

BIG SKY FILM INSTITUTE

HOME OF THE BIG SKY DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL



ᏊᏊᏊ ᏌᏊᏊ – MEET ME AT THE CREEK



DIRECTED BY: Loren Waters

PRODUCED BY: Rebecca Jim & Loren Waters

Executive Producer: Dr. Laurel Smith

MEET ME AT THE CREEK – ᏊᏊᏊ ᏌᏊᏊ (Meet Me at the Creek) tells a story of interconnectedness and Cherokee values through lifelong fight of Rebecca Jim, a Cherokee nation citizen and Waterkeeper Warrior, as she leads the effort to restore Tar Creek located in Miami, Oklahoma. U.S. Government officials have designated Tar Creek as “irreversibly damaged,” but Rebecca refuses to accept that.

MEET ME AT THE CREEK

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USING THIS GUIDE

This educator guide is intended to provide context and background to the documentary film MEET ME AT THE CREEK offering a range of activities that underscore educational benchmarks of Montana Core and National Core Content Standards. The themes of the film are outlined in the context of Montana Office of Public Instruction's Indian Education for All Essential Understandings. This guide aims to provide a framework for teachers to encourage active engagement before, during, and after viewing the film, and to provide a deeper appreciation and understanding for the documentary form.

This educator guide is also designed to provide IEFA EU implementation support in both the "what" and the "how" traditional Native learning and teaching. This guide aims to strike a holistic balance in the teaching and learning that leads to self actualization and the coming to know of tribal, cultural, and personal identity for all those who choose to participate.

THE TEAM BEHIND THE FILM

WATERS MEDIA PRODUCTION

Directed by: **Loren Waters**

Executive Producer: **Dr. Laurel Smith**

Produced by: **Rebecca Jim & Loren Waters**

Featuring Film Participant: **Rebecca Jim**

Director of Photography and Editor: **Nick Buttram**

Associate Producers: **Sierra Revis & Dylan Brodie**

Composer: **Trevor Kowalski**

Animator: **Sierra Revis**

Senior Colorist: **Andrew Francis**

Impact Strategist: **Jessica Epstein**

Publicity Strategist: **Sarah Gray**

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Big Sky Film Institute acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispell people. In addition, we honor the twelve Indigenous tribes that have cared for and honored the distinct region we now refer to as Montana.



THE CHEROKEE TRIBE

The Cherokee tribe, also known as the **ᏍᏏᏉ** (Tsalagi, pronounced sah-la-gee) in their native language, are one of the largest Native American tribes. They have a rich history marked by resilience, cultural achievements, and significant challenges, including the Trail of Tears. The Cherokee Nation's recognition as one of the "Five Civilized Tribes" stems from their assimilation of certain European customs and practices. They adopted elements such as agriculture, permanent homes, a written language, and a centralized government system. Despite these adaptations, the Cherokee maintained their distinct cultural identity and sovereignty.

Tragically, the Cherokee Nation faced forced removal from their ancestral lands in the 1830s. The Indian Removal Act led to the infamous Trail of Tears, during which thousands of Cherokee people were forcibly relocated to present-day Oklahoma. This devastating journey resulted in the loss of many lives and profound hardship for the Cherokee community.

However, the Cherokee Nation demonstrated remarkable resilience and managed to rebuild and reestablish their government and cultural heritage in their new homeland. The Cherokee have traditional ecological knowledge passed down through generations, which includes sustainable practices in agriculture, hunting, and resource management. This deep connection to nature is reflected in their spiritual beliefs, ceremonies, and the incorporation of natural elements in their art and crafts.

BACKGROUND

The Cherokee have many stories and legends that illustrate their respect for water and the teachings of the Water Spirit. The Water Spirit holds a significant place in Cherokee mythology and culture, reflecting the deep connection between the Cherokee people and their natural water sources. This relationship is characterized by respect, reverence, and a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of life. As we reflect on these traditions, it is crucial to explore and respect indigenous water traditions, recognizing the wisdom they offer in today's environmental challenges. By honoring the teachings of the Water Spirit, we can strive for a more harmonious existence with our natural world.

