



Skinwalkers

Limited TV series proposal by Jan Wilson
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Tagline: *Never strike a drum in anger.*

Genre: Horror with a healthy dose of the dark humor of *True Blood* mixed with the relentless struggle with supernatural creatures of *The Walking Dead* with a Native American angle.

Logline: A Native American rock 'n' roll drummer struggling to make it in the music business while still honoring his tribal traditions accidentally unleashes the deadly Skinwalkers, coyote-human shapeshifting creatures that now stalk the band on the rez. Only when Gregg learns how to balance his two worlds will he discover the key to sending the Skinwalkers back to The Sacred Tree.

Synopsis: Gregg's a drummer in a hard rock band in New Mexico, but he also uses tribal drums with his granddad at their tribe's gatherings and ceremonies. Gregg joins these events more out of love for Granddad rather than a connection with their Native American culture. Gregg's band gets a gig at a local casino on the rez, and though they're a bit leery of the sketchy casino manager, it seems like their big break so they take it. Unfortunately, the band's popular gimmick of incorporating tribal drumming on traditional drums in with their own music riles up the dreaded Skinwalkers. The band teams up with one of the cocktail waitresses they nickname Vegas and the slick-but-smarmy Native American casino manager, Ivan, as they all must figure out how to survive after all hell breaks loose on the rez. As everyone's true natures emerge, they aren't sure who to trust and everyone's motives are now in question.

Premise: One must find a balance in life to survive.

Themes and issues: Aside from the fun and frightening tale of trying to survive Skinwalker attacks, *Skinwalkers* deals with the issues Native Americans struggle with in trying to find a balance between assimilating in a mostly White society while maintaining their Native American values and traditions. As with humans learning to deal with the trials of life on Earth, finding a true balance is also the key to learning how to defeat – or at least live amongst – the other-worldly Skinwalkers.

Pilot episode completed. Could easily be made as a feature film.

Character bios and opening scene attached.

(All images are general photos from the internet used to give the reader a sense of the style of the project; not meant to be used for public use.)



Skinwalkers Character Bios

Gregg Chiwiwi

Last name pronounced chi-WEE-wee. Tall, 30ish, handsome, FBI – full-blooded Indian. Gregg was raised on Isleta reservation in New Mexico, mostly by his grandparents after his parents were killed in a car wreck when he was young. They didn't have much money, but tried to give Gregg everything he needed growing up. He went to local schools in Los Lunas and for the most part assimilated easily into the mostly White and Hispanic community. One thing Gregg refused to do was cut his hair. It's long, thick and usually flows loose down his back. Growing up, Gregg would tell his grandparents that he wanted to keep his hair long to stay true to his Indian roots, but the truth is Gregg wanted to look like the long-haired rock stars he saw in music magazines. Gregg lived a traditional Isleta life on the rez, but dropped those traditions when he was in town. (No one says reservation, they say "rez.")



Gregg's very close to his grandparents, especially Granddad. Granddad is a traditional drummer in Native American tribal events and encouraged Gregg to be a drummer too. Gregg did indeed play drums in local events, but as a teenager fell in love with rock and roll and turned his attention to becoming a rock drummer.

In his 20s Gregg moved into Albuquerque and started a rock band with his friends. Gregg had decided not to go to college, despite his grandparents urging, because he thinks if he learns a backup trade he won't try as hard to succeed with the band. "If you have a plan B, you'll use it." Grandma was disappointed in Gregg for not going to college, but Granddad was proud of Gregg's drive to make the band a success. Gregg moved into the city he got a job at an auto parts store and rented a house with a few of his bandmates who also have crappy day jobs.

Both of Gregg's grandparents managed to avoid having diabetes, but it always looms large in their lives. Gregg's mother had it, and the family has always been on the lookout for it in Gregg. He's been urged his whole life to take care of himself since he's at risk for it. Gregg found out in his 20s that he did have diabetes, but he kept it a secret from his grandparents – he doesn't want to worry them. He tries to take care of himself for the most part by running, watching what he eats and having regular checkups at the diabetes center on the rez, but nobody's perfect. He's responsible, he carries his insulin with him and takes it when he needs to without making a big deal of it.

