

• VIEWER DISCUSSION GUIDE •

Good Meat



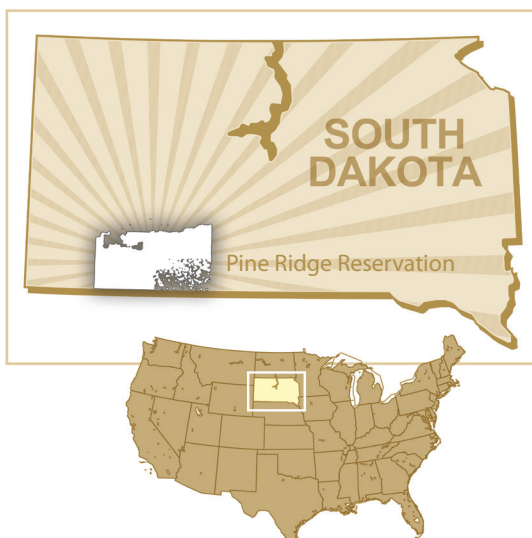
The new generation of Mustang basketball players at Pine Ridge.
Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.



This photo was taken during a session between Beau LeBeau and Dr. Kevin Weiland. Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.

“The epidemic of obesity and Diabetes on the Pine Ridge Reservation is doing more to destroy the Lakota Nation than the 7th Cavalry ever could.”

— Dr. Kevin Weiland, Beau LeBeau’s primary care physician.



Beau LeBeau is a 35-year-old Oglala Lakota man who was once an extraordinary athlete—a five-year starter on his high school’s basketball team, a South Dakota all-star athlete and second team Catholic School All-American. He grew up running in the Badlands of Thunder Valley, and now he is having trouble even walking these same hills. Poor diet and lifestyle habits have led to an explosion of obesity and related illness in American culture. On Indian Reservations, poverty and generational trauma have compounded these issues.

In the beginning of filming ***Good Meat***, Beau LeBeau weighs in at 333 pounds and discovers that he has Type 2 Diabetes. Several members of Beau’s family are obese, and his mother died too young from Diabetes complications. This real-time film documents Beau’s journey as he confronts his own health issues head-on by adopting a traditional Lakota diet centered on Native foods, such as buffalo, and regular exercise. The film follows both Beau’s struggles and triumphs as he works with Dr. Kevin Weiland and nutritionist Kibbe Conti (Oglala Lakota) to regain his health.

This Viewer Discussion Guide is designed to encourage deeper exploration and conversations about the film and explore issues surrounding obesity, poverty and heritage.

FILMMAKER'S NOTES



Sam Hurst, Producer, *Good Meat*
Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.

Sam Hurst, Writer/Director/Producer

"Imagine living in the middle of a deadly epidemic, like smallpox or measles, that ravages a community, but the people have become so accustomed to its presence among them that it is as if the public stops paying attention to the matter. That's the situation I faced living next to the Pine Ridge Reservation. You can see the epidemic, but no one ever quantified it or put a face to it. I waited three years to make this movie because I didn't know how to approach it, until Producer Larry Pourier (Oglala Lakota) convinced me to tell the story of obesity among Indians as part of a larger, cultural story," said Hurst.

"I needed a character who was compelling, vulnerable, funny and willing to expose himself to failure. Beau LeBeau is a great embodiment of the modern Lakota. He is courageous, deeply committed to his family and surrounded by the modern day warrior society of his Sun Dance Circle. And yet, he is lonely and trapped in a dysfunctional food economy that makes his health problems almost inevitable. It is the tension between Beau LeBeau's aspirations and the real world inability to solve his problems that I was drawn to," explained Hurst.

BY THE NUMBERS

Life expectancy on the Pine Ridge Reservation is the **lowest** anywhere in the western hemisphere, except for Haiti. A recent study found the life expectancy on the Reservation is **48 years** for men and **52 years** for women. Source: (and for items 4, 5, 7, 8 & 9) http://www.redcloudschool.org/history/072409_PineRidge_FactSheet.pdf

Obesity, Diabetes and Heart Disease occur in epidemic proportions on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Native Americans' rate of amputations related to Diabetes is **3 to 4 times higher** than among the general United States population. Death rates due to diabetes among Native Americans are **3 times higher** than among the general United States population. Unhealthy diets and lack of exercise are the two main contributing factors behind these high numbers, despite the fact that in the early history of Oglala Lakota, Diabetes was virtually unknown.

American Indians and Alaska Natives die at higher rates than other Americans from Tuberculosis (**600% higher**), alcoholism (**510% higher**), motor vehicle crashes (**229% higher**), Diabetes (**189% higher**), unintentional injuries (**152% higher**), homicide (**61% higher**) and suicide (**62% higher**). Source: (Rates adjusted for misreporting of Indian race on state death certificates; 2000-2002 rates.) (<http://info.ihs.gov/files>)

On the reservation, **13%** of residents lack complete plumbing facilities, **9.2%** lack complete kitchen facilities and **22.8%** lack phone service.

