

a TELUS original



# AITAMAAKO'TAMISSKAPI NATOSI BEFORE THE SUN

TAXAM FILMS PRESENTS AITAMAAKO'TAMISSKAPI NATOSI: BEFORE THE SUN  
MUSIC BY NADIA AND JASON BURNSTICK CINEMATOGRAPHERS BEN GIESBRECHT AND LUKE CONNOR EDITOR TANYA MARYNIAK  
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BEFORETHESUNFILM.COM



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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the California Film Institute's DocLands screening of *Aitamaako'tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun*.

We believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom, and these curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text.

The discussion questions on the following page offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using the suggested essay prompt for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CAFILM Education Team

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the central issues addressed in this documentary? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. What are some surprising facts you learned from this film? How do these facts shape your understanding of the central issue of the film?
3. Does this documentary feel objective and/or balanced in its presentation of the issues? Why or why not?
4. What did you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
5. Were there any perspectives relevant to the central issues of the documentary that were not included? How would those voices have changed the film?
6. What are some background details you noticed in this film? How do these details provide information about the time or place in which this film was made?
7. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
8. How is Indian Relay similar or different from other sports?
9. How does Logan's family support her passion for Indian Relay?
10. What larger themes does the documentary explore beyond the sport of Indian Relay? How are these themes expressed in the film?

## INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPT

1. *Aitamaako'tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun* follows Logan Red Crow, a young Siksika woman who pursues her passion for Indian Relay. Through Logan's experiences, the film explores themes of perseverance, identity, and cultural heritage.

Reflect on a personal hobby or practice that you are passionate about, and compare and contrast Logan's life with your own experiences. Consider how Logan's passion for Indian Relay connects her to her heritage, and describe how your hobby or practice connects you to your own cultural heritage or background.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Indian Relay

<https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/indian-relay>

A 2013 PBS documentary on the sport of Indian Relay.

### Blackfoot Caretakers Of The Land

<https://youtu.be/kksLC6TIOyE>

A 3-minute BBC web video featuring a Blackfoot elder explaining some of the history and cultural practices of the Blackfoot people.

### Indian Relay Celebrates History And Culture Through Horse Racing

<https://www.npr.org/2019/08/21/752820760/indian-relay-celebrates-history-and-culture-through-horse-racing>

A 3-minute National Public Radio piece on the history and practice of Indian Relay.

### Blackfoot Confederacy

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/blackfoot-nation>

Canadian Encyclopedia entry on the history and culture of the Blackfoot people.

## STANDARDS

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. summary of the text.

## ABOUT CAFILM

The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CAFILM Education programs.

### Follow the California Film Institute on social media



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## ABOUT THE FILM

Set on the golden plains of Blackfoot Territory, this thrilling portrait of a young Siksika woman follows her journey as she prepares for one of the most dangerous horse races in the world—on bareback. A champion in the making, Logan Red Crow is an Indian Relay rider who vaults from horse to horse in short, exhilarating races. In addition to her skill and sheer grit, Logan has a loving family, an elite group of horses, and a home on her ancestral lands. As she pushes toward her goal, the connections between animal and human, family and community, ancestral tradition and contemporary life, are shown to be profound and lasting.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR: BANCHI HANUSE

Banchi Hanuse is Nuxalk from Bella Coola, Nuxalkulmc. She is the co-founder and station manager of Nuxalk Radio whose mission is to keep the Nuxalk language alive, assert Nuxalk Nationhood and promote the stewardship and protection of Nuxalk homelands. She has directed the short film *Uulx* (2015) and short docs *Cry Rock* (2010) and *Nuxalk Radio* (2020). *Aitamaako'tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun* (2022) is her first feature length documentary.



## ABOUT THE BLACKFOOT PEOPLE

Modern Blackfoot Territory is a region in North America that spans across present-day borders of the United States and Canada. The Blackfoot people are comprised of four distinct tribes: the Siksika, Kainai-Blood Tribe, Peigan-Piikani, and Aamskapi Pikuni. The majority of the population resides in Canada, with over 35,000 members of the Blackfoot Confederacy in the country. There are approximately 15,560 enrolled Blackfeet tribal members in the United States and 22,490 people of Blackfoot ancestry in Canada.

Today, the Blackfoot people continue to maintain their cultural heritage through traditional practices and events. One of the most notable events is the Indian Relay, a fast-paced equestrian sport that involves a team of three horses, one rider and three additional teammates who manage the horses. The rider must leap from one horse to another in each lap, making a total of three laps around a track. Indian Relay events are held several times a year in Canada, Wyoming, South Dakota, Montana, and other parts of North America.



### Sources:

<https://blackfootconfederacy.ca/>

<https://tribalnations.mt.gov/Directory/BlackfeetNation>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/blackfoot-nation>

<https://horsenationsindianrelay.com/>

# BEFORE VIEWING: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

## Directions:

Before watching the films, respond to this anticipation guide to consider some of the themes in the film. Read each statement below. If you agree with the statement, explain why in the left-hand box under the Agree column. If you disagree, explain why in the box under the Disagree column.

**AGREE**

**STATEMENT**

**DISAGREE**

Sports competitions are an important way to connect to one's cultural heritage.

The bond between humans and animals can be as strong as between humans and other humans.

Success in sports is mostly a reflection of individual determination and ability.

It's fairer for everyone when sports have separate divisions based on gender.

## DURING VIEWING: EMPATHY MAP

**Directions:** In *Aitamaako'tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun*, we follow the journey of Logan Red Crow, a skilled Indian Relay rider. In this empathy map activity, fill out each quadrant to better understand the Logan's experiences and passion for the Indian Relay.

### HEAR

What do people say about Logan's passion for the Indian Relay? How do her family and community support her?