The Cherokee Nation actively engages in contemporary issues and advocacy efforts. They work to protect and defend Native American rights, preserve tribal lands, and promote social and economic development for their citizens. These stories, beliefs, and efforts often emphasize the importance of:

- Living in harmony with nature and respecting water sources
- Understanding the balance between human needs and environmental sustainability
- Recognizing water as a sacred element deserving of reverence

Contemporary Cherokee practices continue to reflect these teachings, with many community members advocating for water conservation and environmental justice. The relationship with water remains a cornerstone of Cherokee identity, connecting past traditions with present realities.

TAR CREEK FAST FACTS

- **Tar Creek is an 11-mile waterway starting in Kansas and running into Oklahoma.**
- **In 1979, the creek turned bright orange when toxic water from abandoned lead and zinc mines seeped in. The water carried heavy metals like lead, zinc, and arsenic, poisoning plants, animals, and people.**
- **Tar Creek is the nation's oldest Superfund site, covering 40 square miles.**
- **The creek is still on the EPA's top 10 worst Superfund sites after 40+ years; many local residents have suffered from lead poisoning and other health effects.**
- **Mining left massive tailings piles ("chat") up to 200 feet high, with lead levels reaching 15,000 ppm, far above EPA soil standards. Mines filled with tainted water eventually spilled over daily (~1 million gallons) into Tar Creek and surrounding land, poisoning ecosystems.**
- **The orange color comes from iron oxidation when acid mines water surfaces and reacts with air, staining rocks, trees, and structures along the creek.**

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Creation Story- Each tribal nation has an origin story, a creation story that passes on from generation to generation how they were created, how the land was created, how their language was created, and how their culture evolved from its earliest inception. These stories are not passed on solely to teach how their cultural identity came to be, they are also passed on to explain why their tribal identity and cultural worldview came to be.

Culturally Relevant Education- An educational system grounded in learning the “why” by experiencing the “what” and participating in the “how” to achieve holistic learning using a hybrid of contemporary and traditional methods

Coming to Know- To learn or discover through the process of listening, participating, investigating & engagement until the idea becomes like breathing or your heart beating, until it becomes a part of who you are through the journey of developing respect and the gradual acquisition of knowledge & wisdom.

Metaphor- A figure of speech that compares two different things by stating that one is the other, highlighting similarities for emphasis or symbolism. The compared elements are not literally the same but are linked to create a deeper understanding or evoke imagery. Metaphors help convey abstract concepts, emotions, or complex ideas through vivid and imaginative language and to add depth and expressiveness.

Reconcile- To find a way to make conflicting ideas, feelings, or situations compatible, or to restore friendly relations after a disagreement by acknowledging the conflict and having positive discourse where listening is the top priority to rebuild healthy relationships & restore the trust that was lost to move forward together.

Removal- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized the forced relocation of Native American tribes from their ancestral lands in the southeastern United States to designated territories west of the Mississippi River, leading to significant suffering and loss of life, particularly during the Trail of Tears, primarily to modern day Oklahoma. This is the first major legislative departure from the U.S. policy of officially respecting the legal and political rights of the American Indians. The act authorized the president to grant Indian tribes unsettled western prairie land in exchange for their desirable territories within state borders (especially in the Southeast), from which the tribes would be removed.

Scientific History- On the simplest level, science is knowledge of the world of nature. There are many regularities in nature that humankind has had to recognize for survival since the emergence of Homo sapiens as a species. Science can be defined simply as knowledge of natural processes that are universal among humankind, and have existed since the dawn of human existence. Each tribal nation also has a scientific history of how they came to be on the land, how they have evolved and how their worldview was developed. This is the history of the people as told by outsiders for other outsiders on how each tribal nation came to be. The science surrounding migration has evolved over time as new archaeological evidence comes to light.

Superfund Site- A place so contaminated that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must lead cleanup efforts to protect human health, restore the environment, and involve local communities.

Time Immemorial- A time in the distant past that was so long ago that people have no knowledge or memory of it – a time that extends beyond the reach of any ancient record. It is often used to emphasize the ancient or unchanging nature of a particular custom, tradition, or phenomenon, conveying the idea that something has been in existence for such a long time that it predates recorded history.

