

BIG SKY FILM INSTITUTE

NATIVE FILMMAKER INITIATIVE FILM CLUB



JOE BUFFALO



Directed by Amar Chebib in collaboration with Joe Buffalo

FILM SYNOPSIS

Joe Buffalo is an Indigenous skateboard legend. He's also a survivor of the notorious Indian Residential School system. Following a traumatic childhood and decades of addiction, Joe must face his inner demons to realize his dream of turning pro.

BSFI CURRICULUM
Written in Collaboration with
Anne des Rosier Grant

Additional support of the NFI Film Club is provided by Humanities Montana, the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction

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USING THIS GUIDE

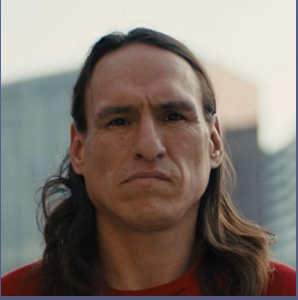
This educator guide is intended to provide context and background to the film **JOE BUFFALO**, offering a range of viewing activities that underscore educational benchmarks of Montana Core and National Core Content Standards. This guide aims to provide a framework for teachers to encourage active engagement before, during, and after viewing the film in an effort to engage in a deep dive into the content and craft of the filmmaking process and the stories they bring to life.

JOE BUFFALO

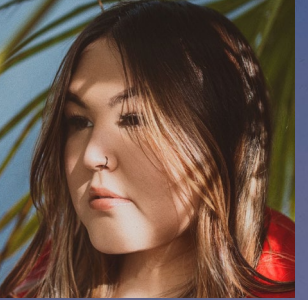
THE TEAM BEHIND THE FILM



Amar Chebib
Director, Producer & Editor



Joe Buffalo
Writer & Subject



Hayley Morin
Producer



Samson Cree Nation

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Big Sky Film Institute acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people. In addition, we honor the twelve Montana tribes that have cared for and honored the distinct and multifarious region we now refer to as Montana. We would also like to pay our respects to the second largest Band of Plains Cree, the Samson Cree Nation located in Mâskwâcîs (musk-wah-chise), Alberta, in Canada's Treaty 6 Territory, approximately 61 miles south of the city of Edmonton.

The Samson Cree or îpisîhkopâhk, which translates in the Cree language to "at willow grove," are one of four First Nation Bands residing in Mâskwâcîs or "bear hills." Mâskwâcîs was formerly known as Hobbema, which was named after the Dutch Golden Age landscape painter, Meindert Hobbema (1638-1709). On January 1, 2014, the name Hobbema was officially changed by the Cree back to Mâskwâcîs, what the four First Nation Bands traditionally called it.

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HELPFUL DEFINITIONS & CONCEPTS:

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

- Schools that were established primarily after 1880 by Christian churches and the Canadian government specifically to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture. The Indian Residential Schools Timeline says there were “over 139 schools located in every province and territory in Canada except for Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.” The majority of Indian Residential Schools were located far away from the students’ Indigenous communities.



HISTORICAL TRAUMA (INTERGENERATIONAL):

- “The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over one’s lifetime and from generation to generation following loss of lives, land and vital aspects of culture.” (Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart).
- For more on “How Trauma Gets Passed Down Through Generations,” visit nativehope.org.

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ASSIMILATIONIST INDOCTRINATION:

- Indian Residential Schools used assimilation to force the dominant White/Western-European culture onto Native American children. Joe makes reference to this in the film when he says, “Kill the Indian...save the man.”
- Native American students were forbidden to speak their Native languages, practice their Native religions and participate in their cultural ceremonies and lifestyles through assimilationist policies that the schools implemented. To indoctrinate someone is to impose (force) upon the person, like a young student, beliefs or a belief system without giving the students the opportunity to question those beliefs. Indoctrination is a form of “brainwashing” and hiding the facts (or truth) about something.’