Gregg downplays his Indian-ness when he's in town. He wants to be seen as a rock and roller, not an *Indian* rock and roller. (Gregg prefers "Indian" to "Native American" by the way, he likes the old school ways of his granddad.) Gregg never minds dressing in traditional tribal clothing for events on the rez, but his day-to-day wardrobe consists mostly of jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers or boots. He drives an old pick up that he and Granddad fixed up. They painted it turquoise, and Gregg never hears the end of Duke teasing him about their choice of color. "Dude, I know Indians love turquoise, but there *are* other colors, you know." But Gregg loves the color because Granddad chose it. Gregg's handy with cars and that, coupled with his job at the auto parts store, means he can easily keep his old truck running really well.

One of Gregg's bandmates, Duke, urges Gregg that he should "play up" his Indian roots for the sake of the band. Gregg resists this for years, he wants to succeed as a rock and roll drummer, he's good and doesn't need a gimmick. But Duke convinces Gregg that the band needs to stand out from the other bands in town, so Gregg finally relents that he will do ONE song with his tribal drum, but that's all. It's a huge success, the audiences eat it up, so this encourages Gregg to add to the performance and amp it up. Gregg tries hard to just be "a rock and roll drummer" in his city life, but enjoys doing tribal things with Granddad when he's on the rez. He has one foot in each world and sometimes has a hard time keeping his balance.

Gregg has a White girlfriend, Lisa. He met her when she came into the auto parts store with a dead battery and needed help. He jokes that she is his groupie now and he loves that she comes to all of his shows. She is convinced that his band is going to make it big one day.

[Isleta reservation can be renamed as a fictional reservation or set elsewhere.]

Duke

Duke is way past 40, but thinks he's still 22, and lives like it. He's one of Gregg's roommates in Albuquerque and Gregg jokes that Duke is the whitest man he knows. Duke grew up in Albuquerque, never had much of a career and now works as a custodian at a large corporation that produces medical supplies. He probably smokes way too much pot, but he's a great bass player. He never really thought the band would amount to much until Gregg joined the band and is enjoying the band's new rush of success. He's got an ex-wife somewhere in Colorado, but isn't on the hook for alimony because she now makes much more than he does. That hurts his pride a bit, but at least he's grateful for the lack of alimony. What little money he does make he spends on pizza, beer, pot and new bass guitars. He's not ambitious, he's happy with his mellow life the way it is. One of the main reasons he's hoping the band finds success is so that he can finally have a few groupies. To Duke, having groupies is a sign that he's made it in life. He's got a good sense of humor and keeps things light when things get too heated.



Nathan

Young Nathan is merely 17, not even old enough to legally play in the clubs where the band plays. He's an innocent-looking Latino kid, but he can play the guitar like Jimi Hendrix reincarnated. The band jokes that Nathan Chavez's initials N.C. stand for "No Cash" as he's always broke and constantly scavenges for food or gas money. He goes to high school in Los Lunas and is a very smart kid, but quiet and hard to gauge. The other band members keep their eye on him and try not to let him get corrupted by their sometimes gritty surroundings and devious club owners.



Ren

He's the 20-something lead singer of the band. Like Gregg, he's from Isleta Reservation. Long and lanky like lead singers should be, but he's high-strung and constantly paces like a nervous chihuahua. He paints his fingernails 'rock star black' but they're all bitten down to the quick. He's high maintenance and drives everyone crazy, but he's a damned good front man for the band.

Granddad

Born and raised on the rez, Albert will die on the rez. He loves his home, his land, its traditions. He's worked for most of his life on the foundry that's on the rez, but was happy to retire. He's very active in tribal council meetings, events, and celebrations, and has been drumming since he was a child. He takes the art of drumming very seriously and insists that the handmade deerskin tribal drums he uses are far superior to machine-made "plastic" ones Gregg uses with his band. All of the bandmates love to playfully debate with Granddad as they chow down on the free meals he provides in his warm home.