MEET ME AT THE CREEK

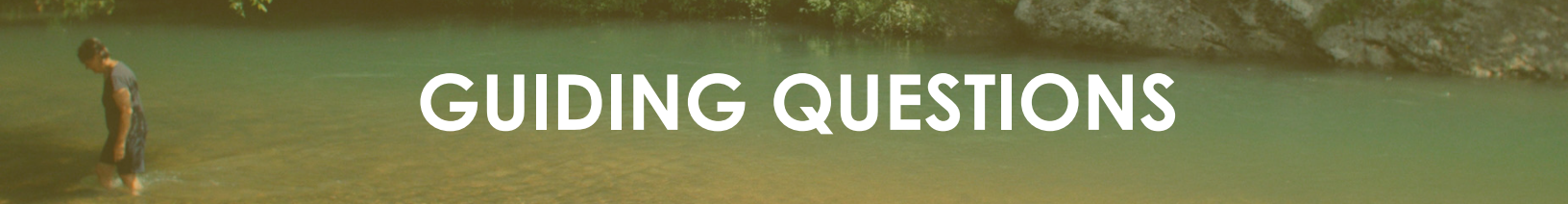
A NOTE TO TEACHERS

It is important that all students feel safe and respected when studying the themes of this film. 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 responses.
- 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.
- Use the Land Acknowledgement as a first step in learning both the creation story and the scientific history of each tribal nation to move forward together with a better understanding of participating in positive civic engagement as an avenue to develop respectful cultural awareness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will make connections between the past and the present, looking at how certain people, activities and events evolve and change over time, and how they can participate in these connections to make them relevant today while honoring the ancestors who began those connections in the past.
- Students will come to know that all Native tribes have their own creation story and how the natural process of their land was created. They will know that these stories are told from each tribal nation's worldview and that each tribal nation evolved independently using their own methods of education, language development, understanding of the natural world and their place within the natural world. This history is not the story told most often and the overall history of each tribal nation cannot be told in its entirety without each tribal nation's own history as told by themselves being passed on to all students.
- Students will understand that all tribal Nations have a scientific history of how they came to be today, how they came to be on their ancestral and current homelands, and how their independence was assimilated into an outside worldview. This common history is the story most likely told regarding tribal nations and their lands.
- Students will begin the process of understanding that each tribal nation has its own independent identity, civic history and a cultural history. The civic history relies upon the scientific version of what happened, this version is the information that can be described as the timeline history which is the information found in nearly all books and textbooks regarding Federal Indian Law, Tribal Law, U.S. History and North American history. The cultural history relies upon the citizens of each tribal nation and their understanding and knowledge of their creation story sincere time immemorial. This history is the information that can only be provided either by the people themselves or people who have chosen to learn this history. This information relies primarily upon oral tradition, storytelling in all of its forms, cultural immersion, and language understanding.
- Students will be exposed to the Indian Removal Act and how that fits into the civic history of the Cherokee people and how that affected their cultural history. Students will also learn about the different eras of Federal Indian Law and Indian Reservations were created and why. Students will also begin the discussion of assimilation and how that affected all tribal nations.



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ★ How do you connect with and honor your community and/or cultural traditions to build positive relationships to the **NATURAL PROCESSES** of the place that you call home?
- ★ In these rapidly changing times of shifts in cultural tribalism of people of all races, how do you connect yourself to the tribal cultural history of the place you call home?
- ★ What role can you play in the **PRESERVATION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES & PROCESSES** that is meaningful and purposeful to you and your community, and if applicable, your reservation?
- ★ How can knowing shared **CIVIC & CULTURAL** histories help us avoid repeating harm and continue positive traditions?
- ★ Water has always been the source of life for Native tribes - what do you consider your source of life today?
- ★ How do traditional Native worldviews differ from early American worldviews of the 1800s? How have these changed?
- ★ How does learning tribal civic history help us build respect, awareness, and positive relationships today?
- ★ Why is it important to reconcile with the past and know how your land—and your presence on it—came to be?

MT & NATIONAL CORE CONTENT STANDARDS

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT STANDARDS FOR GRADES 6-8

SS.G.6-8.2 - Identify locations/regions and understand their physical, political and cultural characteristics.

SS.G.6-8.4 - Explain how environment/geographic features have affected people and how people have affected them.

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT STANDARDS FOR GRADES 9-12

SS.CG.9-12.10 - Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY CONTENT STANDARDS FOR GRADES 9-12

RL.9-10.2 - Determine two+ themes by/about American Indians, analyze their development, how they interact and build on one another; and provide an objective summary.