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

- Truth is factual. Reconciliation is restoration and healing from conflict, i.e., in relationships between people and/or organizations. September 30, 2021 marks the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada to honor the lost children and survivors, their families and communities of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools. It recognizes that public commemoration of this terrible history and ongoing impacts of Indian Residential Schools is an important part of the reconciliation process. On September 30, all Canadians are encouraged to wear orange to also publically commemorate truth and reconciliation. •

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GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What role does history, tradition, and tribal culture play in JOE BUFFALO?
- Why is it important to learn about cultural and historical traditions of Indigenous groups such as the Samson Cree?
- What role does family heritage play in cultural preservation?
- What role does storytelling play in the transmission of oral history, tradition and Indigenous knowledge?
- What were the Indian Residential Schools and why is it important to learn the history of them?
- How does documentary film spotlight stories and histories, and what is its role in underscoring diverse representation on the screen?

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JOE BUFFALO

Given the complexity of the themes JOE BUFFALO explores, this film is most suitable for use with high school-aged students (Grades 9-12). Teachers are encouraged to preview the content as it may be too mature for younger audiences. The film's content, themes, and message is most clearly connected to the following areas of Montana Core Content Standards (among others not listed):

MONTANA COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Reading Standards for Literature (RL.6):

Reading Standards for Informational Text (RI.9-12):

RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia, paying specific attention to cultural nuances), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

RI.11- 12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.11- 12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, cultures, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Writing Standards (W.11-12)

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts, including those by and about American Indians, to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (RI.11-12):

RI.11- 12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Readings Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies (RH.11-12)

RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information. Include texts by and about American Indians.

RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, including American Indian sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Production and Distribution of Writing

WHST.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

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TYING INTO ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING MONTANA INDIANS

As an educator, you can make connections to all Seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians (in this case as it relates to First Nations, Métis and Inuit of Canada), but this film highlights the following EU's particularly well. You can find the full list of EU's at the OPI website [here](#), or at <https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education-for-All>.

Essential Understanding 2

Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

Essential Understanding 3

The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indians and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Essential Understanding 5: There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

- Colonization/Colonial Period, 1492-1800s
- Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778-1871
- **Reservation Period – Allotment and Assimilation, 1887-1934**
- Tribal Reorganization Period, 1934 - 1953
- Termination and Relocation Period, 1953 - 1968
- Self-Determination Period, 1975 - Present

Essential Understanding 6: History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

JOE BUFFALO

BEFORE WE BEGIN...A NOTE TO TEACHERS

It is important that all students feel safe and respected when studying the themes of JOE BUFFALO. The strategies below can help students and teachers support positive learning while studying the film:

- Use inviting and inclusive language when discussing themes and ideas from the film. This includes respectful reflection on race and privilege, highlighting that contribution to the conversation is an option for students, not a requirement.
- Encourage students to be active listeners, meaning they are creating space for others to share their experiences and perspectives and providing encouraging response.
- Underscore that the film they are about to watch is a documentary, meaning this film follows real people and lived experiences. Be respectful of personal differences and keep an open mind.
- Remind students to challenge ideas rather than people, with language such as, “I don’t see it that way...”, or “Your comments bring up questions for me...”
- Take ownership of comments and don’t put blame on others. Reframing input as one’s own (“I think...”), avoiding accusational language such as “You should...”
- Give plenty of time for students to think and reflect on discussion topics. You’re digging into some big topics!
- Preface conversation with the Land Acknowledgement on Page 2, engaging in respectful language around personal and cultural needs of students, staff or visitors that identify as Indigenous.

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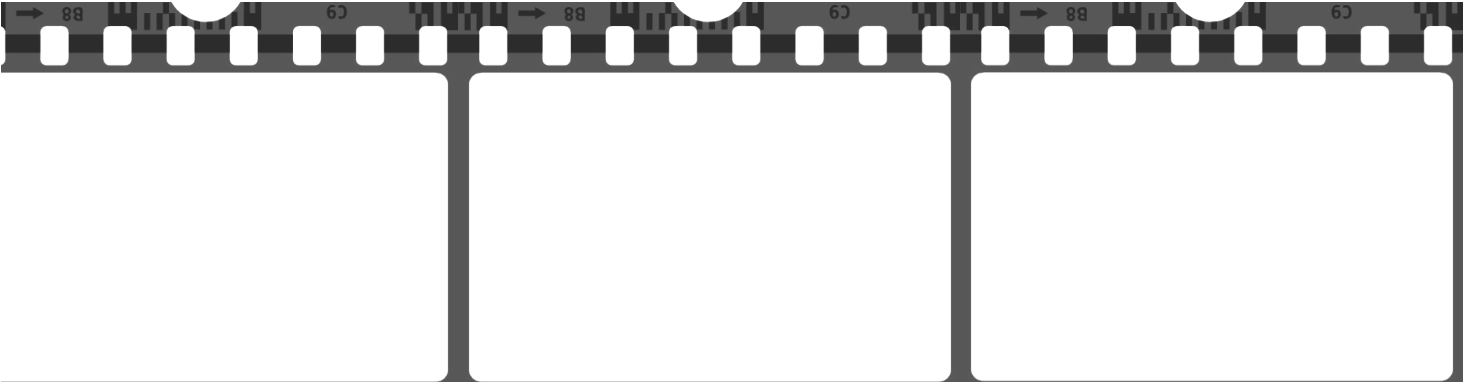


