

## **A Filmography of Native American Themed Films**

**Images of Indians** – A five-program series focusing on the history and effects of Native American stereotypes in film. Critical issues facing Native American communities and individuals as a result of this unfair stereotyping are addressed. Prominent Native American icons and filmmakers are included in the dialogue. Numerous examples and clips are included to illustrate the severity of these inaccurate representations. 150 min.

**More Than Bows and Arrows** – A great teaching tool for grades 6-12. The film covers a broad range of Native American history, inventions, and contributions to US society. The film reveals that Native American influences are found in our current political system, art, architecture, agriculture, medicine, and recreational activities (to name a few). The video is full of information and is sure to keep viewers' attention! 60 min.

**Coming to Light: Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indians** – This film explores the life and work of avid photographer and filmmaker Edward Curtis. Fearing the complete assimilation of Native American cultures, Curtis spent over thirty years capturing photographs and video recordings of North American Indians. The film explores Curtis' questionable techniques of collecting such information, the relationships he had with the tribes, his personal biases and struggles, as well as the legacy of his work. 86 min.

**In the Light of Reverence** – An interesting documentary on the struggle to protect sacred Native American sites in the midst of mining, recreational use threats, and competing religions. The film follows three separate but similar Native people's struggles: Mato Tipila in Wyoming (Lakota), Hopitutuskwa in Arizona (Hopi), and Bulyum Puyuik in California (Wintu). The film offers an array of differing positions on the complex situations and does a great job highlighting the ongoing question of public land rights versus Native American religious freedom and practice. 73 min.

**Kinaaldá: A Navajo Rite of Passage** – This film follows a young Navajo girl as she undergoes a three-day sacred rite of passage (*Kinaaldá*) from adolescence to adulthood. The video follows the girl through nearly all aspects of the very traditional and sacred ritual. By following the ritual closely, the film illustrates the importance of family, community, balance, purification, and tradition among the Navajo. 56 min.

**On and Off the Res' with Charlie Hill** – An entertaining documentary about the life and career of famed comedian and actor Charlie Hill, this film illustrates the many influences that contribute to one's individuality. The film explores Hill's versatile influence and audience. Through his comedy, Hill addresses a number of sources of Native American discrimination. However, he does so in a manner that both raises awareness and alleviates the pain. In his own words, "I try to turn poison into medicine through comedy." 56 min.

**In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots in Sports** – This film explores the ever-controversial topic of Native American mascots. The main storyline is centered on

mother and University of Illinois grad student Charlene Teeters' personal disapproval of the school's mascot, Chief Illiniwek. The film follows her and her opponents as the issue grows to a hotly contested national debate. The film raises the issue of potential self-esteem and self-image problems that such mascots can have on Native American youth. 47 min.

**Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story** – Attempting to decipher truth from scandal, this film critically looks into the events of the June 26, 1975 murders on the Lakota Pine Ridge Reservation and the subsequent Leonard Peltier case. Many of the original individuals involved are interviewed – including community members, attorneys, and FBI agents. Leonard Peltier himself is featured in this film. An alarming and stirring story is presented. Questions of justice are explored and a number of critical inconsistencies with the trial that put Peltier behind bars for two life sentences are brought to light. 90 min.

**Thunderheart** – This Hollywood production is based on the Pine Ridge Reservation tragedy and, at times, draws strongly from the circumstances surrounding the incident. The film's main character – agent Ray LeVoy – undergoes a personal transformation as he struggles to deal with his Sioux roots (that he has turned away from for many years). The film's portrayal is much more optimistic than the actual Pine Ridge events. The film does, however, offer a realistic depiction of the communal division, crime, and corruption on the reservation while managing to illuminate a strong Native community and traditional belief system. 118 min.

**Pow Wow Highway** – This film is an entertaining chronicle of two Cheyenne men's journey to bail out the sister of one of the men, who has been wrongfully jailed. Both men evolve as the road trip and adventures unfold. A number of themes are represented in this Hollywood movie such as the sometimes ambiguous role of tradition in the present day, seeming disconnection from one's Native roots, and tribal government corruption. 88 min.

All of these films are available at the Wake Forest University Library and many are available for purchase at [www.oyate.org](http://www.oyate.org)

# Suggestions for Educators

## **Middle School**

Recommended viewings:

More Than Bows and Arrows

Images of Indians

\*discuss themes of film

## **High School**

Recommended viewings:

In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots in Sports

Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story

On and Off the Res' with Charlie Hill

More Than Bows and Arrows

Images of Indians

\*discuss themes of film(s)

\*have students write a reflective essay or response to film(s)

## **College**

Recommended viewings:

In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots in Sports

Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story

On and Off the Res' with Charlie Hill

In The Light of Reverence

Kinaaldá: A Navajo Rite of Passage

Pow Wow Highway

Thunderheart

\*Either show film(s) in class or have independent viewings as part of syllabus