FILM SYNOPSIS

The word given to the Salish people to call themselves is Sqelixw, which translates to “flesh and land.” When people lose their sense of “Place,” they lose their awareness of self and others in relation to the land and the legacy of their cultural traditions. Modern day Salish strive to help children experience a respected and nurtured place in the community through programs, activities, and the building of an intentional community.

Directed by Ivan MacDonald

BSFI CURRICULUM
Written in Collaboration with Anne des Rosier Grant

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This educator guide is intended to provide context and background to the film Snqʷeyləmistn (pronounced, “SING-KWAY-SH-MEE-STOIN”), 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.

*For additional information see the Sélis and Qlispé Culture Committee website and download the Salish Language App also available through the website.*
THE MISSION

To nurture indigenous community through experiential learning and traditional life ways.

THE VISION

The Flathead Reservation is a place where there is an Intentional community of resilient indigenous families with a sound sense of identity and purpose.

- Ceremony is at the center of the community
- Community members do the work together. In this way, the community is a healing place.
- With strong support for families every step of the way, no one is alone in raising kids.
- Children will have forever homes.
- Collaborations with other tribal organizations to provide children with quality services.
- The community comes together to create their own trauma informed education system. Where nature and mentors provide experiences, students have the opportunity to create their own stories.

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Social Services is over capacity, with anywhere from 70-150 open cases on the reservation at any given time. In some situations, native children are being placed with non-Native families and are being sent away from their homelands. In contrast, Snqʷeyłmistn seeks to instill Salish identity and recognize the importance of the values of its ancestors. According to Snqʷeyłmistn, the answer to stronger future generations of Salish people lies directly within traditional way of life.

*the above information is from the Snqʷeyłmistn website. For more information visit https://www.snqweylmistn.org/

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How does cultural identity relate to self-esteem and skill-building? [Based on MT OPI-IEFA Essential Understanding (EU) #2]

- What are some of the ways tribal cultures, traditions, and values get passed down through the generations and influence future practice? [Based on EU #3]

- How have federal indian policies, like those based on assimilation, negatively impacted tribal communities and contributed to poor mental and physical health? [Based on EU #5]

- What were the Indian Residential Schools and why is it important to learn the history of them? [Based on EU #5]

- Why is it important to learn the history of Montana’s Indigenous groups like the Salish and other Native Americans? [Based on EU #6]

- How does documentary film spotlight stories and histories, and what is its role in underscoring diverse representation on the screen?
Snqʷeylmistn

THEMES & CONCEPTS

COMMUNITY

• According to Snqʷeylmistn, their programs are “designed to connect youth to land, tradition, self and others,” with “experiential learning models intended to empower, strengthen, and inspire generations of strong-healthy snkʷsqilxʷ (people), with each generation becoming progressively healthier.”

WRITE about how being connected to land and/or cultural traditions creates community. How does working on an outdoor project with others, for example, empower and inspire?

*For more on community, explore the MT OPI guide: Building Bridges, Building Friendships.

EDUCATION

• According to Snqʷeylmistn, their programs, “focus on connection to place, awareness of self, identity formation, awareness of others, traditional values, traditional knowledge, and experiential learning through group and individual mistakes and successes.”

EXPLAIN how these concepts are related to Montana’s Indian Education For All (IEFA). How is IEFA relevant to all content areas?

*See: Getting Started in IEFA at MT OPI for teacher recommended lessons and additional resources.

CULTURE & LANGUAGE


• According to Snqʷeylmistn, their “seasonal programming follows the cycles of the Salish Medicine Wheel”: loving, caring, sharing, giving and truth. Under the guise of these cycles, the program focuses around intentional community building, living in ceremony and “learning through group mistakes and successes.”

With the above information in mind, LIST THE WAYS communities can build and preserve cultural heritage. How is the Snqʷeylmistn addressing this? Why is this important?

Snqʷeylmistn

EXPLORING ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING #5

• There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people in the past 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

EXPLAIN how these concepts are related to Montana’s Indian Education For All (IEFA). How is IEFA relevant to all content areas?

*See: Getting Started in IEFA at MT OPI for teacher recommended lessons and additional resources.

EXPLORING EU #5

• Look at EU #5 and the major policy periods in Native American history:
  - 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

- Select one of the periods above. How is it related to one of the following current issues/events?
  - Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)
  - Tribal Sovereignty
  - Indian Education for All (IEFA)
  - Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)
  - Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
  - Food Sovereignty
  - Foster Care

Read the full EU #5 write-up on page 16 here.
PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) FILM TITLE - Understanding theme

- What THEMES does the title of this documentary imply (Snq"eyłmistn: The Place Where You Do Your Best)?
  - Who is being interviewed?
  - What is the conflict / issue presented? In a larger group have students discuss the effectiveness of the title as a hook to the story the film presents.
- DISCUSS these possible film themes. Have pairs or small groups of students brainstorm possible themes and make a list of what kind of places are places where you do your best and why.
- Afterwards, ASK: Does the film title translation, The Place Where You Do Your Best, give you a sense of...
  - Family and/or Community
  - Safety
  - the outdoors
  - Schooling and/or an educational system
  - Foster care
  - the indoors

Why or why not?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

REVISITING THEMES & THROUGHLINES

COMMUNITY

- After viewing the film, return to the pre-viewing activity for the film trailer. How have the students thoughts about the film’s themes changed after watching the film? Have new themes emerged?
- Resume small group discussion surrounding the translation of Snqweyłmistn (The Place Where You Do Your Best) and discuss how themes like safety, community, or family contribute to doing your best.
- ASK: How does having a strong sense of identity or a strong connection to place impact individuals?

EDUCATION

- Consider the quotes (pg 8) from Snqweyłmistn and the Guiding Questions (pg 4).
  - ASK STUDENTS to select one quote and use it to answer one of the Guiding Questions in a short, one-page essay.
  - For a class discussion, focus on two of the quotes and consider who said them (age, background, experience, for example). ASK STUDENTS: How do different interpretations of the same materials (stories, law, histories) emerge? How does one’s experience contribute to their identity? What about their worldview?

CULTURE & LANGUAGE

- Consider the story of Sixto Cancel, an individual who grew up in foster care system, in the TED Talk, ‘A Foster Care System Where Every Child Has A Loving Home.’ Cancel founded the organization Think of Us, aiming to reform child welfare by centering kinship care, or placing a child with extended family or a familiar adult.
  - WATCH the TED Talk video [00:10:45 minutes] and have students research the current system of foster care. Debate the pros and cons with the kind of foster care system that Sixto Cancel is creating.
  - OR Have students create a Venn Diagram of the similarities and differences between the latest ICWA Supreme Court Ruling surrounding Indian Child Welfare Act and the kind of Foster Care System that Sixto Cancel is creating.
"In order to heal intergenerational trauma, we have to return to some type of collective living."
– April Charlo, Snq’eytmistn co-founder, [00:00:03-00:00:09]

"Children once knew the land like they knew their mother’s face."
– Stephan Hunt, Snq’eytmistn co-founder, [00:00:09-00:00:12]

"The Land is like a book, just like you learn in school…but that book, it’s alive."
– Stephan Hunt, Snq’eytmistn co-founder, [00:00:09-00:00:12]

"We were punished for just about everything."
– Johnny Arlee, Salish Elder / Language Teacher, [00:00:40-00:00:42]

"They just came in and took kids, you know?"
– Johnny Arlee, Salish Elder / Language Teacher, [00:00:35-00:00:38]

"In order to heal intergenerational trauma, we have to return to some type of collective living."
– April Charlo, Snq’eytmistn co-founder, [00:00:03-00:00:09]

"We have a short time on this Earth to do the very best that we can do… I want them to be able to walk out the door of a forever home and meet up with their forever cousin… or their forever friend of Snq’eytmistn, and go into the woods and have an experience… that’s what I want for our kids."
– April Charlo, Snq’eytmistn co-founder, [00:00:03-00:00:09]

"We were punished for just about everything."
– Johnny Arlee, Salish Elder / Language Teacher, [00:00:40-00:00:42]
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 shore key records with the initiative—particularly since transparency can aid in further identification of children at these schools.

References & Additional Resources:


- 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.


- Think of Us. April 17, 2023. “Think of Us raised $47.5M through Audacious project.” Think of Us Online Press Release.

More MT Connections...

* For more on contemporary Indian issues and how they relate to the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians and Montana Social Studies Standards, see this MT OPI-IEFA lesson.

* The Montana Social Studies Standards established goals for history content standards (4) for grades 9-12 that are each student will: (c) identify ways in which people and groups exercise agency in difficult historical, contemporary, and tribal contexts; (d) analyze multiple, and complex causal factors that have shaped major events in US and world history, including American Indian history; (e) explain events in relation to both their intended and unintended consequences, including governmental policies impacting American Indians.

* The Supreme Court on Thursday, June 15, 2023 upheld a 1978 law aimed at keeping Native American adoptees with their tribes and traditions, giving preference under federal law to Native families. The Court ruled Native American tribes are political entities, not racial groups. The have distinctive tribal rights, including aspects of instituting Indian law and policy, and governing access to land and water, among other things. Read more here.

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