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PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) FILM TRAILER - Identifying the Hook

- **Before you begin...**What IS the role of a film trailer?
 - One main purpose of a film trailer is to give a feel for what the full film is about, without giving away the plot.
- **WATCH the trailer** for [JOE BUFFALO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXqEhrPt1W0) and have students identify themes and ideas addressed in the trailer.
 - Who is being interviewed?
 - What is the conflict / issue presented? In a larger group have students discuss the effectiveness of the trailer as a hook to the story the film presents.
- **DISCUSS** film themes and character qualities introduced in the trailer. How effective was the trailer in hooking you and your students?
- **Trailer link here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXqEhrPt1W0>



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VIEWING ACTIVITIES

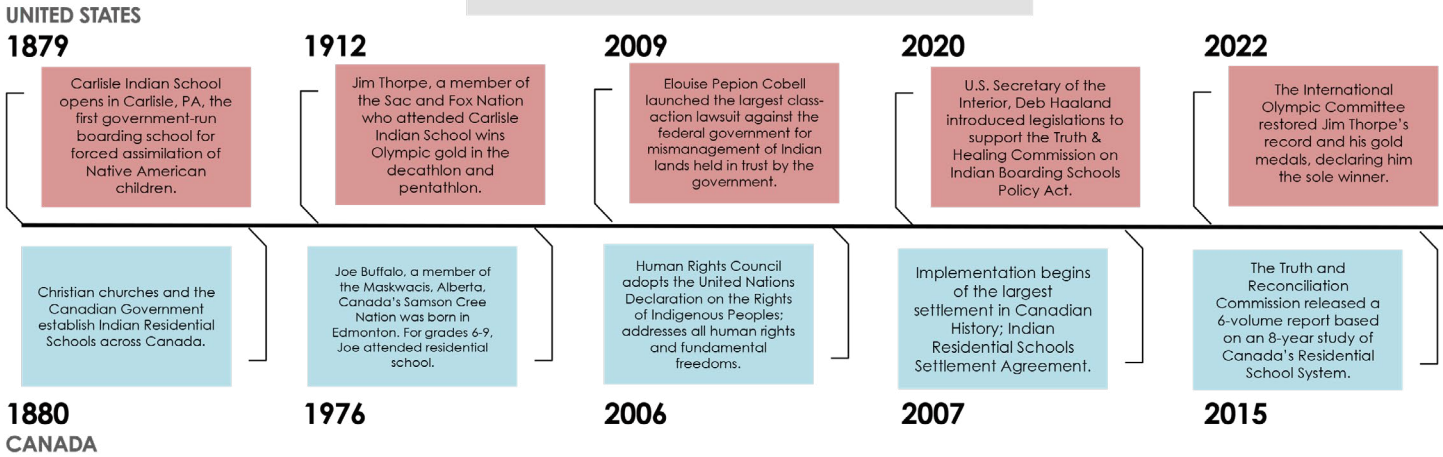
EXPLORING INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

- Students can use the timeline below and Internet resources to make a comparison of similar events throughout history. Students can select various dates from the resources below and create a Venn diagram that illustrates impacts on Canada's First Nations, Métis Nations and Inuit peoples alongside American Indians and Montana's Native communities.
- Students can follow the narratives of Jim Thorpe and Joe Buffalo, two people who attended and were impacted by Canada's Indian Residential Schools and the U.S. Federal Indian Boarding School system. Both men are athletes who excelled at their respective sports. In both cases, the sport provided an outlet for their expression. In spite of negative stereotypes, struggles with identity, and shared adversity, Thorpe and Buffalo became exceptional sportsmen.
- At minimum, students should be able to explain the significance of the events they choose to compare.

