries including *Jackpot*, *Radical Dreamer: The Passionate Journey of Graham Spry*, *Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma*, *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* and *Lost Adventures of Childhood*.

Nida is also a board member and volunteer for Beit Zatoun, a cultural centre, gallery and community meeting space that promotes the interplay of art, culture and politics to explore issues of social justice and human rights, both locally and internationally.

KYE MEECHAN - Bio

Kye Meechan is an editor, originally from Vancouver and now based in Toronto.

An alumni of the Canadian Film Centre, he has edited a number of award-winning short films, including Lisa Jackson's *PARKDALE* and Ana Valine's *HOW EUNICE GOT HER BABY*, which have screened at film festivals around the world as well as airing on CBC, Bravo! and the Sundance Channel.

Most recently, Kye worked with director James Genn on the feature film *OLD STOCK*, starring Noah Reid (*Score: A Hockey Musical*) and Melanie Leishman (*Todd and the Book of Pure Evil*). *OLD STOCK* is distributed by E1 Entertainment and slated for theatrical release in 2013. Later this year, Kye will also be editing Maxime Desmons' debut feature film *WHAT WE HAVE*.

DEDICATED TO
Ikeena, Jaheim, Jordyn, Juelz
Ayden, King, Sade, Saniyah, Shkaree, Shakore
Shyhemil, Shyine, Shylah, Shyloh, Zakeyah and Noah

Directed, Written & Produced by Michelle Latimer

in collaboration with

Producer
Nida Marji

Edited By
Kye Meechan

Original Score
Vikas Kohli

Cinematographer
Chris Romeike

Location Sound Recordist
Jason Milligan

Featuring
Alias Donmillion
Alkatraz
Keon Love
Knia Singh
Trench

Additional Appearances by
Mr. Erbie
Banana Clip
Bella Banks
Bradley Tolliver
Eyes
J.B.
KTS
James Martin
Nemesis & Baby Gryme
Professor Boutros

Rich Kidd
Marlin Robin
Scrwg Scrilla
Abby Speng
Tommy Spitz
Strez One
The Kid
TnT
Tom Vujicic
Young Grova

Associate Producer
Tina Witham

Associate Producer Development
Alan Black

Production Coordinator
Mackenzie Muldoon

Production Assistance
Darren Hynes

Dolly Operator
Nicholas Fasullo

Additional Camera
Gregory Biskup
Tess Girard
John Tran

Additional Sound
Daniel Hewett
Brian Horrell
Sanjay Mehta

Transcription
Darren Hynes

Editing
Kye Meechan
Graham Withers

Editorial Consultant
Peter Mettler

Post Production Supervisor
Allan Schwartzberger

Online Post-Production Facility
Technicolor

Sales Representative
James Kwiatkowski

Colourist
Mike Dobroski

Online & Packaging Editor
Michael Key

Post Production Coordinator
Lisa Lanthier

Audio Post Production Facility
Jam Post

Re-recording Mixer
Orest Sushko

Dialogue Editor
Janice Ierulli

Sound Designer
Mark Shnuriwsky

Assistant Sound Editor
Gren-Erich Zwicker

Graphics & Web Designer
Sonya Lacroix

Business Affairs
Nida Marji

Production Accounting
Rong Liu, Kay & Warburton

Legal Consultant
Kevin Matthews

Legal

Stohn Hay Cafazzo Dembroski Richmond LLP

Insurance

The CG&B Group, Unionville Insurance

Publicity

GAT Publicity

Ingrid Hamilton

Daniela Ponce

Jonny Bunning

Brian Geldin

Special Thanks

The Latimer Family

Darren Hynes

Noah Costales

Peter Mettler

Thank you

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Jennifer Donath-Black

Quinn Donath-Black

Carlos Bleeks

Anna Chatterton

Liz Chatterton

Shane Corkery

Sarafina DiFelice

Lynne Fernie

Cami G

Marc Giardini

Gisele Gordon

Danis Goulet

Heather Harding

Robin Hood

Christine Kleckner

Bev Krupa

Kool Aid

Nicole Allen

Levi "Super L" Loblack

Paula Letang-Loblack

Paramita Nath

Julia Newell

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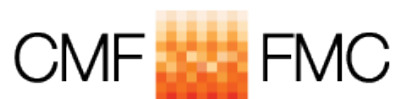
Flo

Martin Scott-Pascal
Ken Puley
Alex Rogalski
Bajrang Singh
Andrea Singh
Vincent Singh
Snow
Sparky D
Kerry Swanson
Moya Teklu
Otis Harding-Withers
Roslyn Woolridge
African Canadian Legal Clinic
Caribana Arts Group
ImagineNATIVE Film & Media Arts Festival
Reel Wolf Productions
CMP Studios
Wellesley Street Studios
Madame Wob Dwiyet Canada Cultural Pageant
The Opera House – Athena Towers
The University of Toronto, Elementary Coptic class
York University

Executive in charge of production for Shaw Media
Lynne Carter
Ben Rotterman

Produced by Streeel Films

With the participation of



The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit



And with the assistance of



(Shaw Media Animated log – minimum 3.5 seconds)

www.aliasmovie.ca

ALIAS

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