

Warrior Women

VIEWER DISCUSSION GUIDE

In Their Words

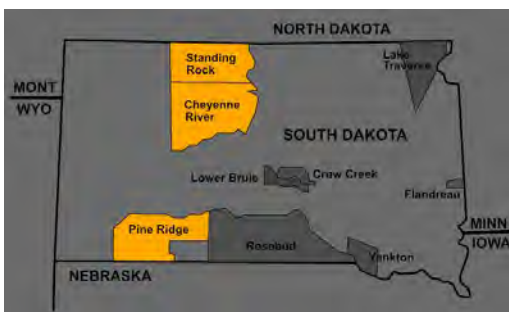


"This country was built on the bones of our ancestors. We have our culture; we have our way of life; we have our language. What we're trying to do is retain it. Retain our right as a people, to be Indian [01:11-01:25]."

*-Madonna Thunder Hawk,
Oohenumpa Lakota*



Marcy Gilbert at the 1976 anti-Bicentennial protest march in Philadelphia, PA, photo Courtesy of Jean-François Graunard.



Madonna Thunder Hawk and Marcella Gilbert on tribal land in the Swift Bird District of their home on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. Photo by John Larson.

Program Synopsis

In the 1970s, with the swagger of unapologetic Indianness, organizers of the American Indian Movement (AIM) fought for Native liberation and survival as a community of extended families.

Warrior Women is the story of Madonna Thunder Hawk, one such AIM leader who shaped a kindred group of activists' children - including her daughter Marcy - into the "We Will Remember" Survival School as a Native alternative to government-run education. Together, Madonna and Marcy fought for Native rights in an environment that made them more comrades than mother-daughter. Today, with Marcy now a mother herself, both are still at the forefront of Native issues, fighting against the environmental devastation of the Dakota Access Pipeline and for Indigenous cultural values.

Through a circular Indigenous style of storytelling, this film explores what it means to navigate a movement and motherhood and how activist legacies are passed down and transformed from generation to generation in the context of colonizing government that meets Native resistance with violence.

Co-Director's statement: Elizabeth A. Castle & Christina D. King

The world needs Indigenous women's leadership more than ever and the story of *Warrior Women* is right on time.

The film is rooted in a community-based oral history project on Red Power women's activism that has been 20 years in the making. So it has a long history of accountability to community before the actual documentary film came about through the collaboration of Elizabeth Castle and Christina King.

As an Indigenous collective film team, we are interested in pushing the visual boundaries of traditional documentary filmmaking to create an experience that better conveys how Indigenous women actually see and engage with the world.

To achieve this lens shift in the film, we made *Warrior Women* by maximizing the storytelling potential of art and design to express the effects of ongoing colonization and repression, intergenerational trauma, sexual violence, responsibility and relationship to land, reclaiming and maintaining cultural practices, and ultimately the decolonizing of minds and spirits.

While we wanted to include the key – but often little known – historical events, we are not attempting to take the viewer through a standard chronology. Instead, we wished to follow the circular nature of memory and experience; we do not remember our lives in order but rather by the emotion(s) attached to that memory. It is not always important exactly when something happened as much as it is to know why it did. So whether we are watching government violence at Wounded Knee in 1973 or Standing Rock in 2016, we witness and experience the same patterns of colonial aggression against Native people. We also release ourselves from the obligation to educate the viewer who has never learned about the history and worldview of Native people in the United States. Rather, we invite you directly in to see the world through the eyes of Madonna Thunder Hawk and Marcella Gilbert.

Warrior Women Film Team



L to R: Activist & organizer Madonna Thunder Hawk, co-director Elizabeth A. Castle, producer Anna Marie Pitman, co-director Christina D. King, and activist and organizer Marcella Gilbert.

Elizabeth "Beth" Castle is a scholar/activist/filmmaker who began interviewing women of the Red Power Movement almost 20 years ago for a dissertation. She wrote the book, *Women were the Backbone, Men were the Jawbone: Native Women's Activism in the Red Power Movement* on the subject which was based on The *Warrior Women* Oral History Project collection. Castle is a committed anti-racist ally and descended from the Pekowi band of the Shawnee in Ohio - both shape how she engages with community-based scholarship and organizing.