This activity highlights EU2 regarding DIVERSITY and meets Montana SSCS.6 for grades 9- 12: Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies. Benchmark 1: Students will analyze and evaluate the ways various groups (e.g. social, political, cultural) meet human needs and concerns (e.g. individual needs, common good) and contribute to personal IDENTITY.

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TIMELINE EXAMPLE: United States and Canada



JOE BUFFALO

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) EXPLORING FREEDOM

Freedom is defined as - *having the right or power and ability to think, act or speak as one wants, without restraint and control; not being subject to others' ideologies, including political and religious, and not being enslaved, imprisoned, constrained or forced to do something without your freewill.*

- "Freedom," song and lyrics by Pharrell Williams
- "Freedom," song and lyrics by Jon Batiste

ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Use the definition of FREEDOM above, with the two above songs titles, "FREEDOM" (using the lyrics), in addition to the following quotes from JOE BUFFALO (paying special attention to the words underlined)
- 2) Write an Essay or Poem on what, "FREEDOM IS...", considering the following:
What does FREEDOM mean to you? Is it the same for everyone? Are there limits? Provide examples of freedom and discuss its importance.
- 3) SHARE student essays and poems and discuss the differences brought up in student responses.

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→ QUOTES ←

- "I realized I wanted freedom and I don't want this intergenerational [expletive] to be an excuse."
- "I didn't even know that skateboarding can evolve into this family worldwide."
- "I made my first pro model as a tribute to my grandfather, Chief Poundmaker."
- "Having that childhood dream fulfilled for me, oh, it's just amazing. And now it's time to move on to the next chapter of my life."
- "Now I'm just getting started, you know? Joe's got his sleeves rolled up and he's in."
- "I want to get the point across to the kids that if I can make it happen given the circumstances of how I was raised, then there's hope out there, man."

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION IDEAS:

1) EXPLORING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Read the following quote and have a group discussion or write about this topic. Have your students ever felt this way? Ask them to explain.



Film Still by Amar Chebib
JOE BUFFALO, 2021

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2) EXPLORING CULTURAL IDENTITY

Consider the following quotes from Joe Buffalo and have a group discussion or write about how cultural identity can be both beneficial and detrimental.

What have you drawn from your ancestors, their cultures and backgrounds that contribute to your identity and/or give you a source of strength, pride, or self-confidence?

★ QUOTES ★

- “For me, skateboarding was definitely like a savior, given the circumstances of me growing up, having to deal with the cards I was dealt.”
- “...how we would look at Mahatma Gandhi was how they looked at Chief Poundmaker, with the utmost respect, holiest of the holies, you know?”
 - “I made my first pro model as a tribute to my grandfather, Chief Poundmaker.”
 - “You could hear a lot of things at night. I could hear spirits in the walls from the dark history there.”
- “...the severity of what I’ve gone through is nothing compared to what my parents or my grandparents have gone through.”
 - “I was coming from a place where people tell you that you’re no good.”

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DOUBLE ENTRY CHART + DISCUSSION

(CAN BE APPLIED TO ANY OF THE ABOVE ACTIVITIES)

*Worksheet attached (Page 15)

As students watch the film have them take notes in the attached Double/Entry Chart provided to have students remember specific moments in the film. After watching, ask students what they wrote down:

- What moments stood out to them?
- Was there anything in the film that changed what you knew or what you thought you knew?
- Many documentaries are also narrative, meaning they tell stories! How do we articulate certain histories through a good story?
 - (Bring this back to the film. From which perspective is the film’s story told? Do they narrate? How much time are watching versus listening? Make a list!)

SUPPORTING AN EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION:

To most effectively track learning throughout viewing and discussion, have students reflect on what they know about the issues being presented in the films. With their Double Entry viewing chart they will have written down observations and inquiries. The following is a short list of keys terms and vocabulary to help students articulate their analysis:

KEY TERMS (to sound like a professional):

EXPOSITION: the information that grounds you in a story (Who, What, Where When, and Why). Exposition gives us the tools to follow the story as it unfolds.

