FLICKER FEATHER FILMS: VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY, INDIGENOUS FILM, AND DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

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Dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Anthropology

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

May 2023

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Abstract

In order to contribute 21st-century tools to educational settings, this dissertation draws from the growing subfield, multimodal anthropology, which includes, but is not limited to visual anthropology and film. This dissertation is composed of a series of documentary films created by an Indigenous filmmaker. When combined with Indigenous filmmaking, tribal cultures can begin to share their points of view through self-representation. Indigenous methodologies helped to frame the documentary films I made for my dissertation by aiming to combat the perpetuation of stereotypes and misrepresentation by non-Native filmmakers. Documentary films within anthropology still have validity in academia if the goal is to make works of art. A film without everything explained to the viewer, or student for that matter, encourages further research by the viewer. This also alludes to the potential that anthropological films have in reaching the public with what anthropology departments are working on and disseminating into the community. Such films can add engaging platforms and profound layers of learning in college classrooms.
This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and kids. Thanks for all the support and for believing in me. I love you all.

Note to reader:
This is the written portion of this dissertation. The other portion of my requirements (six short documentaries) are available to watch at the internet links supplied at the end of the Introduction chapter.

When discussing the Apsáalooke tribe, I will use Apsáalooke and Crow interchangeably, as they are synonymous for the same Indigenous/Native American group of people.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This is also a pedagogical issue. Not only are images, recordings, artworks and other media central to the teaching of anthropology, but there is often a point at which students ask if they can produce a film, performance, photographic essay or sound recording as part of a dissertation. In order to do so, they usually have to justify it in text and explain why it is necessary and what it is doing that a conventional ethnographic text could not. (Cox et al, 2016: 7)

I’ve been shooting and editing film for over twenty years. While working on my masters at the University of Montana, I found the subdiscipline of visual anthropology, which allowed me to combine my love of film with cultural anthropology (Lopez, 2017). Studying here in Missoula, Montana, allowed me to tap into the tribal cultures of the state, primarily my own tribe, the Apsáalooke. This dissertation follows the three-publication format with three of my published short documentary films standing in for written publications. In addition to those three, I have added three more of my documentaries to the analysis chapter that share common threads relating to my goals to advance and integrate visual anthropology, Indigenous film, and documentary filmmaking in academia.

A big part of what I see myself doing in the world of anthropology coincides with what Jenny Chio describes about Indigenous media creators and how they "are united by a commitment to representing the experiences, perspectives, and values of Indigenous communities from their points of view, rather than from that of dominant, mainstream society" (Chio, 2021: 8). Indigenous film is an important form of anthropological expression. It is a unique medium for conveying the stories and experiences of Indigenous peoples, which can often be difficult to communicate through traditional forms of writing due to language and cultural barriers. Through films, Indigenous filmmakers can document and share their culture, history, values, and ideas with the world. Indigenous film can also act as a powerful tool to raise awareness of social issues that are
important to Indigenous communities, while simultaneously practicing self-representation in a world that constantly undermines tribal sovereignty (Ginsburg 1994.; Raheja, 2010).

The recent Charles King book, *Gods of the Upper Air*, explores ways in which Franz Boas and his students affected American anthropology in the early 1900s, and influenced the state of social issues in the United States and beyond. In the book, King mentions a letter one of Boas’ students, Yankton Dakota anthropologist and educator Ella Deloria, sent him. Ella Deloria wrote Boaz discussing the importance of first being a Dakota woman, rather than prioritizing being an anthropologist, in which she could follow cultural protocols including “how to make a gift, how to make the right kind, how to eat properly with people, [and] how to call them by the correct kinship terms” (King 2019: 238). Deloria saw this as advantageous when interviewing people from her tribe, rather than working as an outsider with sterile academic procedures guiding their interactions. Similarly, after interviewing a Crow person for a documentary, I always give them four gifts, as is custom to do when you ask for a story or knowledge from someone.

Deloria is among the first Native American anthropologists to go into her own community and record information about her own people; an “emic” anthropologist. Under Boas, she had found success recording cultural information with her own people, where previously some of her colleagues had struggled. Following this example, from some of the earliest history of American anthropology, I am continuing to do what Deloria was doing then, going into my own communities and collaborating with the people.

The use of documentary filmmaking has allowed Indigenous filmmakers to bring attention to topics such as language loss, land rights, environmental destruction, and cultural survival, and that helps with creating a platform for advocacy, education, and dialogue. Indigenous films can also be used to facilitate cultural understanding and promote positive relationships between
Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people (Flores 2004). By sharing stories of strength, resilience, beauty, and creativity, Indigenous films have the power to open hearts and minds to different cultures in ways that traditional media cannot.

In terms of applying this type of filmmaking in academia, "there have also been numerous initiatives and efforts to change established scholarly practices. Increasing numbers of anthropology programs now accept non-text-based scholarship as part of degree requirements, and more and more discussions have emerged on the evaluation of non-textual scholarship within the discipline" (Chio, 2021:3). The notion that visual anthropology is in competition with the text-based way of doing anthropology, only slows the progress that departments in the discipline could be making to both increase enrollment rates and increase community involvement.

A 2016 book called *Beyond Text?* is concerned with questioning this dichotomy between the written word and multimedia works. There have been "attempts within visual anthropology to recognize the ethnographic value of artistic works and practices and have also highlighted the capacity of anthropological film-making... to overcome the descriptive limits of text in evoking qualities of presence and feeling" (Cox et al, 2016:4). In the Introduction of their book, editors Cox, Irving, and Wright express that their "aim is to argue that there may be critical and creative competencies at work in artistic, non-textual or media productions and show how these have the capacity to offer anthropological insights of equivalent value to the standards set by the written text" (2016: 7). The book also includes an accompanying DVD with multimedia files that are directly mentioned in the essays. This is just one example of how multimedia can be distributed within the publishing world of anthropology.

An example from *Beyond Text?* describes a documentary that was shunned by multiple ethnographic film festivals, comes from Montana. The film is called *Sweetgrass* and is about sheep
and sheepherders trekking through the Absaroka-Beartooth mountain range to a summer pasture. When asked if they would describe their work as visual anthropology, Lucien Castaing-Taylor responds with, "I'm never clear about anything; are you? Isn't cognitive and sensory muddle the human condition? I'm not desperate for Sweetgrass to be recuperated as a work of visual anthropology, but simply because it doesn't tell you what it's about, and because there aren't that many words in it, doesn't for me mean it isn't a work of anthropology" (Cox et al, 2016: 154). Similarly, I consider my methods of filmmaking matter in this modern world, where the landscape itself becomes a character in anthropological studies, ethnographies, and documentaries.