### SEE

What does Logan's life look like on her ancestral lands? What challenges does she face in her community and the wider world?

### FEEL

What are Logan's thoughts and emotions about the Indian Relay? What motivates her to keep going, even in the face of challenges?

### SAY/DO

What are Logan's actions and words like on and off the track? How does she communicate with her family and her horses?



# AFTER VIEWING: RESPONSE QUESTIONS

**Directions:**

Respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your interpretation.

1. What obstacles does Logan face as a young Siksika woman competing in the Indian Relay, and how does she overcome them? How does the fact she Logan is female affect her Indian Relay pursuits?

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2. What physical abilities are necessary for success in Indian Relay? What additional abilities, skills, or supports are necessary?

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3. How did Logan’s relationships with her horses and her family shape her experiences and attitudes towards Indian Relay? How did these relationships contribute to the themes of the film?

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4. What techniques do the filmmakers use to alternate between scenes of tranquility and scenes of exhilaration in the film? How do the filmmakers convey the relationship between Logan and her horses?

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5. Revisit your responses on the Anticipation Guide. Has your opinion on any statement changed? Explain what details from the movie either changed or affirmed your prior knowledge and beliefs.

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# AFTER VIEWING: FOUR C'S

## Directions:

Respond to each prompt in complete sentences, citing specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

### CONNECTIONS

What connections do you draw between the film and your own life or your other learning?

### CHALLENGE

What ideas, positions, or assumptions do you want to challenge or debate in the film?

### CONCEPTS

What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the film?

### CHANGES

What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the film, either for you or others?

Adapted from Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/the-4-cs>

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY: DESIGN YOUR OWN INDIAN RELAY TEAM UNIFORM

## Directions:

Indian Relay is a sport that requires both skill and style. The riders and their horses wear unique and distinctive uniforms that reflect their team's identity and culture. For this extension activity, imagine that you are a member of an Indian Relay team and design a uniform that represents your team's unique spirit and traditions. Here are some steps to follow:

- 1. Research:** Watch the film *Aitamaako'tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun* and think about the different uniforms worn by Logan and her competitors. Search online for other Indian Relay racers and their uniforms. Take note of any colors, patterns, and symbols that are commonly used.
- 2. Brainstorm:** Think about what makes your team special. What values and beliefs do you want to express through your uniform? What colors or patterns are meaningful to your culture or heritage? Consider the environment where you will be racing and how your uniform can help you stand out.
- 3. Sketch:** Use pencil and paper or a digital drawing tool to sketch out your ideas. Start with a rough outline of the uniform, including the shape and placement of any symbols or designs. Experiment with different color schemes and patterns until you find something that feels right. If you need a free digital drawing tool, Krita (<https://krita.org>) can be installed on Windows and Mac computers, and Magma (<https://magma.com>) is a free browser-based application.
- 4. Refine:** Once you have a basic design, refine it by adding details and texture. Think about how the uniform will look in motion and how it will be seen from a distance. Make sure that the design is practical and comfortable for the riders and horses.
- 5. Present:** When you are happy with your design, present it to your class. Explain the meaning behind the colors, symbols, and patterns you chose. Share how your uniform represents your team's identity and culture.
- 6. Bonus:** For an extra challenge, consider creating a physical version of your uniform using materials like fabric, paint, or markers.



# ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

## What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals through-

out the world, with some focusing on particular themes, such as highlighting LGBTQ films/filmmakers, specific cultural groups, or particular genres. While some of the more famous festivals may be in distant locations, there are hundreds of small festivals spread through every corner of the world and, increasingly, festivals are using streaming access to make it easier for the public to view their curated programs.

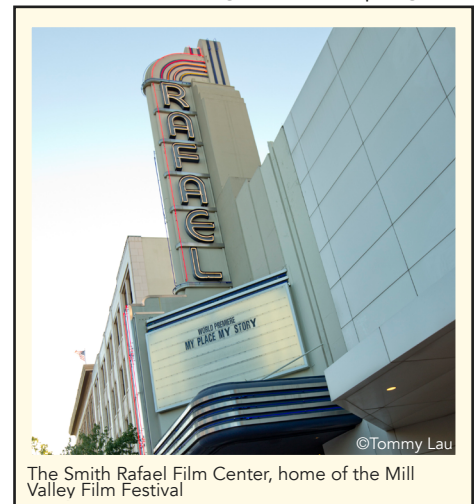
## History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Since founding the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1977, Executive Director Mark Fishkin has shepherded this once small, three-day showcase into an eleven-day, internationally acclaimed cinema event presenting a wide variety of new films from around the world in an engaged, community setting.

The festival has an impressive track record of launching new films and new filmmakers, and has earned a reputation as a filmmakers' festival

by celebrating the best in American independent and foreign films, alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF, gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial setting.

Each year the festival welcomes more than 200 filmmakers, representing more than 50 countries. Screening sections include world cinema, US cinema, documentaries, family films, and shorts programs. Annual festival initiatives include Active Cinema, a forum for films that aim to engage audiences and transform ideas into action; Mind the Gap, a platform for inclusion and equity; and ¡Viva el Cine!, a showcase of Latin American and Spanish-language films. Festival guests also enjoy an exciting selection of Tributes, Spotlights and Galas throughout the program.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

## Questions to Consider:

1. What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community?
2. How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater?
3. What qualities do you think festival curators might look for in a film? If you are watching a festival film with a class/school group, what aspects of the film do you think made it appealing to the curators?

## Get Involved!

Many film festivals, including the Mill Valley Film Festival, have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway ([www.filmfreeway.com](http://www.filmfreeway.com)) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. The call for entries for MVFF opens in late February and closes in June. Youth filmmakers do not have to pay an entry fee. MVFF also offers many opportunities for volunteering. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.