

= Shapes (The X @-@ Files) =

" Shapes " is the nineteenth episode of the first season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on April 1 , 1994 . " Shapes " was written by Marilyn Osborn , and directed by David Nutter . It featured guest appearances by Michael Horse , Ty Miller and Donnelly Rhodes . The episode is a " Monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Week " story , a stand @-@ alone plot which is unconnected to the series ' wider mythology . " Shapes " earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @.@ 6 , being watched by 7 @.@ 2 million households in its initial broadcast ; and received mixed reviews , with varied reaction to the episode 's handling of the werewolf genre and of its Native American themes .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Mulder and Scully are called to Montana after a shooting on a farm near a Native American reservation . Investigating the case , the agents find that the dead man , and those that he attacked , may be capable of shapeshifting into ferocious beasts ? a phenomenon which was documented in the very first X @-@ File .

" Shapes " was written after executives at Fox had suggested that the series should feature a " more conventional " type of monster , and producers James Wong and Glen Morgan began looking into Native American legends of the Manitou to form the basis of the episode 's concept . Much of the episode was filmed in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows , British Columbia .

= = Plot = =

FBI agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder travel to Browning , Montana to investigate the killing of a Native American man , Joseph Goodensnake , by local ranch owner Jim Parker . The present killing appears to be motivated by a dispute over the ownership of a tract of land , although Parker claims that he fired on a monstrous animal rather than a human . Parker 's son , Lyle , bears scars that lend credence to the story .

At the scene of the shooting , Scully reasons that at the short range from which Goodensnake was shot , it would have been impossible to mistake him for an animal . However , Mulder finds tracks leading to the area that appear to change from human to something more animal in nature . Scully dismisses this , but finds a large section of shed human skin nearby . She believes that the Parkers knowingly killed Goodensnake , but knows that they could not have skinned him since no signs of such injury were found on the body .

The matter is complicated by the difficulties Mulder and Scully have with dealing with the Native American population , stemming from the experience of the locals with the FBI at the Wounded Knee incident in 1973 . Goodensnake 's sister Gwen is also bitter that her neighbors are too frightened of native legends to confront his death . Despite these misgivings , the agents find a seeming ally in Sheriff Charles Tskany , who permits Scully to make a cursory examination of Goodensnake 's body , but forbids a full autopsy . They discover that he had elongated canines , similar to those of an animal , and bears long @-@ healed scars similar to those borne by Lyle . After parting ways with the Sheriff , Scully asks Mulder why it seems he is expecting every piece of evidence they have come across . Mulder informs Scully that forty years previously there was a similar incident in the area , which was investigated by J. Edgar Hoover and became the FBI 's first X @-@ File case .

Goodensnake 's body is cremated in a traditional ceremony , while the agents watch from a distance . Mulder shares with Scully his belief that both the culprits in both the current case and Hoover 's investigation are werewolves . Scully dismisses this theory and instead credits the belief to clinical lycanthropy . The elder Parker is subsequently ripped apart by an unseen animal outside his home , and Lyle is found naked and unconscious a few hundred yards away .

Ish , one of the elder men of the reservation , explains to Mulder the legend of the manitou , a creature which can possess and transform a man and which can pass to a new host , through a bite , or upon the death of the original host . Ish believes he had seen the creature in his youth , but was

too frightened to confront it . He says it happens every eight years to someone in the region , and that it has been that long since the last sighting of a possible manitou .

An examination of Lyle reveals his father 's flesh in his stomach , though not before Scully brings him home from the hospital . After the medical examiner calls , Mulder and Tskany hurry to the Parker ranch . The beast has already arrived at the ranch house , and has stalked Scully into the attic of the Parker home . Just as the creature lunges from the shadows to attack Scully , she shoots it , thinking it was the Parker 's pet mountain lion , escaped . Outside , Mulder and Tskany see that the mountain lion is still in its cage , and discover Lyle 's body in the attic . As the agents leave , they learn that Gwen has left town , while Ish cryptically warns Mulder , " See you in about eight years " .