Christina D. King is a producer and filmmaker whose work spans broadcast news, commercials, documentary, film, and television with a focus on human rights issues, civic engagement through storytelling, and democratizing filmmaker opportunities for marginalized voices. Her most recent film *We the Animals* debuted at Sundance 2018 to critical acclaim. She is from Oklahoma and of the Seminole, Creek and Sac & Fox Nations and is currently living in the unceded Lenape Nation in New York.

Anna Pitman is a producer working in a cross-section of formats and genres; documentaries, commercials, and narrative films. Moved to action by the frustration of witnessing similar indigenous struggles in her home country of Australia, Anna is committed to documentary storytelling through socially-conscious, community-based projects that have taken her all around the world.

Brief Timeline (for an extended, interactive version please visit www.warriorwomen.org/timeline)

July 1968: American Indian Movement was founded in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

November 1969 - June 1971: Occupation of Alcatraz Island by Indians of All Tribes [26:35-28:33].

August 29, 1970: United Native Americans lead occupation of Mount Rushmore [24:22-26:04].

June 6, 1971: American Indian Movement leads occupation of Mount Rushmore.



Archival photo of International Indian Treaty Council meeting in 1970s . Photo courtesy of Dick Bancroft

November 1972: Trail of Broken Treaties march to Washington, D.C., resulting in the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

January 1973: The Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization was formed by local people to draw attention to the abuses of Chairman Dick Wilson on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation; founders included Geraldine Janis, Gladys Bissonette and her nephew Pedro Bissonette.

February 27 - May 8, 1973: 71-day Occupation of Wounded Knee [35:33-40:08].

1973: Wounded Knee Legal Defense Offense Committee (WKLD/OC) was formed to handle the legal trials of the 400 people arrested around the Occupation of Wounded Knee.

1974: The We Will Remember Survival School was established (also calling itself the We Will Remember Survival Group). It was first located in Rapid City, South Dakota and later moved to Porcupine on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota [00:01-00:38].

June 1974: The International Indian Treaty Council was formed on the Standing Rock Reservation.

1977: First gathering of Indigenous people at the United Nations – Marcy attended the International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas in Geneva, Switzerland [44:13-44:40].

1978: Women of All Red Nations was formed, and the Longest Walk which protested the anti-Indian legislation was proposed in Congress [46:46-47:50].

July 18-28, 1980: Black Hills International Survival Gathering was held in the Black Hills in South Dakota hosting 10,000 people interested in indigenous-led sustainability practices [47:51-48:37].

By the Numbers

- Since World War II and the 1950s Relocation policy, the Native population has shifted predominantly from reservations to urban areas: from 8 percent in 1945 to 45 percent in 1970 to the most recent Census Bureau data registering 7 of 10 Native people living in metropolitan areas. Since the 2010 census, over 71% of Native people live in urban areas.
- In 1977, the first gathering of Indigenous peoples at the United Nations was held in Geneva. It was known as the International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas in Geneva. From this first meeting, a remarkable global plan was initiated and after 40 years resulted in the adoption of international instruments and mechanisms, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the establishment of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Pages/EMRIPIndex.aspx>) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNSR). (World Bank)
- According to the United Nations, "there are approximately 370 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide, in over 90 countries making up 5 percent of the global population. While Indigenous Peoples own, occupy, or use a quarter of the world's surface area, they safeguard 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity. They hold vital ancestral knowledge and expertise on how to adapt, mitigate, and reduce climate and disaster risks." The struggles to stop corporate incursion reflects indigenous environmental climate justice and the inherent leadership of Native women. (World Bank)



- In 2018, the midterm elections witnessed the first two Native women ever elected to Congress in the history of the United States: Rep. Sharice Davids, D-Kansas and Rep. Deb Haaland, D-New Mexico. (News Maven)
- There are currently 573 federally recognized tribes in what is now the United States of America. (Congress of American Indians)

Group photograph of indigenous leaders outside the United Nations 1977. Photo courtesy of Dick Bancroft.

Discussion Questions

1. At the start of the film, Marcy Gilbert says "People think Indians always knew that we were powerful. We always acted that way. But we didn't. Everybody accepted the racism. But during that time, people were standing up and saying, 'Hey, yeah, I am Indian.' We want to be who we are, not who you are [00:41-00:57]." What does she mean by this?