•Questions to ask students:

- What information is given away?
- What still don’t we know?
- Who are we hearing from/who is interviewed (who is not?)?

•Examples of Expository Information:

- Shot of a place/location and its landmarks
- Headlines/printed materials
- Voice over
- People getting upset over something

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THEME: A recurring idea that illuminates an aspect of the human condition. The theme is the most basic lifeblood of a film, it tells you what the film is about. This differs from the subject, which is the topic of the film. A theme gives a story/subject focus and depth and brings out universals from the subject of a complex/simple film subject. A good theme should have multiple layers: personal level, political level, or spiritual level.

- **Questions to ask students:**
 - **What are the universal ideas behind the film?**
 - Ex: History told from Arrernte/Aboriginal perspective frequently conflicts with the histories taught in school. JOE BUFFALO addresses that histories can be rediscovered, revised, and better integrated into everyday knowledge, especially when those histories are often one-sided in their telling.

SUBJECT: the topic/focal point of the film

- **Questions to ask students:**
 - **What is the general subject of this film?**
 - Ex: JOE BUFFALO follows the life of skateboard legend Joe Buffalo as he grapples with the trauma of his past and takes control of his future.

ARC: the ways the events of the story transform the subject/character. Story arcs can be hard to find in documentary film, there is not always an obvious beginning, middle, and an end (as in life!)

- **Questions to ask students:**
 1. **What does the protagonist/subject learn about themselves as they pursue a goal?**
 2. **How has the film challenged your assumption about the film’s subject? Did you have preconceived notions of who the characters were/where they came from? Did this film change your opinion on this subject matter?**

PLOT + CHARACTER:

- **CHARACTER-DRIVEN:** film where the action of the film emerges from wants and needs of the characters
 - **Questions to ask students:**
 1. **Who is this film about? Is it about a person or an event?**
- **PLOT-DRIVEN:** characters are secondary to the events that make up the plot
 - **Questions to ask students:**
 1. **Who is this film about? Is it about a person or an event?**

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Double Entry Viewing Sheet

NOTICE	WONDER
Write down details, or quotes from the film that stand out to you. Who's being interviewed? Are there animations? Is this happening now or is it recounting something in the past?	What does this make you think? Write down observations, questions, or comments you might have related to what you wrote down in the NOTICE column.

References & Additional Resources:

- [Canada's Indian Act](#) was first introduced in 1876.
- Cope, A. June 23, 2022. "The U.S. Is Reckoning With Its Troubled Past of Indian Boarding Schools." *National Public Radio*. URL: <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/23/1106944327/deb-haaland-indian-boarding-schools>.
Interior Secretary, Deb Haaland addresses "fallout" from generations of federal Indian policy and advocates for a Truth and Healing Commission. "Haaland was speaking in support of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, which could allow Congress to issue subpoenas to non-federal entities to obtain more detailed information about the locations of the burial sites. It would also help trace the identities of the children back to their families, work with tribal leaders to arrange repatriation in a culturally-appropriate manner, and end removal of Indigenous children from their families by state adoption, social service, and foster care agencies.
- The Carlisle Indian School Project. URL: <https://carlisleindianschoolproject.com/>
Carlisle Indian School Project portrays a complex history. Civil War veteran Lt. Col. Richard Henry Pratt founded the first government-run boarding school in the U.S. for Native Americans in 1879 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Similar to the Indian Residential Schools established across Canada, off reservation boarding schools in the U.S. were instituted by Christian churches and/or the government as a way to convert Native Americans to Christianity and strip them of their lands, cultures and languages. Pratt's goal was forced assimilation and cultural genocide. His infamous motto, "kill the Indian, save the man" resulted in scores of premature death, disease, and generations of grief and trauma. Many off-reservation boarding schools in the U.S. were fashioned after Carlisle.
- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- Democracy Now! May 13, 2022. "Nick Estes: Indian Boarding Schools Were Part of "Horrific Genocidal Process" Carried Out by the U.S." *Democracy Now!*. URL: https://www.democracy-now.org/2022/5/13/interior_department_indian_boarding_schools_500.
- Gillies, R. and Winfield, N. July 28, 2022. "Pope's Apology to Indigenous Peoples for Abuse at Residential Schools Insufficient, Canada Says." *PBS*. URL: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/popes-apology-to-indigenous-peoples-for-abuse-at-residential-schools-insufficient-canada-says>.