= = Production = =

" Shapes " was written after executives at Fox had suggested that the series should feature a " more conventional " type of monster , and producers James Wong and Glen Morgan began looking into Native American legends of the Manitou to form the basis of the episode 's concept , believing that " a horror show should be able to do these legends that have been around since the thirteen hundreds " . The episode made mention of the first X @-@ File case to have been opened , apparently initiated by J. Edgar Hoover in 1946 ; whilst it also references the events of the earlier first season episode " Beyond the Sea " , as Scully is seen discussing her father 's death . " Shapes " marked the first time an episode of The X @-@ Files had made use of Native American themes and folklore . Whilst this episode was a stand @-@ alone ' monster @-@ of @-@ the @-@ week ' story , later episodes beginning with the second season finale " Anasazi " , would begin to incorporate Navajo cultural references into the show 's overarching mythology .

Guest star Michael Horse , who plays Sheriff Charles Tskany , is the third guest star of the series to have previously appeared alongside David Duchovny in Twin Peaks , after fellow alumni Claire Stansfield , who played the Jersey Devil in the episode of the same name , and Don Davis who had portrayed Agent Scully 's father William in the earlier episode " Beyond the Sea " . Davis would reappear in the second season 's " One Breath " , whilst other Twin Peaks actors would appear in later episodes of the series ? Michael J. Anderson in the second season 's " Humbug " , Kenneth Welsh in the third season 's " Revelations " and Richard Beymer in " Sanguinarium " from the fourth season .

Much of the episode was filmed in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows , British Columbia , on a site named Bordertown ? a " classic western " town that had been built specifically for film sets , located just a " ten @-@ minute drive " from first assistant director Tom Braidwood 's home . The area was chosen as it provided locations for the exterior shots of the reservation , plus all of the interior areas that were needed for the episode . Despite covering the area in gravel , heavy rains left the ground sodden and muddy enough to bog down equipment and vehicles . Similar weather conditions would hinder the filming of the next episode , " Darkness Falls " . The funeral pyre scene was lit mostly using the natural light of the bonfire used ; whilst the extras who sang and prayed were cast by director David Nutter after a visit to a weekly meeting of Native Americans in Vancouver , who felt that casting non @-@ professionals would lend the scene more authenticity .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Shapes " premiered on the Fox network on April 1 , 1994 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on February 2 , 1995 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 7 @.@ 6 with a 14 share , meaning that roughly 7 @.@ 6 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 14 percent of households watching TV , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 7 @.@ 2 million households watched this episode during its original airing .

In a retrospective of the first season in Entertainment Weekly , the episode was rated a D + , being described as having a " garden @-@ variety werewolf plot " that offered " nothing much to sink your teeth into " . Zack Handlen , writing for The A.V. Club , described the episode as " thoroughly predictable " . He found the plot to be unoriginal , believing that it existed " more out of a sense of

tradition than any real desire to tell a specific story " ; however , he praised the acting in the episode , especially that of guest star Michael Horse . Matt Haigh , writing for Den of Geek , described " Shapes " as being " a very basic and slightly drawn @-@ out werewolf and detective story " , though overall finding that the episode 's visual effects and atmosphere meant that it " mostly comes out good in the end " . " Shapes " has been criticized for seeming like a " werewolf tale with Native American trappings " , with its attempts at political correctness being seen as forced . However , it was praised for not adhering to the " noble savage " archetype in its portrayal of the Native American characters . Jane Goldman , in The X @-@ Files Book of the Unexplained , feels that the episode seriously misrepresents the folklore it portrays , noting that " for many natives , calling a crazed , man @-@ eating beast ' Manitou ' is like calling Charles Manson ' God ' " . The plot for " Shapes " was also adapted as a novel for young adults in 1996 by Ellen Steiber .