

## The end of the hollywood trail

-Courtesy of Hanay Geiogamah  
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With *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, the power brokers of the industry have demonstrated that their entertainment values and demands prevail over anything we say or do, write or create, that our history is for them to tell, to fictionalize, to distort with false love stories and character portrayals, and to trivialize all that is complex and tragic. HBO did not ask for or seek the help and guidance of any of the experienced American Indian creative professionals who might have helped steer them away from this debacle. Yes, Indian actors played the Indians, but that was all.

With breathtaking arrogance, *Bury My Heart's* narrative forcibly inducts American Indians into the brotherhood of savagery as a way of universalizing them and making them like all other people. Genocide is dramatized as just as much the result of the mean-spirited and physically cruel behavior of American Indians, who were fighting for their very survival, as it was of the inhumanity of the American armies. The last shreds of Indian nobility are eliminated once and for all.

A feature article on the making of *Bury My Heart* titled "The Last Stand" in the May 27 Los Angeles Times gives a brief, perplexing account of how Hollywood came to the view that American Indians can now be justly and fairly seen as co-agents of their own destruction. As a two-hour condensation of the book, "The film didn't have time to dwell on the spiritual, Earth-friendly image of Native Americans," says the article's author, Graham Fuller. "Nor does it offer a politically correct perspective," he adds. The Sioux, we're told, were "as rapacious as their white conquerors."

This view is scaldingly laid out with the portrayal of Sitting Bull as a baby killer, as a coward who hid in his tipi at the height of the Battle of Little Bighorn, and as a greedy buffoon who lusts for the white man's money and approval. The scriptwriter, Daniel Giat, confidently tells *The Times*, "My primary objective was to fully dimensionalize these people. Sitting Bull was vain. He was desperate to hold onto the esteem of his people and win the esteem of the whites. But I think in depicting his desperation and the measures he took in acting on it, it makes it all the more sad and tragic, and I think we identify with him all the more for it."

To complete this grim, determined view, the film presents every Indian cliché imaginable in graphic, full-bodied images without context or explanation: brutal scalplings;

stoic, saddened faces of Indian elders; sick, dying babies; herds of wild horses surging across open prairies; vast armies of Indian warriors mounted along high vistas; war ponies being ceremonially painted; desperate ghost dancers, and heartless Indian agents and schoolteachers. We've seen them all far too many times and to all of this, unbelievably, the article tells us, "The passel of Lakota and other Indian consultants hired for the project obviously didn't object too strenuously." No credible American Indian historians, scholars or film makers are quoted in *The Times* article. I was astonished to see the names of two highly respected scholars and historians listed in the film's credit crawl and was grateful that this embarrassment for them would not be seen by many.

As students in the early 1970s, members of my generation of American Indians carried paperback copies of *Bury My Heart* in our backpacks as talismans of hope. Thirty-seven years later, we must sadly accept that HBO, the avatar of original television programming and creative innovation, has failed to deliver a truthful, even recognizable telling of Dee Brown's history. The more cynical among us back then forecast that this would happen, and, alas....

By letting go of our Hollywood dreams, we American Indians can take control of our stories and images and establish creative sovereignty. Affordable digital cameras and production equipment and scripts written by the Indian writers whom Hollywood rejected and left blowing in the wind will help us to become free and independent tellers of our own stories. The failure of *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* urgently tells us that we must, must do this. Aho, thank you.

## NASA Hosts welcome back softball game

By Johnny Rodriguez and Samantha Hill

The Native American Student Association (NASA) hosting its first annual softball game at River Park on August 25th. The event began with a bang, bringing in over twenty players ranging from faculty, to incoming freshmen. Head of the Health Promotion Office, Lenny Shible, even lent his umpire skills to direct the game. Among those who participated in the game were Native American Studies faculty: April Lindala, Kenn Pitawakwat, Aimee Dunn and Adriana Grecie Green. Center for Native American Studies (CNAS) staff played alongside fellow



NASA members and interested students. Team captains were Kenn and April. Teams were divided evenly we and started our slow pitch game. A couple of good hits and great pitching by Jeff McRoy led Kenn's team over April's for a couple of innings. By the seventh inning April's team came back from behind with a couple of good runs, and they ended up winning in a very close game, (11-7). Jeff boasted, "I thought I was dominating, an unstoppable force like Ben Sheets, until the seventh."

Following the event, players chowed down on hotdogs, chips, and lemonade while talking about the semester to come. Thanks again to Lenny for letting us borrow his grilling tools, without those, there would not have been those good dogs. Compliments to the chefs, Sam and Johnny, on grilling some scrumptious hot dogs and brats. Everyone enjoyed meeting each other and recapping the exciting game they had just finished. We ended with a delicious dessert of key lime pie. Everyone helped clean up the picnic tables and made sure the place looked the same as when we found it.

As we were leaving, everyone agreed that this was the perfect event to host for Welcome Weekend. NASA members met new students, and faculty members were able to mingle with students while having a great time playing softball. NASA will be looking forward to next year's game and we hope to see a lot of people out there on the ball field. We hope to have more social events, such as a volleyball game, during the regular academic year as well. If you are interested in joining NASA, please come to our meetings. Experience the Native American culture first hand as we plan some of our big events for the year. Or, you can simply hang out with a lot of fun and outgoing people!

NASA meets every Friday at 1p.m. in the Center for Native American Studies (112 Whitman Hall).



-Photos by Amanda Shellnut

Above right: The teams take time to pose for a picture after 9 innings.

Above left: Adjunct Instructor Aimee Cree Dunn takes her position in the outfield.

Above: Volunteer Umpire Lenny Shible and Instructor Kenn Pitawanakwat stand ready while Assistant Professor Adriana Grecie-Green takes a swing.