CONNECTION

Additional support of the NFI Film Club is provided by Humanities Montana, the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

BIG SKY FILM INSTITUTE
NATIVE FILMMAKER INITIATIVE FILM CLUB

FILM SYNOPSIS

A lifelong angler, Autumn Harry had never fished beyond the waters of her reservation — until she picked up a fly rod. On a trip to Washington to cast for steelhead, she unpacks what it means to overcome her own image of who is a fly fisher and uses the sport to fight for conservation.

Directed by Tracy Nguyen-Chung

BSFI CURRICULUM
Written in Collaboration with Anne des Rosier Grant

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USING THIS GUIDE

This educator guide is intended to provide context and background to the film CONNECTION, 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.

THE TEAM BEHIND THE FILM

Ciara Lacy
Producer
Autumn Harry
Subject
Tracy Nguyen-Chung
Director

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Big Sky Film Institute acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Ktunx̱e people. In addition, we honor the twelve Montana tribes that have cared for and honored the distinct and multifarious region we now refer to as Montana. We would also like to pay our respects to the Pyramid Lake Paiute Nation, whose 475,000 acre Reserve northeast of Reno, Nevada, includes the beautiful and extensive Pyramid Lake. This 27-mile-long by 11-mile wide “terminal desert” lake is considered a world-class fishery and is one of the Paiute people’s most “valuable assets.”
HELPFUL DEFINITIONS & CONCEPTS:

What is TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (TEK) and what does it have to do with CONNECTION?

- TEK is also called Native Science. TEK can be described as a body of knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples around the world. It is local knowledge and sacred knowledge. TEK is diverse and adaptive.

- TEK is an important complement to scientific ecology and has cultural and political significance. Ecology is a branch of Biology (the study of life) that looks at the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings or environment.

- TEK considers several levels of analysis and is defined as a complex knowledge-practice-belief system. Use of TEK provides long-term knowledge for climate change and planning built on relationships with Indigenous people around commonly-held environmental issues and topics.

- TEK provides direction in working through human-environment relationships. A focus on how these relationships are conceived is called Ethnoecology. TEK allows for mutually-beneficial decision-making, based on different perspectives and understanding and are critical to conservation.

- TEK is mainly subjective and qualitative, while western science is objective and quantitative. Western Science is based on academic and literate transmission and TEK is passed down orally from one generation to the next by elders.

- As life conditions and the Earth’s systems continue to rapidly change and our planet continues to experience mass extinctions and other cascading consequences for wildlife and ecosystems due to global climate change, more and more people and scientists around the world are looking at TEK for its inherent value in current & future management of Earth’s natural resources.

SOVEREIGNTY & TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty is a political concept. Tribal Sovereignty refers to the right of self-governance of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) without external interference. AI/AN have retained their sovereignty since time immemorial. The U.S. Constitution recognizes AI/AN as distinct governments that have the same power as other governments to regulate their internal affairs, such as determine their own membership requirements and law enforcement.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How does CULTURAL HERITAGE, which includes artifacts, sacred sites, and behaviors, influence current or future practice(s)?

- What are some of the ways people CONNECT with and honor their histories, traditions and place?

- What is the significance of the cui-ui and Lahontan Cutthroat Trout to the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribal community and surrounding area?

- How might TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (TEK) help Indigenous communities work toward addressing various aspects of CLIMATE CHANGE?

- What does SOVEREIGNTY have to do with WATER RIGHTS?

- How does documentary film spotlight stories and histories, and what is its role in underscoring diverse representation on the screen?
Teachers are encouraged to preview the content to give proper context for the film. The film’s content, themes, and message is most clearly connected to the following areas of Montana Core Content Standards (among others not listed):

MONTANA COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Social Studies Content Standards for Grades 6-8:
- SS.G.6-8.2 - Identify the location of places and regions in the world and understand their physical, political and cultural characteristics.
- SS.G.6-8.4 - Explain how the environment and geographic features have affected people and how people have affected the environment across Montana, the U.S., and the world.
- SS.H.6-8.3 - Analyze how, since European contact, historical events and policies have mutually impacted American Indian and European societies.
- SS.H.6-8.6 - Understand there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.
- SS.H.6-8.7 - Analyze how people’s perspectives shaped the historical narratives they created.