READING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT FOR GRADES 11-12

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

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES FOR GRADES 11-12

RH.11-12.9 - Integrate information from American Indian sources into a coherent understanding of an idea or event.

MEDIA ARTS STANDARDS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

MA:Cn11.1.I (HS Proficient) Demonstrate and explain how media artworks and ideas relate to various contexts, purposes, and values, such as social trends, power, equality, and personal/cultural identity.

The Seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians (EUs) are guiding principles that form the foundation of Montana's Indian Education For All. The following EU is reflective of how the EU's align with aspects of MEET ME AT THE CREEK.

EU 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.

- There exists no universally accepted rule for establishing an individual's identity as Indian. However, as a general rule, an Indian is a person who has some biological Indian ancestry and is recognized as an Indian by a tribe.
- For millennia, individual tribal groups successfully educated their children using highly effective Indigenous pedagogies that imbued Indian children with all the knowledge and skills they needed to thrive in their world.
- Boarding schools and other federal policies of assimilation brought disruptions to the traditional transference of knowledge in tribal communities and have had wide-ranging and lasting impacts on American Indian individuals and communities.
- Students who maintain a strong sense of pride in their language and culture tend not to experience school failure.
- Ideally, school curricula will offer equal recognition of the contributions students' home cultures bring to the learning situation and will help all students develop the self-esteem and self confidence that can enhance their learning.

EU 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 Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the "discovery" of North America.

- The term spirituality within a cultural context can be limiting and misconstrued. Spirituality to Indigenous peoples generally refers to one aspect of their worldview in which all things are connected. Spirituality in this context does not necessarily equate to nor denote religion.
- A complex history of pre-Columbian tribal migrations and intertribal interactions, European colonization and Christianization efforts, and federal assimilation policies have contributed to the broad range of spiritual beliefs held by American Indians today.
- Despite this history, Native people have retained their spiritual beliefs and traditions – tribal languages are still spoken, sacred songs are still sung, and rituals and ceremonies are still performed.
- It is not important for educators to understand all the complexities of modern day American Indian cultures; however, they should be aware of their existence and the fact they can influence much of the thinking and practice of American Indians today.

- Humor plays an important role in American Indian cultures, there was no "stoic" Indian.
- Tribal oral traditions, ideologies, worldviews, and the principles and values associated with them, are as valid as other such traditions from around the world and should be accorded the same respect and standing.
- Educators should be aware that portions of these principles and values are private and are to be used and understood by certain individuals, groups, or the entire tribe. Tribal culture bearers, experts, and others can assist educators in navigating these situations.

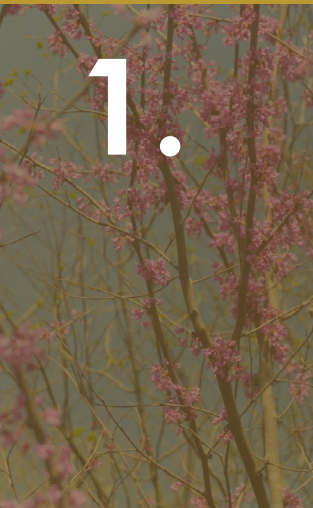
EU 5 - EU 5 - There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

- 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

EU 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.

- Much of America's history has been told from the Euro-American perspective. Only recently have American Indians begun to write about and retell history from an indigenous perspective.
- It is critical that history curricula include the stories and experiences of individual men and women of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious groups.
- Providing students with textbooks, primary source documents, and surviving oral traditions allows them to gain an objective view of history and provides them with a historical context in which to situate and understand the experiences and perspectives of these groups in American society today.
- By giving students the opportunity to view our past through the eyes of many, they can begin to create their own view of our collective history, understand the present, and become better prepared to engage the problems of the future.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES



1.

UNDERSTANDING THEME - WATCH FILM TRAILER

ASK STUDENTS:

- Who is the story about?
- What is the issue being presented?
- What do you think the film title, **MEET ME AT THE CREEK**, implies about the story?



IN SMALLER GROUPS, have students discuss the effectiveness of the description and trailer as a hook to the story the film presents, keeping the above questions in mind.