2. What does it mean to be a Warrior Woman and how is it explained in the film? How is that similar to or different from your understanding of the power and position women hold in society? How would you describe the leadership shown by Indigenous women in the film? Who in your life is a Warrior Woman and what makes them so?

3. In an archival clip, Madonna describes how Native children were "pushed out" of the public education system [06:00-06:15]. She starts a "survival" school to provide knowledge and education that is relevant to their lives. What does survival mean in this context?

4. The young people of the "We Will Remember Survival Group" chose not to call themselves a school. Why do you think that is? Based on what you have learned from the film, discuss the differences between the government-run boarding schools and the Native-run survival schools.

5. In the film, Madonna is fighting to keep Native children from being fostered and adopted out of tribes and into non-Native homes as part of her work with the Lakota People's Law Project (LPLP) [22:00-24:21]. Also in the film, Sara Nelson from LPLP explains the part of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that declares "moving children from one culture to another is an act of genocide." How could being adopted out of your cultural home into another culture be an act of genocide?



The flag of Women of All Red Nations – also known as WARN founded in 1978.

5. In the scene featuring Madonna's cousin Mary Lee (Johns), she explains how gang rape was used as a tool of violence and repression. Due to jurisdiction, tribal police could not arrest or prosecute a non-tribal member for sexual assault on reservation land. Mary Lee states "The (tribal) police couldn't do anything about it, because they are white men [18:48-20:10]." This changed for the first time in 2013 when the Violence Against Women Act included provisions to allow for prosecution of non-tribal offenders. The reauthorization of VAWA expired in December of 2018 during the government shut-down. How might the expiration of VAWA affect today's prosecution process when it comes to the sexual assault of Native women? Will this impact the progress made on the issue? Research VAWA's provision on Native women and discuss.

6. What are the motivations behind Madonna Thunder Hawk's commitment to community organizing? What about Madonna's life inspires you?

Suggested Activities

1. Choose at least 3 major themes from the film. List them and discuss how they are interconnected. Which one resonates with you the most and why?
2. Read the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Pull out the main points of the document that connect with the themes in the film. What are the ways in which you can individually support the implementation of this document? What are the ways your community can do so?
3. At the core of the Standing Rock [30:50-35:50] resistance movement was the Indigenous stand on the protections offered by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 [30:23-30:50]. Research the Treaty and discuss the reasons you believe the treaty was violated. What action(s) can you take as an individual or in your wider community to support Native sovereignty?
4. Think about where you live and whether you are aware of any fossil fuel industry pipelines that could affect the environment and health of your community. Find any information available about the community response to the proposed or already existing pipeline. Based on this research, determine one action you could take that would draw attention to the issue. Some examples could be: writing a letter, contacting an elected official, and/or interviewing and writing about those most affected or displaced.
5. After the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 [35:33-40:08], hundreds of people were prosecuted. Madonna states "The federal government, rather than see it as an issue of Treaty violations, they made us all criminals, charged us all with federal offenses." What are the similarities between the occupation of Wounded Knee and the movement at Standing Rock in terms of treaty rights? What are the differences?
6. A "hashtag" campaign known as #MMIWG or "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" has become known to a national audience through awareness efforts by Indigenous community organizers. #MMIWG gives a name to the phenomenon of elevated violence against Native women. By reading the report (<http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>) published by Urban Indian Health Institute, discuss the reasons why tracking, collecting, and analyzing the data is difficult and then share your ideas about potential solutions.
7. One of the themes in the film is the challenge of navigating motherhood and movement activism. Marcy states about her mom, "When you're revolutionary, you have to make those sacrifices. What she was doing rebuilt a nation . . . It's easier for me to think about her as Madonna the activist rather than my mom because all the other stuff gets in the way [49:28-51:33]." Were there the times during the film that you were able to relate to the relationship between mother and daughter?

506 MMIWG cases were identified across 71 selected urban cities

128 were cases of missing Indigenous women

280 were cases of murdered Indigenous women

98 were cases with an "unknown status"

29 The median age of MMIWG victims

* This is an undercount. We know there are more victims.