David MacDougall’s (2019) book, The Looking Machine: Essays on Cinema, Anthropology and Documentary Filmmaking, contains great ideas that have both influenced and coincided with my own ideas about visual anthropology. MacDougall is one of the leading figures in scholarship exploring the role documentary films play in the growth of anthropological filmmaking. With his decades of experience making documentaries, some with his wife, in Africa, Australia, Europe and India, he adds many points of discussion in his book. MacDougall notes,

increasingly anthropologists are eager to add filmmaking to their traditional methods of note-taking and writing. In this anthropologist filmmakers like Jean Rouch have led the way. Filmmakers trained in anthropology are also more common, and indeed the separation of the two domains is beginning to look outdated. Younger anthropologists increasingly regard filming skills as a necessary part of their research repertoire (145).

During the filming of my first documentary while I was a PhD student, I came up with a name for my YouTube channel. During that time, I had a growing interest in the
northern flicker, which is a type of woodpecker prevalent around Missoula, Montana, where I presently live. One of the things that drew me to this bird is the vibrant orange color of its feathers. It had become a goal of mine to find a flicker feather on the ground. One day after filming an interview, I spotted one of these feathers sticking out of the grass. I took it as a good sign to go with the name I was thinking about: Flicker Feather Films.

Even before I began to study visual anthropology, I daydreamed about having a YouTube channel dedicated to sharing with the public what students like me were working on in the anthropology department. Naturally, after realizing the significance that Indigenous film and culturally centered documentary films can have in anthropology classrooms and beyond, I plan to upload my future anthropological films to the Flicker Feather Films channel on YouTube, where it will be free and accessible. All the films that will be discussed in the analysis chapter are available to watch online (links provided below).

Links to the Flicker Feather Films Dissertation Documentaries

Watch Apsáalooke Shields, Now We Sing, Roots & Berries, and Where They Fight at the following link:
youtube.com/@flickerfeatherfilms

Watch Indigenous Smoke at PBS.org:
https://www.pbs.org/show/indigenous-smoke/

Watch We Come From the Land at the following link:
https://youtu.be/uaUDqhtNr4A
Chapter 2: Methods of Filming and Editing

There is the clichéd but accurate bit of advice given to beginning writers—write about what you know best. Why shouldn't ethnographic film makers do likewise?

(Ruby, 1995: 81)

A discussion about methods of filming must first start with the equipment. I use a Canon DSLR with an old lens from a 35mm photography camera, which allows for good exposure at different light levels and has a manual focus ring. For recording the sound, I use a Rode VideoMic Pro plugged directly into the camera. I also utilize a budget friendly video tripod, which differs from a regular photography tripod with its smooth pan movement. I do all my editing in Final Cut Pro X on a MacBook Pro laptop. Final Cut Pro X is what I consider an entry-level but professional editing software, although many others prefer Adobe Premier editing software. However, I should point out for developing visual anthropology and documentary programs, Adobe Premier requires a reoccurring subscription fee, while Final Cut Pro X does not. Although, both do offer student and educational discounts.

So far in my filmmaking I utilize sit-down interviews, action interviews, and b-roll footage primarily. It is imperative that, if you would like to make a documentary film that elicits candid and revelatory responses from interviewees you must get to know your camera equipment well, so the setup and operation of the equipment does not hinder the filming process, or disturb the person being filmed (MacDougall, 2019:148). More insight to my filming and editing methods will follow in the next chapter, when specific examples come up in the analysis of each film.

One defining feature of my filmmaking process is that I do not require a pre-interview of my interviewees before actually filming. Some ethnographic filmmakers believe the pre-interview to be a vital step, in order for them to come up with a narrative before a camera is even turned on.
(Gill, 2014 72). I, on the other hand, feel that this method does not work for me, especially since I want my interviews to generate honest and genuine reactions. Being that most of the people I interview are Native American, I feel that the process of a pre-interview to be burdensome, especially when sharing cultural knowledge or stories. In my opinion this would be very off-putting to some elders and other knowledge keepers, creating a distrust that sometimes is already there when bringing up the topic of an anthropologist “studying” Natives.

Music shapes the emotional response of a listener; certain chord progressions, keys, and melodies can evoke distinct moods, from feelings of joy and elation to melancholy and sorrow. Understanding the influence that music has on emotion can be beneficial for Indigenous filmmakers who wish to craft powerful films that ignite powerful emotions in their audiences. By understanding the relationship between music and emotion, Indigenous filmmakers can take advantage of their unique cultural soundscapes to create music-driven works that reach deep into the heart of viewers. Indigenous films have something unique to offer in terms of storytelling. There are stories that have never been told before, and stories that need to be heard. Music can be a powerful tool for helping to tell these stories, as it allows the filmmakers to truly express themselves and evoke emotions in viewers that cannot be conveyed with words alone.

One of the things I deliberately avoid, in terms of music selection, is utilizing the cliche Native flute music that plagues any video that mentions a Native American. I do realize that some flute music is traditional, but with the history of its use in popular movies about Native people, I avoid using it in my own documentaries. One type of music that I do find appropriate sometimes is reggae music. Reggae music resonates with Native people because it has a steady beat and the theme of the lyrics will often relate to our colonial histories. More often than not, I employ the use
of ambient instrumental music. I feel like that kind of music pulls the viewer in, which I test on myself during the editing process.

The process of filming with the camera is a much different story. As the quote below explains, the only thing available in the editing is what was recorded at the time of the shoot:

A major difference between anthropological filmmaking and most other modes of anthropological research is that it collapses the distance between inquiry and publication. The visual recording – that is, the research data – becomes the fabric of the finished work. What is filmed cannot be rewritten, although it can be edited and presented in different ways. This is in marked contrast to conventional anthropology, which is the result of gathering data, reflecting on it and then presenting conclusions in a written form. This means that much of what the audience eventually sees, and how they see it, will have been inalterably determined at the time of filming. The expressive strategies of an anthropological film must therefore be ever present in the mind of the filmmaker as it is actually being shot (MacDougall, 2019:140).

In contrast to how the music is chosen, the choices for what’s included in the edit is limited. When it comes to the music, there is a lot more freedom to choose anything that’s available to the filmmaker.