Lisa

She's Gregg's White girlfriend, 30ish. Cute as a button, but clever and ambitious. She has great plans for the band, and they appreciate her input. She's smart enough to not overstep, but cares enough to offer suggestions. She runs the band's website since none of the guys in the band have any clue how to do it. She screens the fan email the band gets, and she has been known to "accidentally" delete messages from Gregg's female fans that are a bit too sexy or provocative. She's no fool.

Ivan

Ivan is the general manager of Isleta Gaming Palace. ("Don't call it a casino!") He's about 40, also an Isleta native, but he thinks he's some sort of cross between Al Capone and Sitting Bull. Not as fit as he could be, not as tall as he should be, Ivan makes up for his shortcomings by being very Zen. Very spiritual. Very Native American sage. Or least he *tries* to be. He's full of poetic imagery and cheesy Native American sayings as he oversees his casino kingdom, oops, I mean, *gaming palace* high atop his office that has a bank of windows overlooking the gambling floor. He is giving Gregg's band a chance. He will let them play the large Blue Cactus room for a trial run of two weeks. There's a smarminess to Ivan that makes it hard to trust him.



Vegas

Her real name is Michelle, but once Gregg learns that she used to be a showgirl in Las Vegas, he only calls her "Vegas." She's mid-thirties, very casual, can spar with the band, can even handle Duke's constant teasing and jabs. She's been on her own for over a decade after her husband in Las Vegas left her for the woman who runs the local car wash. She is all too aware of the irony that she looked like a sexy showgirl, yet her husband preferred a boring businesswoman. She toughened up, stopped relying on her looks, packed up and moved to New Mexico. She's now a cocktail waitress in the casino auditorium where Gregg's band will be playing. Her divorce left her with a bitterness and a tough veneer, but underneath she's smart and caring, but she won't let anyone see it anymore.



Nurse Willow

Willow, 40, works on the rez as a nurse in the diabetes center. She used to work in a large hospital in Albuquerque, but because so many of her fellow Isletans suffer from diabetes she specialized in that illness and now treats folks on the rez. There is an otherworldly quality to Nurse Willow. Quiet, contained, restrained. She only speaks when she has something important to say, so you better listen. She often appears when you least expect her and disappears without a word. Gregg has a special friendship with her.

Grandma

Gregg's grandmother has lived most of her life with her husband, Albert, on the rez. She's been a devoted wife and mother and that's all she ever wanted from life. She was happy to raise Gregg when his parents were killed. It helped ease the pain of losing her son and daughter-in-law to raise little Gregg. Now that Gregg is grown, she mothers his bandmates, which they all love for the most part. She's always got food on the table and a kind word for anyone who passes through. She relishes taking care of her husband, though she sometimes pretends to be annoyed with him.

Skinwalkers

No one knows how long these creatures have roamed Earth. The Native Americans have known about them for eons and have stayed clear. They are known to be shapeshifters, but usually prefer the form of a coyote-type creature: head of a coyote, but with huge antlers, torso of a man, and legs of a mountain lion. They usually reside in the land of The Sacred Tree, which is in perpetual lovely orangey-yellow sunset light. When they're in their home land they are beautiful creatures; their soft, clean fur flows in the gentle breeze. Happy and gentle, they roam their land --- until they are summoned to our



current reality. Once in "our" land they are angry, rabid, with matted fur, gooey drool falling from their jaws, and fiery eyes. Once summoned up they feed on humans' emotions, so they'll rile up the human as much as possible before feeding on them and draining this precious energy. After blowing white powder into their victim's face, the victim's emotional state – whether scared, angry, blissful or *whatever* – will get into a heightened state and that's when the Skinwalkers make their move. They will commonly take on the form of your worst fear to make sure they catch you at your frenzied peak state. Only when Gregg learns how to balance his two worlds will he discover the key to sending the Skinwalkers back to The Sacred Tree.



[The race of each character is important as it partially determines their fate when the Skinwalkers arrive.]