In a remote Peruvian Amazon rainforest, an Ashéninka boy must overcome his fears and catch a giant catfish using only a hook to begin his adult journey.
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USING THIS GUIDE
This educator guide is intended to provide context and background to the film Shirampari, 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.

Shirampari: Legacies of the River

THE TEAM BEHIND THE FILM

Lucia Flórez
Director

Chemi Pérez
Producer

Diego Pérez Romero
Director of Photography

This film spotlights:

The Ashéninka
Indigenous Group of Peru, located in the Yurúa District of the Ucayali region in the Peruvian Amazon

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Big Sky Film Institute acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispell people. *

In addition, we honor the twelve Montana Tribal Nations that have cared for and honored the distinct and multifarious region we now refer to as Montana. We pay our respects to and honor the Ashéninka and Ashaninka people. While the Ashaninka are largest Indigenous group in Peru’s Amazon, the Ashéninka are a smaller social group that lives between Peru and Brazil and have differences in language and culture from the Ashaninka.

Since the Spanish Conquest in the 1500’s, coupled with colonization and Christianization, the history of both groups has been one of intrusion and resistance. Sustainable farming, rainforest management and providing eco-tourism experiences are some of the projects they are engaged in toward restoring cultural integrity of their Indigenous communities and protecting the Amazon’s remote regions. (permsouth.com/ashaninka).

*For additional information see the Sélis and Qlispé Culture Committee website.
KEY CONCEPTS FOR ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2
• There is great diversity among tribal nations and Indigenous individuals.
• Many communities thrived for generations before colonization in their biodiverse ecoregions.
• Indigenous people have held intimate relationships with their environments throughout history, impacting what we know about the land and what a balanced education means.
• They continue place-based practices and indigenous pedagogies that are reliant on ancestral, intergenerational knowledge.

KEY CONCEPTS FOR ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 3
• Indigenous ideologies, customs, values, and languages are still practiced today.
• They are incorporated into how Indigenous communities manage and govern their affairs.
• They are persistent and as valid as other such traditions from around the world.
• They must be accorded the same respect, relevance, and representation.

KEY CONCEPTS FOR ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 6
• History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

KEY CONCEPTS FOR ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 7
• American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

• What role does history, traditional ecological knowledge and cultural integrity play in Shirampari: Legacies of the River?

• Why is it important to learn about and share the cultural, historical and ecological traditions of Indigenous groups such as the Ashéninka?

• What is Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) or Ancestral Knowledge and what role does it play in efforts to mitigate effects of climate change?

• How can TEK help Indigenous communities address the various environmental impacts currently occurring?

• What role does family heritage play in cultural preservation?

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

1) Film Trailer – Identifying the Hook

Before you begin...ask students, "What is the role of a film trailer?"
- One main purpose is to give a feel for what the full film is about without giving away the plot.

WATCH the trailer for Shirampari: Legacies of the River (https://vimeo.com/695834794) and...
- IDENTIFY themes and ideas addressed in the trailer.
- ASK: Who and what is this film about?
- ASK: What are the issues being presented?

2) Film Trailer – Reflect & Discuss

Have students discuss the effectiveness of the trailer as a hook to the film’s story.
- Does it make them want to watch the film? Why/why not? What questions did it spark?
- What are some things you might infer, or predict, from the trailer and title of the film?
- What were some of the themes identified?

COMPARE lists of themes with the rest of the class and introduce the term Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK, defined on pg 9), or Ancestral Knowledge, as a possible theme. Summarize actions from the trailer that might lead students to think about this concept as a theme throughout the film.

These activities explore EUs 3 & 6 of OPI’s Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

EXPLORING VISUAL LANGUAGE

VISUAL IMAGERY

- CONSIDER this Sundance Film Festival interview with Diego Perez Romero, the director of photography for Shirampari.
  Romero wanted the film to be:
  1. Immersive
  2. Emotional
  3. Dynamic
  4. Magical

ASK STUDENTS, Do you think he achieved each one of the above? Why? How? Consider asking:
- Does underwater filming in water with low visibility make the film more interesting and/or unsettling?
- Does the wide-angle lens “reinforce” the connection between the people and the environment?
- What other elements in the film do you think meet each ‘feeling’ above?
- What are your favorite scenes in the film and why?

This activity explores EUs 2 & 6 (see pg 3) of OPI’s Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.