Social Studies Content Standards for Grades 9-12:
- SS.CG.9-12.2 - Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties and international agreements on the maintenance of domestic and international relationships.
- SS.CG.9-12.10 - Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good and protecting rights.
- SS.G.9-12.4 - Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them, including American Indians.

English Language Arts & Literacy Content Standards for Grades 9-12:
- RL.9-10.2 - Determine 2+ themes or central ideas of a text (the film), including those by and about American Indians; analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; and provide an objective summary of the text.
- RI.11-12.6 - Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text (the film), including texts by and about American Indians; analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; and provide an objective summary of the text.
- RI.11-12.7 - Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- W.11-12.9 - Draw evidence from literary or informational texts, including those 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 diverse sources, including American Indian sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

CONNECTION

TYING INTO ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING MONTANA INDIANS

As an educator, you can make connections to all Seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians as they relate to CONNECTION, but this film highlights the following EU’s particularly well. You can find the full list of EU’s at the OPI website here, or at https://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education-for-All.

Essential Understanding 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.

Key Concepts: 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 environments, for example through Native Science or TEK.

The Pyramid Lake Paiute, or kuyuikokado for “cui-ui eaters” are Northern Paiutes, a federally-recognized Tribe in the Great Basin Region of Nevada. In one of their Origin stories, Pyramid Lake was formed by the tears of “Stone Mother,” (a pyramid-shaped rock) that still sits on the eastern shore of the lake. Much of their economy centers around fishing.

There are many other related Tribal communities who identify as Paiute, including Independence Paiute, Kaibab Paiute, Paiute Tribe of Utah, San Juan Southern Paiute of Arizona, Shoshone-Paiute of Duck Valley and the Las Vegas Paiute Indian Colony.

Essential Understanding 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 Indians and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Key Concepts: Similar to other Indigenous communities, Paiute continue to use a variety of methods like TEK to transmit knowledge and teach youth their histories and diverse traditions.

The translation for Paiute is said by anthropologists to mean “water-Ute” or “true-Ute.” They have also referred to themselves as numa for “the people.” Many other Indigenous groups call themselves “real people.”

Essential Understanding 4
Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties, while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions: I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers; II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land; III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.

Key Concept: The Paiute Tribe signed the 1858 Treaty. In 1859, their 322,000 acre reservation was set aside then later withdrawn by President Grant. They operate under the Indian Reorganization Act Constitution and By-Laws, approved in 1936 by the U.S. Department of Interior. The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribal Council was formed between 1934-1936.
BEFORE WE BEGIN...A NOTE TO TEACHERS

It is important that all students feel safe and respected when studying the themes of CONNECTION. 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 response.

• 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.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) Consider this quote from Autumn Harry in CONNECTION:

“The biggest issue that we’ve had is the construction of the Derby Dam...it did cause our fish to go extinct. Thankfully, we were able to recover that species...Indigenous peoples have always been caretakers of the land. We still see ourselves in that role.” [00:01:17-00:01:36]

2) Share the following information on DAMS with students -

• Dams help to secure water, add to energy supplies, and protect from flooding
• Dams also disrupt rivers’ connectivity and threaten a river’s biodiversity
• Dams contribute to habitat fragmentation
• Dams have negative impacts on fish and other species
• Dams obstruct fish migration routes essential to spawning, feeding, and distribution

3) Have students answer the following questions and then make a list of the positive and negative impacts that they think are related to DAMS -

- WHY do you think this film is called CONNECTION?
- WHAT kind of connections do you think might be made in the film?
- HOW do you think these relate to responsibility?
- HOW do you think these connections relate to conservation?

WATCH THE FILM!
Pyramid Lake is a remnant of the once-expansive, ice-age Lake Lahontan, which once stretched across 83,000 square miles of Northern Nevada, California, and Idaho. The existing lake now covers 125,000 acres and is a “terminal desert lake,” formed at the end point of an enclosed watershed basin - with no outlets. Pyramid Lake sits at nearly 4,000 ft. above sea level. It’s 350 ft. deep at its deepest, 27 miles long and 11 miles wide.

Waves in the ancient lake carved out Hidden Cave, 21,000 years BCE. Artifacts found in cache pits in the cave date back to between 1800-1500 BCE and provide evidence of intensive human activity.