- Government of Canada, The Indian Residential Schools Timeline. URL: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1332939430258/1571587651162#https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca>.
There were, "over 139 schools located in every province and territory in Canada except for Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island." Many of the schools ceased operations by mid-1970; the last federally run school didn't officially close until the late 1990's. The term "residential schools" established by Christian churches and the Canadian government to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture usually refers to schools established after 1880. It wasn't until June 11, 2008, on The Day of Apology that the Canadian Prime Minister issued a formal apology. An Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support program provides mental, emotional and cultural health support with professional counseling that include traditional teachings, traditional ceremonies, dialogue, cultural support services and other traditional healing methods.
- Government of Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). URL: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>.
Includes links to the TRC's final six-volume report and the TRC Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canada's history, which was conducted over an eight-year period from 2007-2015. The TRC provided those affected by Canada's Indian Residential Schools a voice and a platform for sharing their experiences. The TRC travelled across Canada and hosted seven national events engaging the public. They collected information from over 6500 witnesses who were affected by the Indian Residential school system and established The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba.
- Greene, D. October 6, 2021. "A Cree Skateboarding Legend Grapples with the Trauma of Canada's Residential Schools." *The New Yorker*. URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/a-cree-skateboarding-legend-grapples-with-the-trauma-of-canadas-residential-schools>.
- Little, B. Nov. 18, 2018. "How Boarding Schools Tried to 'Kill the Indian' Through Assimilation: Native American tribes are still seeking the return of their children." *The History Channel*. URL: <https://www.history.com/news/how-boarding-schools-tried-to-kill-the-indian-through-assimilation>.
Federal Indian Boarding Schools in the U.S. operated between 1819-1969. The Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report identifies 53 burial sites for children across the Federal Indian Boarding Schools system, with more discoveries predicted. The Department of the Interior has already launched "The Road to Healing," a year-long cross-country tour intended "to allow American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian survivors of the federal Indian boarding school system the opportunity to share their stories, help connect communities with trauma-informed support, and facilitate collection of a permanent oral history." There's now a pressing need for denominations and religious organizations across the US to conduct a transparent examination of their histories and share key records with the Initiative- particularly since transparency can aid in the further identification of children at these schools."

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- Maraniss, D. July 17, 2022. "At Long Last, The Olympic Injustice Done to Jim Thorpe is Corrected." The Washington Post. URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/07/17/olympics-finally-fix-jim-thorpe-wrong/#washingtonpost.com>.
- Maraniss, D. August 2022. *Path Lit by Lighting: The Life of Jim Thorpe*. Simon & Schuster.
- Montana Office of Public Instruction, Indian Education for All Unit, Grades 9-12. The Boarding School Period - American Indian Perspectives. URL: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Social%20Studies/9-12/HS%20Boarding%20School%20Period.pdf>
- Montana Historical Society Press. 2008. *Montana: Stories of the Land Digital Timeline*.
- Rickert, L. July 17, 2022. "How 75,847 Signatures Helped Restore Jim Thorpe's Place in Olympic History." Native News Online. URL: <https://nativenewsonline.net/opinion/how-75-847-signatures-helped-restore-jim-thorpe-s-place-in-olympic-history#nativenewsonline.net>.
- Fonseca, F. August 29, 2022. "Hopi Teen Makes Skateboarding Park Happen." Associated Press. URL: <https://indiancountrytoday.com/news/hopi-teens-make-skateboarding-park-happen>.
- Jetty, Mike. 2019. "An Introduction to Indian Education For All in Montana" Course. Learning Hub. <https://learninghub.mrooms.net/course/index.php?categoryid=105>

Special Thanks to

- ◇ Curriculum Developer Anne Grant, who's historical knowledge of Montana and tenacity to learn has been an indispensable addition to the BSFI Education team. Without her insights and hardwork this curriculum guide would not be possible.
- ◇ Additional thanks goes to OPI's Indian Education Specialist Mike Jetty, whose support of the Native Filmmaker Initiative and edits to the curriculum add to the program's continued success.