Along with these practical methods, I also need to address the methodology that is central to how and why I create documentary films. My goals for making documentaries in anthropology has aligned with the goals of Indigenous methodologies. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that “methodological debates are ones concerned with the broader politics and strategic goals of
indigenous research,” and in my case, my approach “frames the questions being asked” (2012:144). The different types of projects that Smith also describes in her book also have commonalities with my ideas when I set out to start a documentary project. When I engage in creating a film, I continue a tradition of storytelling, strengthen Indigenous representation, and emphasize sharing (Smith 2012: 145-162; Ginsburg, 2018). The documentaries I make directly combat stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media (Singer, 2001).
Chapter 3: Analyzing the Flicker Feather Films Documentaries

A common pitfall when an anthropologist and filmmaker collaborate is that the anthropologist wants the film to be all-inclusive, believing that leaving anything out will distort the result. The error here lies in assuming that a film must cover everything and avoid pursuing specific interests, and that the viewer has no recourse to other sources of information. (MacDougall, 2019: 145)

In this section I will be analyzing six of the short films I made during my time as a PhD student. I will be categorizing each film first in one or more of the following subject criteria: Indigenous (Native American) Film, autoethnography, and public anthropology. I will be using still shots from each film to illustrate the written descriptions and discussion.

For most of the following films, my topic is something I am familiar with. I am a member of the Apsáalooke tribe. We are more commonly known as the Crow tribe of Montana. So, you could say that my approach to documentary filmmaking is different than the more commonly accepted view of ethnographic film in anthropology, one that usually includes an outside researcher spending time and filming people from an “exotic” culture and observing with the camera (Ginsburg, 1991:95). My view is that of an emic one. An emic approach refers to the fact that I am an insider with the culture that happens to be the subject of the film (Chio, 2021:8). Even if the film involves people from a different tribe than my own, I feel the relationship that tribes had historically and have presently, still benefits the project more than being a researcher who is non-Indigenous. I argue, as in my MA thesis, that an emic angle on Indigenous film, meaning an Indigenous person is filming an Indigenous subject they are familiar with, has more potential to share perspectives fairly and accurately. Essentially “an Indigenous film is where the Native person oversees every aspect of creating [an Indigenous documentary film] from the beginning to the end of the production process: filming, editing, and publishing their final video” (Lopez, 2017: 3).
For example, when conducting an on-camera interview, both interviewer and interviewee have a chance to flow more organically in conversation if they are both Indigenous, which ultimately leads to a more productive environment to share thought-provoking statements. Structurally, I would consider my films to be more of a documentary style, than that of strictly ethnographic film, in the sense that I mentioned above. Because of this fact, I see my work as more of an artistic expression, an act of visual sovereignty (Lopez, 2017). Ethnographic films may shy away from adding music and usually attempts to keep the authorship as undetectable as possible, as to not tarnish the scientific data. I view documentary films as an extension of myself, my background, life experiences, and aesthetic preferences. I use the medium of filming on digital cameras and editing on my laptop to share aspects of Indigenous culture. It is becoming more accepted that the process of creating a film is considered research (Pasqualino, 2007). When humanity is filmed, connections can be made between the people on the screen and the people viewing the film. Using documentary films to explore, educate, and perpetuate cultural ideas and ways of life is central to my research in visual anthropology.

In previous research (Lopez, 2017), I wrote about Worth and Adair’s filming project with the Navajo (Worth & Adair 1972), featuring seven short films produced by Navajo filmmakers (Peterson 2013:29). Worth and Adair wanted to see what an unaltered perspective depicted in film looked like for the Navajo. The seven films were collectively entitled, *Navajo Film Themselves*. In my thesis research (Lopez, 2017: 23-24), I argued that this type of project could be done in any Indigenous community in North America, with mostly positive results. In 2011, the series of films were shown to the same Navajo community via partnerships between the University of Pennsylvania Museum Film Archives, the Library of Congress, and the
Navajo Nation Museum. The films were returned and new relationships were established, with intent for future work with these films being developed in the process. What became clear is that the Navajo filmmakers did not see their films as “ethnographic” data. Rather they saw the films’ value for ordinary and practical purposes. This example represents a transition to “visual sovereignty” (Peterson 2013:30) and the importance of community engagement (Leuthold, 1997).

Still influenced by this lesson from the Navajo filmmakers, the goals of my work are to create films that can serve as examples of visual sovereignty and community engagement through self-representation and Indigenous methodologies. The intent is to put the camera into the hands of an Indigenous person. The results combat the perpetuation of stereotypes and misrepresentation by non-Native filmmakers and use Indigenous film to disseminate anthropological insights in engaging ways that are educational and artistically appealing to audiences of all backgrounds.

*Indigenous Smoke (2019)*

This film came about from a documentary film class I enrolled in while taking graduate seminars and doctoral credits in anthropology to develop my skillset to carry out this dissertation work at the University of Montana. On the first day, Sean O’Brien, the instructor, told us about the main assignment: we were to create our own short documentary throughout the semester. Each week we had specific assignments to get closer to completing the short film. We split up into groups of two students and began deciding what our documentaries were going to be about.
My project partner ended up being a student who had very little background in filming and editing. Together we decided on the topic of smudging in Native American cultures. I immediately thought of my two friends who completed their BA degrees in Native American Studies while I did. Aaron Brien and Ray Kingfisher were in the first class that I ever attended at the University of Montana in 2011. Getting both of their unique perspectives on smudging in their own lives was something that I knew could generate enough material for a short documentary film, around fifteen minutes worth. This documentary became the first example in this dissertation representing the category of Indigenous film.

In the opening sequence of this film, I filmed myself smudging, to illustrate the practice for any viewers who are unfamiliar with the subject. A voiceover is heard describing part of a creation story where people are made of dirt from under the ground. The voice goes on to say that bear root, the first smudge given to the Apsáalooke (Crow) people, also comes from within the ground and is still being used as smudge today. The music comes to the foreground and images of the four primary smudges used are pictured: bear root, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass. This list comes from my own experience with smudge and is not meant to be an all-inclusive list.
Among the objectives Sean assigned, were to film a sit-down interview and an action interview, both being self-explanatory as to what they entailed. For the sit-down interview we decided to interview Aaron Brien in his office on the Salish Kootenai College (SKC) campus. The tribally run college is in Pablo, Montana, on the Flathead Reservation, home of the confederated Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d’Oreille tribes. Aaron, however, is a member of the Apsáalooke (Crow) tribe of Montana. At the time of filming, he served as a professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at SKC.

The interview with Aaron centered around his upbringing and memories surrounding the practice of smudging. He mentions how he would line up with his classmates in his reservation elementary school, waiting for his turn to smudge. His recollection of this story allowed him to remember a phrase that was told to him to keep the line of children moving. He was instructed to bathe himself in the smoke, concise instructions with an analogy easily understood by a young mind. Aaron believes that the point of smudging is, in fact, the smoke. Bathing yourself in the smoke is literally what should be done.