Urban Indian Health Institute
Advancing the health and well-being of Indigenous communities



Data and graphic courtesy of Urban Indian Health Institute - for full report please see <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

Resources

About the Film

Warrior Women Film – Official Website
Vision Maker Media - Warrior Women Film

About the Oral History Collection

www.warriorwomen.org

Websites for More Resources

Docip
Facing History and Ourselves
Indigenous Environmental Network
Indigenous Climate Action
International Indian Treaty Council
Lakota People's Law Project
NDN Collective
National Congress of American Indians
National Indian Child Welfare Association
The Red Nation
Sovereign Bodies Institute
Teaching Tolerance
Urban Indian Health Institute MMIW Report
Water Protectors Community Oral History Project
Warrior Women Project

For Further Consideration

Standing Rock Syllabus

<https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/>

Elizabeth A. Castle, "The Original Gangster: The Life and Times of Red Power Activist Madonna Thunder Hawk," in *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, edited by Dan Berger, Rutgers University Press, September 2010

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

<https://bit.ly/2MZxCMP>

<https://bit.ly/2cp1iBG>

Journal/book Articles:

Deer, Sarah. Bystander No More? Improving the Federal Response to Sexual Violence in Indian Country. *Utah Law Review*, 2017.

America Has Always Used Schools as a Weapon Against Native Americans

American Indian Boarding Schools Haunt Many

Critical Investigations of Resilience: A Brief Introduction to Indigenous Environmental Studies & Science



The Warrior Women Film Team at a 2019 Film Festival.

"How Native and White Communities Make Alliances to Protect the Earth: Tribal nations have always been on the front lines of environmental protection. Now their neighbors are catching up." by Mary Annette Pember

Native Foster Care: Lost Children, Shattered Families

Violence Against Women Act Expires Because Of Government Shutdown

Violence Against the Land is Violence Against Women Webinar, March 19, 2018

<https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/single-post/2018/03/19/Violence-Against-the-Land-is-Violence-Against-Women>

The struggle of Indigenous women

Books

Blansett, Kent. *A Journey to Freedom, Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement*. Yale University Press, 2018

Deer, S. (2015). *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*, University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *Indigenous Peoples History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2014.

Estes, Nick. *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, Verso, 2019.

Gilio-Whitaker, Dina. *As Long as the Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to Standing Rock*. Penguin Random House, 2019

Resources Continued

Grossman, Zoltán. *Unlikely Alliances: Native Nations and White Communities Join to Defend Rural Lands*. 2017

Smith, Paul Chaat, and Robert Warrior. *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*. New York: New Press, 1996.

Mankiller, Wilma. *Every Day Is a Good Day: Reflections of Contemporary Indigenous Women*. Memorial ed. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2011.

Films

Alcatraz Is Not an Island

As Long As the Rivers Run

Dawnland

Mankiller

LaDonna Harris: Indian 101

Peace River Rising: The link between violence against Indigenous women and violence against the land

Urban Rez

Native America



Standing Rock organizers Madonna Thunder Hawk and Phyllis Young talking strategy with Beth Castle under "flag row" at the Oceti Sakowin Camp at Standing Rock in September of 2016. Photo by Gwendolen Cates.

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Warrior Women is a co-production of ITVS and Vision Maker Media with major funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

This Viewer Discussion Guide was developed by scholar-activist Elizabeth A. Castle, Ph.D, the co-director of Warrior Women. While completing her Ph.D. at Cambridge University, she worked as a policy associate for President Clinton's Initiative on Race and in 2001 she served as a delegate for the Indigenous World Association at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. While working as an academic specialist for UC Berkeley's Oral History Office, she received the University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellowship at UC Santa Cruz under the supervision of Professors Angela Davis and Bettina Aptheker. She has been a professor at the University of South Dakota and Denison University. She has directed multiple community based oral history projects listed in the resources of this guide.

Funding for this Viewer Discussion Guide was provided by Vision Maker Media. Vision Maker Media supports Native stories for Public Broadcasting. For more information, please visit www.visionmakermedia.org.

Educational resources for this film are available at <http://www.visionmakermedia.org/educators/warriorwomen>

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