- What do you think the words *interconnectedness* and *values* mean in this context?
- What comes to mind when you hear “Waterkeeper Warrior”?
- What might the word “warrior” mean in the context of the film?

2. GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Cherokee Creation Story & Native American Migration Theories



PREVIEW THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES TOGETHER OR IN SMALL GROUPS and have students write notes on provided tables:

- [How the World Was Made: A Cherokee Creation Story](#) - World History Encyclopedia
(Option to listen to article)
- [The Cherokee’s World Origin Story](#)
- [Other Migration Theories](#)
- [Ancient Footprints Suggest Humans Lived In The Americas Earlier Than Once Thought](#)

Cherokee Creation Story Table

NAME: _____

Element	What happens in the story?
Origin of Earth	
Role of Animals	
Water	
Sun & Seasons	

Migration Theory Table

NAME: _____

Theory	Key Ideas

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Choose one or more of the prompts to engage students in a ‘think, pair, share’ activity.

TEACHERS: You might choose to do a separate round of think, pair, share for each prompt OR you could invite students to select one of the questions that interests them the most.

THINK

Give students an ample amount of time to think and perhaps write notes about the question or questions.

PAIR

After sufficient thinking time, pair students to discuss their thoughts and notes with one another.

SHARE

Open up the discussion to the whole class. Invite pairs to share interesting insights or questions that came up during their conversations. Encourage a collaborative atmosphere that fosters authentic exchange.

PROMPTS:

- How do traditional Native worldviews differ from early Euro-American worldviews of the 1800s?
- How do the Creation Story and migration theories explain humans' connection to water and the land?
- Do you lean more toward scientific explanations, creation stories, or both when thinking about how the world began?
- Do you have a place in your own life that feels important or “sacred” to you? Why?
- Do you agree or disagree: “Being a warrior for Mother Nature, the environment, and cultural respect can be a unifying force for society.” Why?

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

WATCH THE FILM!

After engaging with some of the themes explored in the previous activities, your class should now be ready to watch the film. If you've registered through Big Sky Film Institute's NFI Film Club you should have a provided link!

If you're viewing this film apart of the NFI Film Club visit:
<https://www.remainingnatedocumentary.com/contact>
for details on how to host a screening!



ACTIVITY:

Complete the **DOUBLE ENTRY NOTES** for the film in the worksheet provided.

PURPOSE: Note the key prompts, ideas and information provided in the pre-viewing questions to connect to the documentary and engage more deeply with the film's content.

INSTRUCTIONS: In the left column, capture the key prompts that were assigned from the pre-viewing activity and complete as you watch the film. After watching the film, read those notes and then explain your thinking about them in the right column. You can include questions, opinions, interpretations, connections to your own life or to key themes you notice.

DOUBLE VIEWING SHEET

NOTICE

What grabs your attention? What idea or information is being presented? Write down details or quotes from the film that stand out to you. How is the narrative being told? What do you notice about the editing?

WONDER

What are your thoughts, questions, connections, or reactions? Why is this important? What are you wondering or thinking? Write down observations, questions, or comments you might have related to what you wrote down in the NOTICE column.

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

WATER WARRIOR WORKSHEET

After viewing the film *MEET ME AT THE CREEK* and exploring background readings about Rebecca Jim and Tar Creek, respond to the questions on the next page. You may write or draw your responses directly in the boxes.

POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS:

Teachers can divide class into small groups and assign prompts (same prompts to all groups or different prompts to each group; students could choose prompts, as well). Student groups can write/draw responses and/or prepare to share out in a whole-class discussion.

BACKGROUND READINGS:

- [The Death & Life of Tar Creek](#) | Rebecca Jim, Tar Creekkeeper - Waterkeeper
- [Rebecca Jim and the Legacy of Tar Creek](#) | Sierra Club

“Rebecca really cares so deeply about the community, the environment, and our tribes, she still gets a gleam in her eye when she thinks there’s more she can do to help – she’s shaped many lives.”