Of all the foundation dollars infused every year to worthy causes, **less than 1%** of all philanthropic money goes to Native American causes, concerns and organizations.

Shannon County, located in South Dakota, has the highest population rate of Native Americans at **94.2%** in the United States, and the lowest percentage of Caucasians at **4.51%**. Source: 2000 U.S. Census.

If the Oglala Lakota Tribe equally dispersed revenues from the Prairie Wind Casino to all enrolled Tribal members, each resident would receive **\$0.15** per month.

The Oglala Lakota College (OLC) offers a nursing degree program. OLC has **eleven** college centers with **nine** of them directly serving the Pine Ridge Reservation. In 2009, OLC had a record enrollment of **1,800** students.

More than **4.5 million** cans of beer are sold annually in White Clay, Nebraska, just over the border from the Pine Ridge Reservation. This amounts to more than **12,500** cans of beer a day. The Pine Ridge Reservation, itself, is dry.

EXPLORING THE FACTS

1. Indian Reservations destroyed the culture and food economy of the Lakota Tribe and made it more difficult to maintain their health. What factors do you think have contributed to the terrible statistics listed on the previous page? What do you think will help Native people regain their health?
2. During the film, it becomes clear that Beau LeBeau must take his journey toward health alone. It is often very difficult for a person to make significant changes in his or her lifestyle when those around him continue in the old patterns. What do you think would help an entire culture change the habits that are killing them? What actions must they take? What supports are needed?
3. How do you think poverty and economic hardship have contributed to the health issues that the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation face?
4. There is often internal conflict in Native people about “adopting” any of the ways of the “white man.” If they allow themselves to become “assimilated” then they will have lost the war. This internal conflict is difficult to resolve. What do you think needs to happen in order for Native people to take their right place in American culture?
5. There is a strong and positive effort on the Reservation itself to help the people of Pine Ridge gain their health and strength—there are exercise rooms in the college centers and many offices, there are walks and events organized to promote awareness, and educational programs aired on KILI FM radio. What do you think the difference is between programs organized within and programs coming from “outside” the Reservation? Explain your thoughts in detail.



During the course of Beau's journey to reclaim his health, he follows an Indigenous diet centered around buffalo and other Native foods traditional to the Lakota people. *Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.*



Beau LeBeau lifting tipi poles. *Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.*

IDEAS FOR ACTION

1. What is one change that you would like to make in your own personal lifestyle? What kind of obstacles prevent you from making it—and what kind of supports would you need in order to make that change? Design a plan for you to follow and begin now.
2. Many stereotypes exist about “lazy” or “drunk” Indians. An equal amount of stereotypes exist about the “noble warrior” and “keepers of the land.” Stereotypes surround us, and only when we see individuals as individuals do we overcome the bad habits of stereotyping. Make a plan to learn about four or five individuals from the Pine Ridge Reservation who have made outstanding contributions to their communities and to their own families. Beat the stereotypes!
3. Our world is intimately interconnected. What can you do to lend support to the leaders and individuals of our Native Nations to help them overcome the obstacles of oppression and poverty? Take a step in the right direction. Get involved!
4. Do research and find out ten facts about the Indian Reservation nearest you. Who are these people? How do they live? What are their strengths—and what obstacles are they facing?



Beau LeBeau being tested under the supervision of Dr. Weiland.
Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.



On the hunt, LeBeau aims to reclaim a healthy diet. *Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Beau LeBeau's nutritionist, Kibbe Conti (Oglala Lakota). *Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.*

The Strong Heart Study Website

<http://strongheart.ouhsc.edu>

American Council on Exercise Website

www.acefitness.org

American Diabetes Association Online

www.diabetes.org

Association of American Indian Physicians Website

www.aaip.org

National Diabetes Education Program

www.ndep.nih.gov

Indian Health Service

www.ihs.gov

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This Viewer Discussion Guide was developed by Jamie Lee, an author and former instructor at the Oglala Lakota College, where she taught for five years. Lee has a Master's in Human Development and has been a communications trainer and an educator for the past 30 years. Her stories and articles have appeared in *The South Dakota Review*, *Winds of Change Magazine* and several other anthologies. She has published three non-fiction books along with one novel and a collection of writings from Oglala Lakota College students. Her first novel, *Washaka: The Bear Dreamer*, was a PEN USA finalist in 2007. Lee has written over 70 documentary programs including public radio's landmark 52-part Native music series, *Oyate Ta Olowan: The Songs of the People*.

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Beau LeBeau (Oglala Lakota) shops for healthy food options. *Image Courtesy of Sam Hurst.*

To find out more, please visit:

www.nativetelecom.org/good_meat

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