Hidden Cave was the site of an active archeological dig until the 1980’s and is now open for tours where visitors can view thousands of years of layered sediment. (See page 10 for the Hidden Cave Timeline).

Pyramid Lake is home to the largest subspecies of Cutthroat Trout and the 2 million-year-old Cui-ui sucker-fish. The distinctive Lahontan Trout are the only native trout in the Great Basin. By the late 1930’s, Lahontan Trout were nonexistent in Pyramid Lake due to commercial fishing and diversion dams. Dams were built along the Truckee River to provide water to a growing population, drastically lowering the lake’s water level and cutting off fish spawning grounds.

A fish hatchery in the 1940’s successfully restored Lahontan Trout to Pyramid Lake. In the 1980’s, a subspecies of Lahontan trout were discovered at Pilot-Peak, near the Nevada-Utah border. After years of research, it was determined these fish were the actual ancestors of the first Lahontan Cutthroat that typically grew up to 50 lbs in the early 1900’s. Three hatcheries now supply Pyramid Lake with Cutthroat Trout.

Despite dessication in the 20th Century and recent water shortages, anglers still flock to Pyramid Lake for world-class fishing. The Lahontan Trout in this beautiful desert lake continue to grow to record sizes. Pyramid Lake also provides the only habitat in the world where the Cui-ui fish, endemic to Pyramid Lake, continue to thrive and see population increase.

• Montana tribes, like the Salish and Kootenai, have fished for time immemorial, developing certain technologies, such as the one above, to capture, dry and store different varieties of fish. Many tribes have programs like tribal-specific Fish & Games that aim to educate, restore and protect fish and wildlife.

• ACTIVITY: Share the above archival photo with your students and ask them to consider which fish might be caught in the Kootenai River. Have them pick a tribe and look into the different fishing practices of those tribes, or pick a Montana river and ask students to reflect on the fish species that are native to those waterways.
VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) Exploring Native Science and Western Science:

   TEACHERS

   1) Copy the information on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) from Page 3 and share it with students.
   2) Have students take turns reading through the information on TEK aloud. Take some time after each section to answer any questions students have, to define any unfamiliar words and to discuss the content.
   3) Have a class discussion on both Native Science and Western Science examples that the students found within the film CONNECTION.
   4) In talking about the examples, ask students to tell if and how both Native Science and Western Science are related.

   STUDENTS

   1) Compare & Contrast Native Science and Western Science, either by making two lists under each heading and/or drawing a Venn Diagram (a double or triple comparison).
   2) Add content to the two lists gathered from the shared information on TEK and add additional content from outside resources, i.e. books, the internet, references listed here.
   3) Or, add your own ideas and be prepared to say why you added them under the topic.
   4) Write a one-page Descriptive or Expository Essay to describe or explain how Native Science and Western Science compare & contrast using examples from CONNECTION.
   5) In the essay, address specific questions, such as:
      - How is Native Science (TEK) mainly Qualitative and Subjective?
      - How is Western Science mainly Quantitative and Objective?
      - How is Native Science knowledge-practice-belief?

2) Exploring Conservation

   Reflect and explore what connections are made throughout the film.

   ANSWER THE FOLLOWING Q’S:

   - What do the connections teach us about Indigenous groups’ perspectives and how does Native Science relate to conservation?
   - How does a place-based education shape peoples’ perspectives?
   - What does the geographic location, its features and the environment have to do with it?
   - How do the political, cultural and social climates come into play? Or traditions?