CREATE A STORY MAP

- Story Maps are a strategy that students can use to summarize, map, outline, or graphically depict the essential elements of a text, film, or story, and respond to challenges or controversies contained within the story.

PROVIDE information about Shirampari for a broader audience through a graphic/illustrative story map. Similar to having students identify characters, plot and setting, this activity focuses on how specific sections can be organized graphically under each topic below:
  1. Introduction
  2. Indigenous History of Place
  3. Cultural Importance
  4. Current Challenge/s
  5. Proposed Solution/s
  6. Relationship to other issue or impact

HAVE students get in groups of 3-4 to present on one of the above sections. Order presentations in the numerical order above and finish by having students note how each presentation builds on one another.

This activity explores EUs 2, 3 & 6 (see pg 3) of OPI’s Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.
EXPLORING QUOTES & KEY TERMS

“Post-Viewing Activities

“Cut it thinner... thinner so you can bend it easily.”
- Pedro (Ricky’s grandfather) to Arlindo (father) [00:00:17-00:00:20]

Now it is your turn... you have to hold the stick firmly so you can trace a nice line.”
- Arlindo (father) to Ricky (son) [00:13:25-00:13:40]

“Now it is your turn... you have to hold the stick firmly so you can trace a nice line.”
- Arlindo (father) to Ricky (son) [00:13:25-00:13:40]

“I have a lot to teach you now that we are at the river beach.”
- Arlindo (father) to Ricky (son) [00:02:41-00:02:47]

“Now it is your turn... you have to hold the stick firmly so you can trace a nice line.”
- Arlindo (father) to Ricky (son) [00:13:25-00:13:40]

EXPLORING QUOTES & KEY TERMS

All of these QUOTES from “Shirampari” are examples of ancestral knowledge or traditional knowledge that is being passed down from the older generation to the younger generation.

- Arlindo (father) to Ricky (son) [00:03:04-00:03:14]

“You need to hold your breath right... to submerge in the depths of the water.”
- Arlindo (father) to Ricky (son) [00:09:17-00:09:24]

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WHAT IS TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (TEK)?

- Traditional knowledge systems are ways of understanding the world around us, based on observations that are accumulated, in many ways like Western science.

- TEK and Ancestral Knowledge is knowledge about the ecology or environment of any given place that is passed down through the generations that is practiced, specific to and within, certain belief systems, cultural perspectives, and/or worldviews, often encompassing “sacred ecology.” (Berkes, 2017)

*For more information, explore the book *Sacred Ecology* by Fikret Berkes (Routledge 2017).
Montana youth sued state leaders, alleging their constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment is being violated. Based in part on the state's recent enactment of a 2023 law removing consideration of greenhouse gas emissions in the permitting of energy projects, the plaintiffs outlined climate change impacts they're experiencing, such as rivers running dry and longer forest fire seasons.

**References & Additional Resources:**


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World. PBS News Hour. Nov. 3, 2022. *In the Amazon rainforest, a giant fish makes a comeback thanks to settler and Indigenous cooperation*. Carauari, Brazil. This article is about the restoration efforts of another large fish in the Amazon, the air-breathing pirarucu (arapaima), which were threatened with extinction due to illegal and unsustainable fishing practices.

URL: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/in-the-amazon-rainforest-a-giant-fish-makes-a-comeback-thanks-to-settler-and-indigenous-cooperation#-text=Now%20they%20are%20part%20of%20Pirarucu%20are%20fostering.

World Atlas. *The Juruá (Yuruá) River of South America*. The Juruá River, or Rio Yuruá, is one of the most economically important rivers in South America, arising out of the Ucayali Highlands of Peru. Its slow winding current flows through distinctively biodiverse floodplains and forests for over 1100 miles. It is fairly easy to navigate up to where it joins the Amazon River. About “90% of its length” flows in Brazilian territory. The Peruvian portion of the river is home to about 185 fish species, and the Brazilian portion has 110+ species of fish.


Special Thanks To:

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**Shirampari: Legacies of the River**


Survival International Galleries. The Ashaninka. URL: https://www.survivalinternational.org/galleries/ashaninka


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). For information on TEK, see *Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fact Sheet* (PDF) and the USFWS National Native American Programs site for information on federal and tribal conservation efforts. For USFWS project summaries of the 2022 Tribal Wildlife Grants program awardees for federally recognized Tribes. URL: https://www.fws.gov/media/traditional-ecological-knowledge-fact-sheet.