In Apsáalooke culture, items are often smudged, not just people. In my own life, I was taught to smudge my hat if I’m wearing one, because that item is on my head for most of the day. Likewise, items can be smudged such as horse tack. Aaron Brien mentions this when filmed at his home in Arlee, Montana. While he prepares one of his horses to ride, he tells a humorous thing about himself; he likes gray horses because Crazy Sister In Law rode one in the Battle of Arrow Creek and Clint Eastwood rides one in his movie *Pale Rider* (Figure 2). This statement always elicits a laugh from the audience whenever it is screened at a public event. His comment about the gray horse showed some of his personality, which allows the audience to be more perceptive to what he has to say.
When the viewer sees Ray Kingfisher, he is working on creating a powwow drum from a bass drum shell, normally used in standard drum kits. As we hear his saw cutting some wood, he begins discussing how he first was introduced to making drums this way (Figure 3). A jump cut then takes us inside his home, where he shows the camera a finished drum that is used at a lot of powwows. Attached to the side of the drum is a braid of sweetgrass. The action interview leads directly to what the focus of the film is meant to be. Ray then walks us through his daily routine in the mornings, when he gets some sage and smudges, while thinking good thoughts about the day ahead. Then he shares a story of how the Blackfeet were shown how to smudge, finishing with the statement expressing that he wants to pass this down to his family, because it helps him.
After graduating with my MA utilizing short documentary films in anthropology, Kelly Dixon, my academic advisor, had an idea to continue this type of work in another anthropology project funded by the American Battlefield Protection Program. Aaron Brien and Kelly Dixon worked on the proposal together, and when they received word they got the grant, they contacted me to start working on the documentary that would supplement the written portion of the deliverables. The project explored the idea that the Apsáalooke people chose where to fight a battle due to it being a sacred landscape, with spirituality being the main influence.

This documentary is both an example of Indigenous film and public anthropology. The film is made by an Indigenous person, me, and is about Indigenous people, the Apsáalooke people, a Native American group commonly referred to as the Crow Tribe. Being raised as an enrolled member of this tribe, I have taken an emic approach, which means I have an insider’s view and I am also the researcher. This allows for me to make a documentary, rather than observing an exotic tribe and making conclusions. I already know the nuances and background to stories and cultural
values that will excel any film project to explore a topic most efficiently and effectively. For instance, if I know of a story, all I must do is enlist the right people to tell that story the way they know it, and I can catch the most vital elements on camera because, ultimately, I know when to expect them. *Where They Fight* is also a film about anthropologists working on a project, which is normally not exposed to the general public.

The opening sequence begins with images of the first reservation agency assigned to the Crow tribe. Text is shown on the screen explaining the background of the Battle of Arrow Creek, where the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes united to attack the Crow people. A big part of the successful defense was due to the belief that their medicine powers would help protect them. One of the medicine bundles used that day was a rock medicine owned by Sees The Living Bull. Sees The Living Bull’s wife originally found the rock. Presently, their great-great-grandson, Marvin Stewart, and his wife Luanna Stewart own the bundle. This rock medicine bundle ends up being the focus of the documentary, *Where They Fight*, because it is a tangible representation of cultural continuity.

![Figure 5: Marvin Stewart describes the two hills where the rock medicine was found.](image)

Aaron Brien and I started interviews in the summer of 2018, which began with Marvin and Luanna Stewart. Marvin describes how his great-great-grandmother found the rock. Marvin
describes two hills where it was found and informed us which one it was (Figure 5). Today, ranchers in the area call them Nelly’s Buttes, but had been referred to as Squaw Buttes in the past. Aaron and I made a one-day trip from Missoula to just outside of Absarokee, Montana, with a stop at the Museum of the Beartooth’s in Columbus, a 600-mile round trip. We had enlisted the help of Penny Redli, the director of the museum, to contact the people who own the land we were going to film on.

Marvin had also been to the location, but we wanted to go ourselves, take the camera, and get a shot of the viewshed where the rock medicine was found. The viewshed is what can be seen when you’re on top of this hill, and it is incredible. This journey that Aaron and I took to this hill, captured on film, serves as a backbone to the first half of the documentary, returning to it intermittently between other sequences. Mixing up the timeline, in reference to the order in which things were filmed, helps to show a detailed picture of what the documentary is sharing.

![Figure 6: Marvin and his father, Francis Stewart, smoke a pipe at a bundle opening in the 1980’s.](image)

Another way timelines were mixed was unique because we go from footage that I shot, to footage of a medicine bundle opening from 1989. One of the most powerful sequences in the film comes from Luanna Stewart’s description of what happens at a bundle opening. The previous
owners were Marvin’s parents, Francis and Cerise Stewart, and are featured as the owners in the 1980s footage. As we hear Luanna’s narration, we can see step by step, the same things happening in the footage: the men smoke a pipe (Figure 6), they eat a meal together (Figure 7), the wife cleans everything in the bundle by wiping it with buffalo fur soaked in beaver oil, and passing the bundle to one another, they each take time to pray with it in their arms.

Figure 7: Cerise Stewart serving the food as part of the bundle opening ceremony.

This scene shows the viewer that there is cultural continuity occurring in the Apsáalooke people’s lives. The same process of opening the bundle was passed down from the original owners to each subsequent owner. In the 1980’s footage, the Crow language can also be heard. I deliberately did not translate what was said in Crow, so the viewer was reminded that there is more to the ceremony they are witnessing than what’s shown on the screen, which relates to David MacDougall’s views that anthropological documentaries can exist without having to explain everything (2019, p. 145).
Toward the end of the film, we go back to the bundle opening ceremony, where we see and hear Francis praying in Crow with the bundle. Again, I did not see the need to translate what he says, but it is apparent he is praying. However, here I use a technique to visualize a small portion of what Francis specifically mentions in his prayer; the viewer sees layers of images on screen, including everyone who makes an appearance in the film, while still hearing Francis’ voice praying for the entire Crow tribe (Figure 8).

Another person we interviewed is Walter Old Elk, a Crow elder. In the film, Walter recalls being a child who was told not to go behind people’s houses because they keep their medicine there. In later scenes, Walter also describes supernatural events that happened at the Battle of Arrow Creek. Mardell Plain Feather, another Crow elder and historian we interviewed, also shares stories about what happened at the battle, including one about a little girl who would peak under a lodge covering to see the battle, then would hide again.
The scenes discussing what took place at the battle include landscape shots of where it happened and the creek that gives the battle its name: Arrow Creek. The creek acted as a threshold between the Crow camp of fortified lodges and the battlefield (Figure 9). While filming there, I noticed that the birds were singing and wanted to incorporate that sound in the depiction of the place. One distinctive bird that can be heard is the Western Meadowlark, whose song is tied to the landscape of where I grew up. I made sure to turn on the camera and capture some diatonic sound. Diatonic sound refers to any sound that is tied to the image being shown on screen. A non-diatomic sound, on the other hand, is any sound added during editing that did not occur at the exact time of filming. For example, music and voice-overs are considered non-diatomic, as well as sound effects in fiction film productions. For me, the sound of the birds adds a layer of authenticity to the scenes they occur in.

This film belongs in anthropology discussions, because it is an interactive way to engage with the idea of spirituality in warfare. Combining oral history with images of the actual landscape where the events took place gives the viewer a unique experience that would be nearly impossible to simulate, even if on a field trip to the place with one of the speakers in the documentary. The editing process allows for me to pick out the most succinct and pertinent statements from each
interviewee, which translates to a more efficient way of sharing information and ideas. Furthermore, when editing the film, I consciously intertwine interviews with no allegiance to a linear timeline. The following quote from Silva explains how he views this concept pertaining to how it affects the audience:

Time and memory play a crucial role in how the structure delivers the content of the film, in order for the viewer to actively participate and problem-solve within the film to unlock meaning and make connections – working horizontally backwards and forwards in filmic and historical time rather than in a linear fashion, to create a shared deconstruction and reconstruction of memory and history (Silva, 2016: 147).

In a way, this is also amplifying the true stories that documentaries tell. Using techniques such as mixing up timelines, while simultaneously avoiding confusion, benefits how and what the audience can learn in a short amount of time. This also follows the Native American notion that time is cyclical, rather than a straight line, which is something that anthropologists have been experimenting with for decades.

During the nineteen-sixties the view of film in anthropology was going through a shift. “Film until then was not much respected within anthropology” and was distinguished and separated from the more creative side of filmmaking (Bromhead, 2020: 239). It was common to make anthropological videos informative and as scientific as possible. In an article by Bromhead, this shift is explored specifically at UCLA “in the mid-’sixties when the departments of Anthropology and Theater Arts came together to see if, and in what ways, film could become more useful for anthropology, either as a way of recording cultural data and lifeways or, more directly, as a teaching tool” (Bromhead, 2020: 237).
Bromhead goes on to describe how with a group of students and faculty, Colin Young led the way in embarking on creating a “film without a strong linear narrative, no satisfying climax and no wrapping-up of loose ends” (2020: 239). Out of this came the 1968 documentary, *The Village*. The film showed how a village on an offshore island of Ireland was coping with acculturation and assimilation. The filmmakers artfully analyzed this in the film by contrasting a scene of tourists discussing how the local villagers were “not materialistic, with a sequence showing men carrying a [canoe] and one asking the camera crew, ‘Are we getting something for this scene?’ (Bromhead, 2020: 241). The old stereotypical image of a Celtic idealism is still held to be true by the tourists, yet the local villagers directly negate that. This same type of juxtaposition is utilized in *Apsáalooke Shields* (discussed next) when we see a horse rider give a fist bump to a passenger in a truck passing by.

Another element that is shared between my work and *The Village* is the use of narration. In *Where They Fight*, I use the interview with Luanna Stewart as a voiceover explaining her contemporary roles with the medicine bundle while the viewer sees footage from the past. Luanna’s voice from the present day connects directly with what her mother-in-law is doing in 1989, as pictured in the older footage that I incorporated. In *The Village*, the filmmakers utilize a translation to English, from the original Gaelic, as a voiceover, “especially to talk of the ‘old’ when the ‘new’ is pictured” (Bromhead, 2020: 241). These voiceover examples serve as an exhibition of how documentary films in anthropology can display a bridging of time in the explorations of different cultures. This bridging of time is another dimension that can be added in an educational setting, which ultimately leads to more understanding and learning among the students. It is important to note here that the instances of voiceover in *The Village* and in my documentaries lack the presence of a “dogmatic narration” that over explains everything happening. Therefore, “when
the film ends it has raised dozens of anthropological questions without giving complete answers to them. This ‘open-endedness’ should, we hope, stimulate students to search for answers” on their own (Bromhead, 2020: 244). This idea has the potential to create multiple types of assignments in a classroom setting. For instance, if a student is intrigued about a specific aspect of the culture in a film, and has a question, that could lead to a personalized assignment where the student ends up deciding the topic of their own written essay, video essay, prompt for a short writing assignment, or a presentation, just to name a few. When creating these films, I have to think about more than just the viewer. I also must think about the individuals that agree to film with me.

I have purposefully avoided calling the people I interview informants. They are more so collaborators. In this sense, I try my best to honor the agency of everyone I film with and share their words in a way that doesn't distort the intended meaning. There are often times when the interviewee gives the camera a quote that transcends everyday conversations. Going back to the middle of the documentary, we hear Luanna Stewart describe a profound observation she has about the Apsáalooke people: “With the ‘medicine bundle… sundances, sweatlodge, everything that the Crows still practice, it’s all involved around prayer, or spiritual, and your belief; otherwise, nothing’s going to happen.” In that moment the audience experiences the reality that Indigenous people, like Luanna, live in. The next documentary touches on this idea as it pertains to shields from the Crow tribe, some of which were at the Battle of Arrow Creek.

*Apsáalooke Shields* (2020)

This short film was made to be an installation piece for the *Apsáalooke Women and Warriors* exhibit at the Chicago Field Museum. This exhibit was curated by Nina Sanders, a fellow Crow tribal member and museum scholar. The Field Museum happens to house dozens of shields
from the Apsáalooke people. I was enlisted to add a video component to the exhibit focusing on these shields. In April 2019, I joined a group of Crow contributors in a visit to the museum in Chicago. I brought along my camera equipment, ready to capture footage of the shields.

Over the course of two days, we looked at every Crow shield in the archival facility in the basement of the Field Museum. As we pulled each one out, a museum staff member would read off the name associated with the shield, in other words, who owned the shield before it was acquired by a non-Native collector. The shields come from multiple sources. Some of the shields have a narrative description from when the owner had to part ways with the shield. A couple of reasons behind parting ways with the shields include religious persecution, especially as it pertained to the warrior culture, and monetary compensation, which would allow for the warrior to provide for his family in the harsh new way of life that colonialism brought.

The film opens with a question: What would you say to people who visit the exhibit? The question is answered by Aaron Brien, who also attended the shield filming trip to Chicago. Aaron agreed to a sit-down interview after we made it back home from Chicago. Aaron was brought on
to be an anthropologist contributor to the exhibit. The statements he answers will guide the viewer to look beyond the utilitarian purpose of the shields, normally closely associated with warfare. The footage of the shields is full of color, birds, feathers, and animal fur. It is commonly known that when warriors would commit to a fasting ceremony, they were in need of a spiritual helper. During a dream or vision, the warrior would gain a medicine helper, usually an animal, bird, rock, or even a star. Along with this would sometimes be instructions of how to decorate their shield to express that medicine's power. Something that's not included in the film is an interesting point on how oral history helps clarify what we can see today. The example I'm thinking of has to do with the Crazy Sister In Law's shield. He was known to have the medicine of the burrowing owl; therefore, his shield had burrowing owl feathers on it. Aaron recalled from his research, and of course from hearing stories about him from elders, that Crazy Sister In Law would also paint his body with yellow paint. On close inspection of his shield, we found small traces of yellow paint on the edges of the feathers (Figure 11).
I filmed some b-roll at the Crow Fair powwow of 2019 to ensure I had a mulit-faceted view of what these shields represent. Aaron's voiceover also expresses the idea that the Crow Tribe was never a "savage people," and that is made clear with the vibrant footage of the parade and powwow dancers. The contrast between the traditional shields and the modern powwow displays how a culture adapts and evolves to survive in a colonial and postcolonial reality. Another way this is illustrated in the film is in a series of two shots: there is a shot of a "horses and riders have right of way" sign (Figure 12) followed by a shot of a horse rider giving the driver of a pickup truck a fist bump as he passes (Figure 13).
After this, the film describes the specific backstory of why Spotted Tail had to reluctantly give up his shield. At the time the shield was purchased, the non-Native collector had a photograph taken of Spotted Tail holding his shield (Figure 14). Why was the shield sold? Spotted Tail was needing to provide for his family. The only immediate way was to sell one of his possessions that just happened to be illegal to use. This photograph is shown in the film, but only pictured on a smart phone. Again, this juxtaposition of an historic photograph being displayed on modern technology expresses something that is there for a viewer to experience, continuing along the lines of cultural continuity and adaptation. In fact, you could say the work I do is continuing a form of storytelling, but with new technology.

Figure 14: Historic photograph of Spotted Tail with his shield. Note: the actual shield is in the background.

Right before the end of the film, I include one last statement made by Brien. He expresses the hope that the shields will be seen as something more than good looking art, but instead would be seen as something that is holy. I think this was important to keep in the edit, because that is a distinction that has the potential to spark a curiosity to learn more while in the exhibit. The film would also serve to remind museum goers that the shields are different than the modern Apsáalooke art also on display in the exhibit. This notion is often overlooked in explanations of
Native art and other handmade items. These values are revealed in the process of making an anthropological film.

The music I chose for this film is a slow orchestra song that sounds a bit melancholy with a touch of eeriness. The music pushes a bit into adding mystery to the visuals of the film, especially at the beginning when we are shown shield after shield, each with their own unique colors and designs. Some may argue that the music potentially could influence the viewer too much and could be seen as being too subjective to include in a film for the anthropology department. MacDougall again says it well: "Subjectivity and objectivity are not alternatives - they are elements to be balanced in the work, and each filmmaker will balance them differently (2019, p. 142). The editing process is controlled by the emotional response I get from viewing the footage myself, which I hope translates to the viewers’ experiences as well.

This film could also serve as a catalyst for a discussion on cultural heritage and the ethic surrounding that. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is a federally implemented policy that legally binds institutions to ethical standards when it comes to tribal material culture. At the time of writing this, there are no solid plans yet to repatriate the shields to the Crow Tribe. However, there is a cultural heritage center in the works at the Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, Montana. This could possibly be a future home for the shields, where they could be protected by the necessary controlled temperature and humidity of an archival quality facility.
Now We Sing: The Missoula Kids Choir (2019)

Now We Sing is an example of autoethnography. My three daughters joined a choir that Josh Farmer put together in Missoula, Montana. Josh is locally known for his many family-friendly musical performances. Being a father of three of the kids in the choir, I was inspired to stick around after I dropped my girls off at practice and capture the journey the group made over the season. I told Josh my idea to create the film and he was on board. I attended a handful of practices and filmed at each performance, which culminated with a New Year’s Eve performance on the University of Montana campus. The conversations I captured with Josh, both in interviews and when he talks to the kids, shows just how much of his life is devoted to music. And since my wife and I ultimately chose to sign up our three daughters for the choir, we chose to expose our children to this notion that music is something worthwhile in this world.

I have always loved music. I took piano lessons as a child, picked up the guitar and bass when I was a teenager, and grew up recording mix tapes nonstop, trying my hardest to limit the amount of time between songs like I could win an award for it. Needless to say, I consider music to be a big part of my life. This was also a factor behind why I wanted to embark on the adventure of filming a documentary about the Missoula Kids Choir. Choosing music for each film is also something that I take a lot of time doing. The process of finding the right music is not always the same: sometimes when imagining which shots I will shoot, I find the music that fits what I’m envisioning, and sometimes I choose the song when the video file is recorded, and I am editing it on my laptop already.
The opening scene shows yellow-orange leaves with Josh Farmer in the background getting out of his car holding a guitar case. Immediately, the viewer can hear a song playing. This song selection was one of the most unique song choices I’ve made in my filmmaking career so far; it was different because this song had lyrics, and the lyrics were actually relevant to the topic of the film. “Learning what I need to know, letting go of what I don’t,” is what can be heard sung by Wes Urbaniak, a musician from Montana. These lyrics, along with the whole sound of the song, fits perfectly into this opening moment. The words in the song, coupled with what the movie is about, shout out to me that the arts are just as, or even more, important than the more practical subjects that are often taught to nearly every child in the United State of America.

Since the subject matter of this documentary was a little more playful than that of my other films, I took that as an opportunity to try out a couple new techniques in the editing. One of these examples comes in the form of reverberation and echo effects on a voice. Jesse Christian is a musician that helped Josh Farmer with the choir, and primarily played percussion. During a series of shots, we see Jesse interacting with the kids, being playful, and talking to the camera. When he does speak to the camera, he says, “It’s all so exciting, it’s all so exciting.” This statement is the one I applied the reverberation and echo effects to, emphasizing the fun being had at that particular
choir practice. Later in this fun sequence, I sped up a shot of all the choir members staring into the camera and walking toward it; Josh improvised and out of nowhere when he tells the kids to all turn to the camera and stare, after which he requested that they walk to the camera slowly, all while maintaining the eye contact (Figure 16). Speeding up this clip, gave it a fun look in the film.

Figure 16: the choir kids staring into the camera at a practice.

Another playful edit I added into this film happens during the performance at the retirement home. While transitioning from the first performance to the second performance, at the same establishment (they planned for the choir to perform in two different locations, so people with limited mobility would be able to make it to one or the other), I gradually expose parts of the frame, rectangle by rectangle, eventually showing the full frame of the singing kids and Josh playing piano (Figure 17). This was affective in showing how the singing was attracting more people to the location of the performance. This type of transition differs from my usual jump cuts and crossfades.
One of the profound statements that Josh makes is where the title of the film comes from. He describes how in different cultures, sometimes singing was part of everyday life. He says, “in the past there are other cultures and tribes that used song as a way of bringing about a time of day, or it’s time for this meal, or it’s time for this ceremony, and now we sing” (Now We Sing, 2019). This notion really illustrates to the viewer that this film is about more than little kids singing cute songs; discussions about why people take time to sing and make music, can have greater implications in how we choose to live our lives.
*Roots & Berries* (2020):

When the pandemic hit and everything school related went remote, Zoom meetings became commonplace and teachers and students had to adapt. In a Graduate Studies film class with Sean O'Brien, it came time to choose a topic for a documentary. The class was setup to allow for graduate students to create a film piece to incorporate into their requirements for graduating, with approval from the student's committee chair. Because of the limitations that Covid had on us, we had to be creative with our topic choice. Many of the students ended up going an autobiographical route. I started with some interviews with my classmates, planning to create a documentary about a documentary class, but ended up choosing something different for the topic of my film.

![Figure 19: Part of my family on a hike on Kootenai Creek Trail.](image)

*Roots & Berries* ended up becoming a documentary that falls into two of the categories: Indigenous and autoethnography. This film is an example of autoethnography because it is a film about how my family and I navigated in this world of new experiences due to the corona virus. In recent years it has become increasingly common for ethnographies to incorporate autobiographical aspects (Collins and Gallinat, 2010). My wife, my four kids at the time (now we have five), and I started to frequently go for nature walks and hikes in and around Missoula, and down the Bitterroot
Valley (Figure 19). Our kids are also homeschooled, even before the pandemic, so we utilized the time outdoors to get more acquainted with names of plants, animals, creeks, and rivers.

My wife, Christian Goes Ahead-Lopez (Figure 20), works for the All Nations Health Center, a non-profit urban Indigenous clinic, partially funded by IHS grants, which serves primarily the Native American residents of Missoula and Ravalli Counties. During filming, she was an intern there as part of her requirements for completing a health administration undergraduate degree through Montana State University Billings. Christian's preceptor for the internship had a program going that could facilitate for the gathering of roots and berries, as well as distributing them to All Nations Health Center clients affected by Covid. When a day was chosen to do the harvest of bear root and elder berries, my family volunteered to be part of the group that made the day trip to the Lolo Pass area of Montana and Idaho (Figure 21).
The film's opening sequence shows parts of this drive in the pass, as well as elder berry harvesting. My wife's voice from an interview can be heard discussing how our ancestors paved the way for us to still learn about using plants and roots for healing. We see my wife and middle daughter, Kaya, clipping the tips off of branches to collect the berries that fall into a bright pink bucket. This imagery illustrates the fact that one generation is teaching the next generation how to harvest this particular plant's fruit. The music I chose for the opening has an ambience to it that lends itself to feelings of hopefulness.

After the title of the film appears on screen, the music fades out and the viewer then sees Mount Sentinel, the mountain adjacent to the University of Montana campus, with its famous M Trail. The roofs of buildings somewhat mimic the shape of the mountain looming behind them. This reminds me of something the famous Crow artist, Kevin Red Star, once said while I was with him in Chicago. We were walking around the city, and he kept gazing up toward the sky. A couple of us finally asked him what he was seeing in the sky that we couldn't see. He glanced up at the skyscrapers and said, "The buildings are competing with the mountains."
The film follows my family’s adventures while walking nature trails, where we find plants that are edible, play in mountain streams, and we even find other people foraging for Chanterelle mushrooms. One of the scenes that breaks away from this theme is a sequence showing a large tree being cut down (Figure 22). At that moment, the tree symbolizes the process of colonization, purposefully dismantling Indigenous cultures. Branch by branch, tribe by tribe, Indigenous people were targeted, and their traditional cultures were removed to make room for Anglo culture. Just as the tree is hauled away, a realization emerges; the tree is gone, but the roots are still underground. The roots of our Indigenous cultures have been sprouting and revitalizing since the genesis of colonialism and postcolonialism. During this scene is the only time you will hear a voiceover from me, which nudges this well into the autoethnography category, even though it was already there because of my wife and kids. This also is an example of how the filming process can affect the filmmaker, and anthropology researcher, because of my active role in the film (Ferrarini 2017).

*We Come From the Land (2022)*

This documentary is my most recent work. The film is funded by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Montana Tribal Tourism. The state departments were looking for a Crow filmmaker to create promotional material that could increase visitors to two state parks: Chief Plenty Coups
State Park and Pictograph Cave State Park. Both parks are on or near the Crow Reservation. An ad agency was handling the finances of the project, so they were able to put me in contact with a professional cameraman and documentary filmmaker, Damon Ristau. Damon informed me early on that I would oversee the shoots. Damon was also able to enlist one more cameraman, who would pull double duty by also serving as a sound man for the interviews. I planned the interviews, the b-roll shoots, and wrote the questions for the interviews, while Damon and Kenneth Furrow helped with the technical side of things.

I planned a sunrise shoot at the base of the Pryor Mountains, near the reservation town of Pryor, Montana. Damon and Ken met me at a gas station in Billings, Montana, then followed me out to the filming location. There is a special landmark on the face of the Pryor Mountains, called the Castle Rocks (Figure 23). In the Apsáalooke language, it is called the Fasting Place. It is very important to the people and can also be seen from the park. This was the reason I wanted a dramatic shot of it. Damon was able to fly a drone camera, despite the wind that morning, to get an aerial shot of the mountains and the Castle Rocks.
Afterward, we ventured back to Chief Plenty Coups State Park to film b-roll before Vincent Goes Ahead Jr., arrived for his interview with us. At that time, I noticed the sound of a meadowlark singing his song. I asked Kenneth if he wouldn’t mind capturing the audio of the birdsong. He was able to capture a short segment of the song without any noise pollution from passing vehicle traffic.

![Figure 24: Pictograph Cave State Park.](image)

Even though this project was meant to be some sort of promotional media to attract visitors to these state parks, I always knew I was making a documentary. In fact, I have previously taken a course with Sean O’Brien where we made documentaries to promote different departments on campus. With this in mind, I did not set out to create a film that was jam packed with information about each park, because why would a visitor want to go there if they knew mostly everything about it already. Instead, I intended the focus to be on why these places are important, without necessarily hitting on every fact, but rather the stories that are imbedded there.
We interviewed Vincent Goes Ahead, Jr. at Plenty Coups State Park, and we interviewed Aaron Brien at Pictograph Cave State Park. Already thinking of how to bounce from one park to the other, I planned on having a conversation with Aaron about both parks, so I could find points of transition between the two interviewees. One of those points of transition is when both Vincent and Aaron mention the spring there at Plenty Coups State Park (Figure 25). Spring water is an important thing to Crow people, and that particular spring has been revered even before Chief Plenty Coups built his cabin there.

This film ends with the notion that Chief Plenty Coups was a very influential leader for the Apsáalooke people. He had a vision of the cabin that can be seen today, with himself sitting on the porch as an old man. That vision is one of the main reasons led the town of Pryor, Montana, exists now. His decisions he made generations ago, still influence us today. To repeat, the film is not intended to teach someone everything there is to know about Chief Plenty Coups, or Pictograph Cave for that matter. The film should, therefore, pique in interest in the viewer to learn more about the history of Montana before colonization.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

Because film and writing are such different modes of communication, filmmaking is not just a way of communicating the same kinds of knowledge that can be conveyed by an anthropological text: it is a way of creating different knowledge (MacDougall, 2019: 139).

The series of films prepared for this dissertation achieved the goals of my doctoral journey, which ranged from spreading knowledge to the public to helping preserve aspects of culture specific to certain tribes. Of course, my intentions were to bring my work into classrooms to spark conversations about tribal histories, traditional stories, colonialism, and the way Natives are portrayed and perceived in the United States of America today. While the films are made and several published and while the conversations were sparked in university classrooms, there are other outcomes worthy of noting in the concluding comments.

For example, during the course of this research, I not only worked from the vantage of my own identity as an Indigenous scholar, but also from the vantage of someone who had been integrating both anthropological and artistic skills, views, and approaches to filmmaking and my appreciation of the field of visual anthropology. Multimodal anthropology is an emerging subfield of anthropology that “begins with visual anthropology” (Varzi 2018) and encompasses the range of media platforms available to anthropologists in the 21st century, spanning film, photography, podcasts, virtual reality, games, and social networking, to name a few. “A multimodal anthropologist, like an artist, is called to work in a particular medium that may not always be text. Like artists, at the heart of what we do is engage in a process with a material form—in our case, the materials we find in our research…”(Varzi 2018). Considering this, the goals and outcomes of my dissertation are aligned with this burgeoning subfield and a growing awareness of how
multimodal anthropology is a constructive tool for practicing anthropology in today’s complex world, especially in conjunction with Indigenous film, autoethnography, visual anthropology, and public anthropology (Kääpä, 2011: 113; Raheja, 2010).

Among my conclusions is that, documentary filmmaking, one facet of multimodal anthropology and my media of choice featured here, can be an invaluable tool for students to learn more about their culture, heritage, and identity by providing a unique window into the lives of people from different backgrounds. Through storytelling, I observed how documentary film can help students gain new perspectives on the world around them and build an understanding of how their own personal history connects to global issues. By immersing themselves in the stories of their peers and elders, students can gain a greater appreciation for their own culture and history. Additionally, documentary filmmaking can help foster critical thinking skills as filmmakers explore complex topics and examine different sides of an issue (Colín & Molebash 2017:65-66).

I also conclude and will continue to assert that documentaries provide a unique platform for Indigenous voices to be heard, which is especially important considering the ongoing struggle for Indigenous rights and recognition. By creating their own documentaries, students can share their perspective with a broader audience, helping to bring attention to issues that are often overlooked or ignored by mainstream media. Documentary filmmaking is also an excellent way to bring together diverse communities as filmmakers work together to create stories that reflect the shared experiences of all involved.

Over the past several years I have taught Native American Studies courses utilizing as much video as I could. I even shared my own work for the students to interact with. Teaching oral stories with video is something that just makes sense to me. I’ve also been fortunate enough to have helped teach a summer Native American documentary workshop with Sean O’Brien and
Antonio Torres at the University of Montana. The workshop was an intense six-week course with several Native students from Montana, Arizona, and Oklahoma. The students completed a short documentary of their own during the short summer session. We ended the workshop with a small film festival where the students shared their work and enjoyed food afterward.

The films were all a success and some of the work surprised me and the other instructors. What the students picked up in six short weeks was impressive. We received word this semester that Sean, Antonio, and I will be teaching the Native American documentary class during the autumn 2023 semester. I look forward to incorporating some of what was explored in this dissertation. I am also teaching a visual anthropology class during the autumn 2023 semester. Of course, the required textbook will be *The Looking Machine*, by David MacDougall.

Outside of sharing my films in the classes I teach, I have had the opportunity to present in other classes as a guest lecturer. Recently, I was invited to share my work at the Roxy Movie Theater here in Missoula. The reception overall was great, and the films were screened to a sold-out theater, though the tickets were free. Before the six short documentary films were shown, I was able to do a PowerPoint presentation explaining some background to my film work in anthropology. After the screening, the audience at the Roxy then asked me questions about the films. Some social science researchers include events like the one I had at the Roxy as an opportunity to carry out more research by capturing and analyzing responses of the audience members (Ragazzi, 2007: 3). While documenting the Roxy audience responses were beyond the scope of my current dissertation work, Ragazzi’s (2007) point can inspire future studies that focus on audience responses to my work because those may have implications for the long-term, educational goals of my films.
Expected Impacts and Future Directions

I am excited to carry on this work into more and more classrooms. My hopes are to eventually be able to get funding for a visual anthropology lab where students would have access to the technology to edit their own multimedia work. I expect the outcomes of such a lab’s work to have positive societal impacts that not only include, but go beyond the field of anthropology. As is being observed, more fields outside of anthropology are realizing the benefits of making an anthropological documentary (Colín & Molebash, 2017).

At the end of the day, I am a storyteller using new technology. As an Indigenous anthropologist, I hope my efforts aid in the perpetuation and preservation of tribal sovereignty and traditions. The videos are an Indigenous way of sharing stories and are more accessible and more affective in preserving culture. The films are more in tune with a decolonized way of life. The future of Indigenous filmmaking is limitless, and can even entail animated series for young kids, for example, that illustrate traditional stories (Kisin, 2011). Other Indigenous fiction films have been produced that “interrogate the current stakes of cross-cultural representation and capitalize upon new media technologies to productively blur the boundaries between documentary and fiction genres and to foreground the constructedness of visual media” (Thorner, 2007: 141).
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2010 Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.


**Links to the Flicker Feather Films Dissertation Documentaries**

Watch *Apsaalooke Shields, Now We Sing, Roots & Berries, Where They Fight* at the following link:  
[https://www.pbs.org/show/indigenous-smoke/](https://www.pbs.org/show/indigenous-smoke/)

Watch *Indigenous Smoke* at PBS.org:  
[https://www.pbs.org/show/indigenous-smoke/](https://www.pbs.org/show/indigenous-smoke/)

Watch *We Come From the Land* at the following link:  
[https://youtu.be/uaUDqhtNr4A](https://youtu.be/uaUDqhtNr4A)