   CONSIDER THESE QUOTES FROM THE FILM

   “Indigenous peoples have always been caretakers of the land... we still see ourselves within that role.” [00:01:32-00:01:36]
   “My mom and dad started taking me fishing from a young age.” [00:01:40-00:01:46]
   “Within our traditions here, if you catch your first fish, you’re supposed to give that to an elder, so I remember my first fish, I gave it to my grandma.” [00:01:50-00:02:00]
   “It’s really cool that we’re going to be on this river that merges with the ocean.” [00:02:55-00:03:00]
   “I met Sara last year at Pyramid Lake at a Trout Camp.” [00:03:39-00:03:43]
   “Whenever I travel to places, I always think about the original stewards of those lands and the territory that we’re on when we’re fishing.” [00:05:30-00:05:45]
**EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY #1 - PYRAMID LAKE FISHERIES**
- “The goal of Pyramid Lake Fisheries is to maintain both a recreational and trophy fishery for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, while working collaboratively with partners to protect, conserve, and restore aquatic resources, fish habitats, and water quality within the Pyramid Lake - Truckee River watershed.”
- **ACTIVITY:** Students Propose how these goals can be achieved with balance between the Paiute communities of the Pyramid Lake region while meeting the demand of upstream users of the Truckee River.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY #2 - GREAT BEAR SEA**
- **ACTIVITY:** Reiterate the importance of harvesting at certain times of the year and how managing resources is a critical step to ensure those resources are available for the future. When one thing changes in an ecosystem, other things including humans, are impacted. Demonstrate the connection between these systems.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY #3 - FISH WARS**
- Have students review The FISH WARS from the Smithsonian site below and answer the question: What kinds of actions can lead to justice? [PNW Fish Wars, Smithsonian: [https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pnw-fish-wars/](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pnw-fish-wars/)]
- **KEEP IN MIND** – “Treaties are legal promises between nations and are the “supreme Law of the Land” as established through Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. Pacific Northwest Native Nations signed treaties with the U.S. government in order to secure a portion of their historical lands and guarantee perpetual access to ancestral fishing, hunting, and gathering sites, known as “usual and accustomed” grounds.”

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY #4 - MONTANA WATER RIGHTS**
- **ACTIVITY:** Write whether you agree or disagree with the following, and why? “In the State of Montana, owners of Water Rights have only the right to use some of that water. The State of Montana owns all of the water in the state. The right to use the water has been recognized as a form of property right that is based on actual use of the water. Intent to no longer use the water or not using it can lead to abandonment of a water right.” Language from the Montana Constitution states, Article IX – “All surface, underground, flood, and atmospheric waters within the boundaries of the state are the property of the state for the use of its people and are subject to appropriation for beneficial uses as provided by law.” Compare with Nevada Law.

**DOUBLE ENTRY CHART + DISCUSSION**
(CAN BE APPLIED TO ANY OF THE ABOVE ACTIVITIES)

*Worksheet attached (Page 15)*

As students watch the film have them take notes in the attached Double/Entry Chart provided to have students remember specific moments in the film. After watching, ask students what they wrote down:
- What moments stood out to them?
- Was there anything in the film that changed what you knew or what you thought you knew?
- Many documentaries are also narrative, meaning they tell stories! How do we articulate certain histories through a good story?
  - (Bring this back to the film. From which perspective is the film’s story told? Do they narrate? How much time are watching versus listening? Make a list!)

**SUPPORTING AN EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION:**
To most effectively track learning throughout viewing and discussion, have students reflect on what they know about the issues being presented in the films. With their Double Entry viewing chart they will have written down observations and inquiries. The following is a short list of key terms and vocabulary to help students articulate their analysis:

**KEY TERMS (to sound like a professional):**

**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.
- Questions to ask students:
  - What information is given away?
  - What still don’t we know?
  - Who are we hearing from/who is interviewed (who is not?)?
- Examples of Expository Information:
  - Shot of a place/location and its landmarks
  - Headlines/printed materials
  - Voice over
  - People getting upset over something
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.

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

SUBJECT: the topic/focal point of the film

- Questions to ask students:
  - What is the general subject of this film?
    - Ex: CONNECTION follows Autumn Harry, who unpacks what it means to overcome her own image of who is a fly fisher and who uses the sport to fight for conservation.

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!)

- Questions to ask students:
  1. What does the protagonist/subject learn about themselves as they pursue a goal?
  2. 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?

PLOT + CHARACTER:

- CHARACTER-DRIVEN: film where the action of the film emerges from wants and needs of the characters

  - Questions to ask students:
    1. 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

  - Questions to ask students:
    1. Who is this film about? Is it about a person or an event?

Double Entry Viewing Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write down details, or quotes from the film that stand out to you. Who’s being interviewed? Are there animations? Is this happening now or is it recounting something in the past?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WONDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does this make you think? Write down observations, questions, or comments you might have related to what you wrote down in the NOTICE column.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References & Additional Resources:


