

THE PEOPLE'S PROTECTORS

A TWIN CITIES **PBS** ORIGINAL

AKICHITA | OGICHIDAAG | WARRIORS

THE MARK AND MARY
DAVIS FOUNDATION



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The People's Protectors is a co-production of Twin Cities Public Television and Vision Maker Media, with major funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). *The People's Protectors* was produced by Twin Cities PBS, which is solely responsible for its content.

Not Rated, 57 min, Color

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

Four Native American Vietnam War veterans reflect on the agony of war and how their communities helped them carry their warrior legacy proudly. From the Marine Corps to the Navy to the US Army, veterans Valerie Barber, Art Owen, Sandy White Hawk, Vince Beyl, and civilian *eyapaha* (announcer) Jerry Dearly recall their memories of one of the most controversial wars in United States history. Even as they struggled with their relationship to the United States government from genocidal policies and government oppression; the Dakota, Lakota, and Ojibwe warriors still felt compelled to honor their duty to their people as *Akichita I Ogichidaag I Warriors*, as protectors of the people. A lifetime later, these soldiers meet us in the studio as they begin to tell their stories.

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

As a young girl I was raised in the Los Angeles American Indian community and taught at a young age to listen to elder’s experiences. I was told warriors are to be respected. I rely on these teachings daily in my storytelling and personal life, but especially while I was directing *The People’s Protectors*.

Bringing the stories of Native American soldiers to life for television has been an honor. These stories were compelling to me because they are the stories of my community, and those around me. They are the stories I rarely heard growing up. They are the stories I hope my children will hear.

Our featured storytellers are not just heroes, but community leaders and teachers. Vince is an active member of the American Legion and organizes an annual motorcycle fundraiser to support local military families. Sandy speaks across the country about her adoptee and Native veteran identities. Art continues to help veterans from all wars heal and transition to healthy protectors in their communities. Valerie gets her due when she receives an invitation to President Obama’s 2009 inauguration (decades after her service ended she discovered she was the first Native American female mechanic in the Marine Corps). Jerry is adopted by the Sisseton Wahpeton Veterans Association Color Guard for his work in honoring the history of their warrior people, active-duty personnel, and retired veterans. They are epic to me, but, like most good storytellers, they are also kind friends and mentors.

As a Dakota/Diné filmmaker, it is deeply important to me to continue celebrating the stories of my people, as well as sharing with non-Natives the challenges we face. I believe that *The People’s Protectors* can combat decades-long stigmas against veterans and empower all Native people—in fact, all people—to be protectors within their communities by remembering and honoring the bravery of those who served as *Akichita I Ogichidaag I Warriors*.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



LEYA HALE
DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Leya Hale is from the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota and Diné Nations residing in Saint Paul, MN. She currently works as an Associate Producer for Twin Cities PBS. She is best known for her directorial debut, *Reclaiming Sacred Tobacco* (2016), which was an official selection at the American Indian Film Festival, a nominee for Best Short Documentary at the Red Nation Film Festival, and winner of the 2017 Upper Midwest Emmy Award for Best Topical Documentary. Her other notable film, *The Past Is Alive Within Us: The U.S.-Dakota Conflict* (2013), was selected as an Upper Midwest Emmy Award-winner for Best Historical Documentary. Her most recent documentary is *The People's Protectors* (2019), a Vision Maker Media grant production. She is proud to be one of four 2017 Sundance Film Institute Knight Fellows and part of the 2018 Big Sky Film Institute Native Filmmaker Initiative Fellowship cohort. Leya continues to work on a variety of local content documentaries in an effort to create social change within Minnesota communities.



DIANA FRASER
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Diana Fraser is an Emmy-award winning Production Manager at Twin Cities PBS and a freelance producer. A 2018 Minnesota State Arts Board grant recipient, she is currently producing a documentary about queer women's access to health care. Her freelance portfolio features a Princess Grace Honorarium Award, two feature films, and several festival-recognized short films. When not working Diana likes reading books, building Legos she knows she's going to step on someday, and eating churros.

KATHERINE GIBSON
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Kate Gibson is an award-winning producer and production manager who currently serves as the Director of Operations for Twin Cities PBS. With over 15 years of industry experience she has worked for CBS News, the Food Network, Mirimax Films, and Sony Pictures across feature films, reality television programs, and daily news shows. She is best known for her work on *The Early Show*, *Diners Drive-ins and Dives*, *Boy Meets Grill*, and *Throwdown with Bobby Flay*. Outside of work Kate is an avid bookworm, movie buff, mother of two, and chocolate fiend.

ROBERT HUTCHINGS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Robert Hutchings received his MFA in theatrical design and art from the University of Minnesota. Over 35 years at Twin Cities PBS he has been a Director of Photography, Editor and Post Production Specialist and contributed to scores of award-winning national and local television programs and received 5 Emmys in honor of his work. These include work on documentaries, arts series, as well as the beloved PBS *Newton's Apple*, *Right On The Money* and *Nova*. He has also worked as a lighting designer with the Minnesota Opera, The Children's Theater Company, and the Minnesota Dance Theater.

JONATHAN THUNDER
ANIMATOR

Jonathan Thunder is a painter and digital media artist. A graduate of the Institute of American Indian Arts [Santa Fe] and a BA in Visual Effects and Motion Graphics [All Minnesota] his work has been featured in many state, regional, and national exhibitions, as well as in local and international publications. The images he creates are like entries in a scrapbook: conceptual snapshots of events, characters, epiphanies and dreams that shape his life. His works are journal entries, a record of personal evolution and his animations are dark cartoons laced with humor. He currently resides in Duluth, Minnesota.

GALLERY



Director of Photography, Robert Hutchings, filming broll of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Photo by: Leya Hale



Sandra White Hawk (Sicangu Lakota) speaking at the Washington D.C. "In Solidarity We Rise" Conference. Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Color Guard carrying Military flags & Eagle Staffs at the 2017 Prairie Island Powwow. Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Vince Beyl (White Earth Ojibwe) security road guard for the Annual Ride for the Troops, Bemidji, MN. Photo by: Leya Hale



Associate Producer- Diana Fraser, Sandra White Hawk (Sicangu Lakota), and Director- Leya Hale (Dakota/Diné) at Twin Cities PBS studios. Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Close-up of Vietnam Veteran's patches at the 2017 Prairie Island Powwow. Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Director of Photography, Robert Hutchings, filming broll of Vince Beyl on his motorcycle. Photo by: Leya Hale



Washington D.C. Vietnam Veterans Memorial "The Three Soldiers." Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Vince Beyl (White Earth Ojibwe) participating in the candle light vigil at Sisseton Wahpeton Veteran's Day Powwow. Photo by: Robert Hutchings



25th Annual Sisseton Wahpeton Veteran's Day Powwow Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Arthur Owen (Prairie Island Dakota) Načá- Leader & U.S. Army Veteran. Photo by: Robert Hutchings



Close-up of Eagle Staffs at the 2017 Prairie Island Powwow. Photo by: Robert Hutchings

CREDITS

Producer | Director | Editor
Leya Hale

Original Score
Brent Michael Davids

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Associate Producer
Diana Fraser

Animator
Jonathan Thunder

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Caissa Casarez

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Joe Demko

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Elizabeth Day

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Valerie Barber
Vince Beyl
Hennepin County Library
Minnesota Historical Society
Arthur Owen
Prelinger Archives
Pronghorn Productions/Shutterstock.com
Reelcontact/Pond5
Retroklips/Pond5
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Skyward Kick Productions/Shutterstock.com
Star Tribune Archives
U.S. Library of Congress
U.S. National Archives
Sandra White Hawk
Videezy.com
Wisconsin Public Television

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Luke Heikkila
John Heminger
George McCauley
Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post
National Crittenton: Social & System Change for Girls
Northland Visions
Prairie Island Indian Community
Ride for the Troops, Bemidji, Minnesota
Sisseton Wahpeton Vietnam Veterans Association- Kit Fox Society
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
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