At a 1997 meeting, George Mayer took the assembled officials to task. Mayer owned the land where the toxic mine water had first emerged nearly 20 years earlier and was still pouring out. “George said, ‘You promised to plug the boreholes in 1979 – who is the lead agency on this?’” Earl, who became Grand Riverkeeper in 2003, recalls, adding that Mayer got no answer. The next day, Rebecca knocked on Mayer’s door. “I told him, ‘We’ll be the lead agency,’” she says

Consider the questions related to Becoming A Water Warrior in the table on the next page:

1. The water saved by Rebecca held great meaning. How did her Cherokee cultural heritage influence her journey to restore Tar Creek? What does the water symbolize for her and her community?	2. Reflect on the importance of cultural identity and its role in Rebecca's achievement. What are the modern day challenges that Rebecca has faced?
3. Reflect on the importance of cultural sensitivity in modern day life, how can regular people and leaders create inclusive environments for people from diverse backgrounds?	4. Water is sacred in Cherokee culture (and many Indigenous cultures). How would your own community be affected if its water became polluted or unsafe?
5. What are some challenges that you have faced either in or out of school? How have you or how will you show that you are a Warrior as you face these challenges?	6. What are some historical challenges Cherokee tribal families have faced? How does Rebecca's work connect to that history?

ART CONNECTION

OPTION 1: *The Cherokee Warrior Concept*

Create a drawing, collage, or poster that shows the Cherokee concept of a Warrior or illustrates Rebecca Jim's example of being a modern Water Warrior.

- Include symbols or imagery that represent strength, care, balance, and protection.
- You may add short quotes or words that express what being a Warrior means today.

OPTION 1: *Save Tar Creek Poster*

Design a poster that raises awareness for saving Tar Creek.

- Include information or imagery about the creek's history, its environmental challenges, and the people working to restore it.



EXTENDING LEARNING

BACKGROUND ON ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION ON INDIAN REMOVAL

Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778-1871

With the federal government in charge of Indian affairs, Congress enacted the Trade and Intercourse Acts which established the boundaries of Indian Country, allowed for only the federal government to acquire Indian lands, subjected trade to regulation by the federal government, and guaranteed compensation to non-Indians for injuries inflicted by Indians, and vice versa. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson asked Congress to pass a bill providing for the removal of all eastern tribes west of the Mississippi River, which was designated as "Indian Territory." Congress passed the Indian Removal Act despite "protests that the act violated previous treaties and laws recognizing Indian sovereignty. [...] The bill gave some individual tribal members a choice: they could stay [...] and submit to state laws, or they could move west." Those who chose to stay were relentlessly pressured for their lands.

After removal, with the balance of power tipped in favor of the Americans, treaties would become the catalyst for transferring tribal lands to the United States and a way to facilitate westward expansion. Tragically, the Cherokee Nation faced this forced removal from their ancestral lands in the 1830s. The Indian Removal Act led to the infamous Trail of Tears, during which thousands of Cherokee people were forcibly relocated to present-day Oklahoma. This devastating journey resulted in the loss of many lives and profound hardship for the Cherokee community.

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

Native American forced Removal operated from the late 18th century until the mid/late 19th century, with significant events marking this Removal for all affected tribes.

ART CONNECTION

Create a drawing that reflects the journey of the Trail of Tears. Focus primarily on the Water Route (blue route). List the waterways, statelines, state names, and major cities along the way.

Use this as your guiding question:

How does the history of forced removal connect to Rebecca Jim's modern fight to heal and protect water?

(Teachers may provide a sample map or the "Trail of Tears Journey" map for reference.)

[Trail of Tears Journey](#)

9 STATES
 TRAVEL
 ALABAMA
 ARKANSAS
 GEORGIA
 ILLINOIS
 KENTUCKY
 MISSOURI
 NORTH CAROLINA
 OKLAHOMA
 TENNESSEE

TRAIL OF TEARS

The forced relocation during the 1830s of Eastern Woodlands Indians of the Southeast region of the United States to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.

SUPPORTED BY U.S. PRESIDENT
ANDREW JACKSON
 CONGRESS PASSED THE
 INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830

MAJOR 5 TRIBAL NATIONS
 CHEROKEE
 CREEK
 CHICKASAW
 CHOCTAW
 SEMINOLE

5045
 MILES OF
 TRAILS
 OVER LAND
 AND WATER



A REMOVAL CAMPS

After being forcibly removed from their homes in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina, most Cherokee are moved into 11 removal camps—10 in Tennessee and one in Alabama. There they await the start of an 800-mile journey.

B FORT CASS

August 23 – December 5, 1838

At present-day Charleston, Tennessee, 10 detachments totaling 9,302 Cherokee are marched from Fort Cass toward Indian Territory.

C BLYTHE FERRY

In Meigs County, Tennessee, nine detachments with more than 9,000 Indians cross the Tennessee River.

D ROSS'S LANDING

June 6 – 17, 1838

Near present-day Chattanooga, Tennessee, three detachments are forced to leave their homeland for Indian Territory.

E VANN'S PLANTATION

September 1838

At present-day Wolftever Creek, Tennessee, two detachments totalling 1,642 Cherokee leave for Indian Territory.

F BENGE ROUTE

September 28, 1838

Cherokee leader John Bengé escorts 1,079 Cherokee toward present-day Stilwell, Oklahoma.

G BELL ROUTE

October 11, 1838

John Bell of the Treaty Party leads 660 Cherokee from Fort Cass to present-day Evansville, Arkansas.

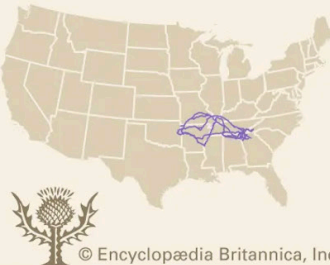
H WATER DETACHMENTS

Cherokee removals from Ross's Landing and Fort Cass include four water routes that prove to be punishing for the Indians: 3,103 depart but only 2,273 arrive at Mrs. Webber's Plantation, Fort Coffee, Lee's Creek, and Illinois Campground.

I TRAIL'S END

March 24, 1839

The last detachment arrives in Indian Territory. The Cherokee are promised subsistence rations through March 1, 1840, in compliance with the Treaty of New Echota.



Source: National Park Service

SKETCHING KEY VOCABULARY

Indian Removal Act: Legacy of Federal Indian Law

Two of the words in EU 5., treaty and removal, are important for teachers to consider when showing this film for a couple reasons: (1) these concepts are central to the film's origin, and (2) these words are likely new to many students when used in this context. Leveraging research-supported methods for [vocabulary teaching](#), this activity invites students to learn these words and deepen their conceptual understandings via a sketching exercise. Engaging in this guided sketch before or after viewing will build students' schema and improve their capacity for deep comprehension while watching and reflecting on the film and the information provided in EU 5..

SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR A GUIDED SKETCH:

INTRO

- Provide students with a blank piece of paper or they can use their own notebook paper.
- This is a “sketch and think” exercise. This activity is not about drawing perfectly. It is a critical thinking and problem solving exercise. This activity is meant to help you connect with some key ideas to further your understanding of the supporting themes of this important documentary. On the page in front of you, let's sketch and think.”

TREATY

- First, draw a blank manuscript.
- Now imagine that you want to get to the top of this fill in this manuscript continuing the Federal Indian Law timeline.
 - 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
- Lots of people want to continue with assimilating Native Americans and instead of working with them they now want to remove them.
- Now add to your manuscript a pictograph that showcases the Colonization/Colonial Period.

REMOVAL

- Another word in the title is *removal*. Removal had a lasting or enduring impact on many Native American people.
- Look at your sketch once more. Now add a pictograph that portrays the Treaty Making and Removal period.
- **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION:** Thinking deeply about this manuscript, why do you think the Cherokee Tribe and all Native American Tribes cherish the Reservation Lands that they currently reside upon? Tell a neighbor, and use your manuscripts to tell the story of these two time periods in Federal Indian Law.

ELEMENTS OF STORY

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.

- Question to ask students: What are the universal ideas behind the film?

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.

ASK STUDENTS:

- What information is given away?
- What still don't we know?
- Who are we hearing from/who is interviewed?
- Who is not speaking/being interviewed?
- Examples of Expository Information:
 - Shot of a place/location and its landmarks
 - Headlines/printed materials
 - Voice over
 - People getting upset over something

SUBJECT

The topic/focal point of the film. Ask students:

- What is the general subject of this film?

PLOT + CHARACTER

CHARACTER-DRIVEN: Film where the action of the film emerges from wants and needs of the characters. Ask students:

- 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. Ask students:

- Who is this film about? Is it about a person or an event?

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!) Ask students:

- What does the protagonist/subject learn?
- 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?



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