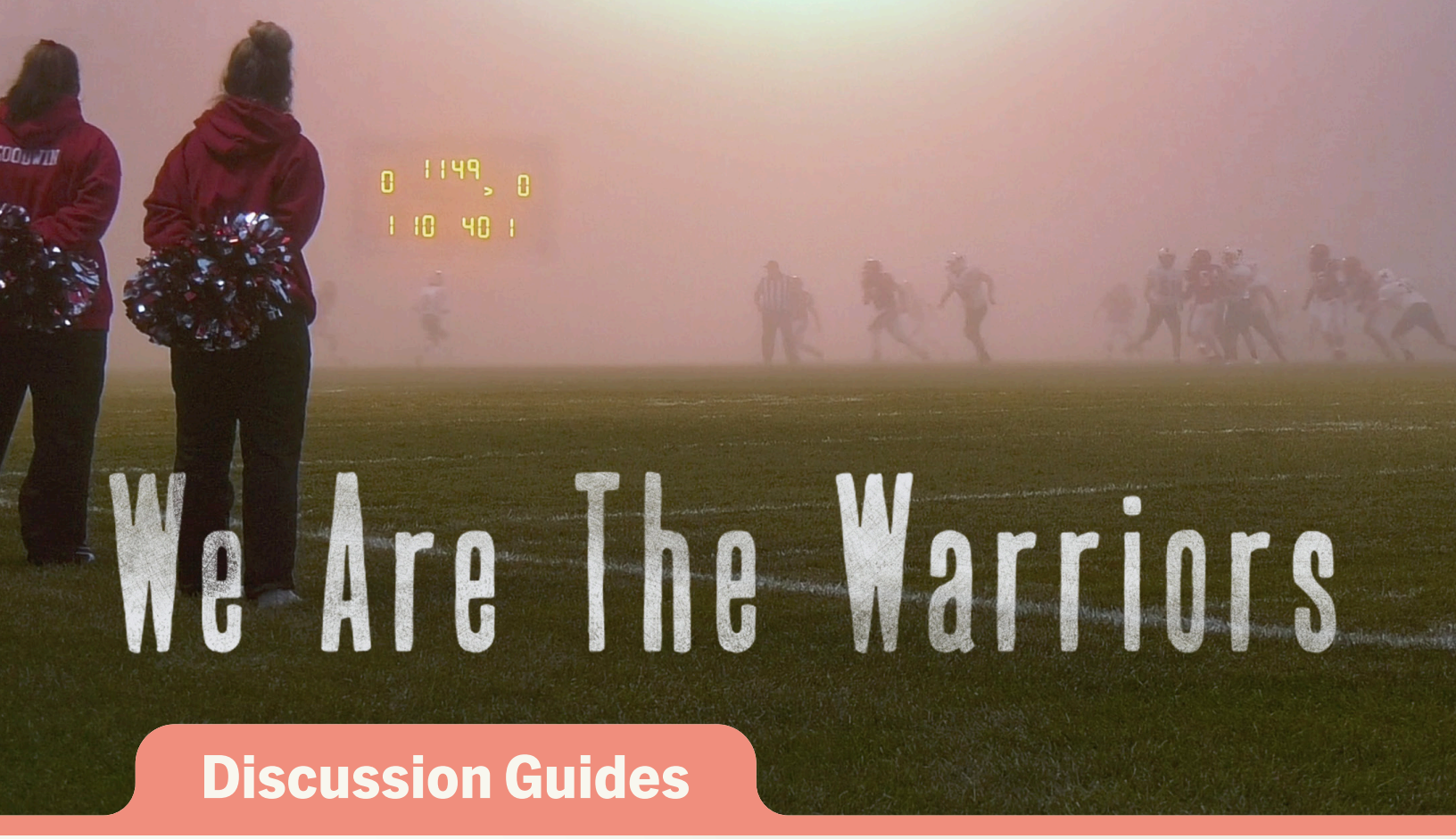

We Are The Warriors

Discussion Guides

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Letter from the Filmmakers

We first became friends as students at Wells High School in the late 1990s—both of us were, ourselves, "Wells Warriors." Three decades later, the two of us were looking to collaborate on a project about difficult conversations in civic life. Like many people, we'd lately become more and more concerned with political polarization and the erosion of civic discourse about the issues that divide us. When local media reported Amelia Tuplin's complaint about racist behaviors at a Wells football game —and the school district's consequent conversation about Wells's Native mascot—we knew we had found our project.

As we filmed the work of the Wells Mascot Advisory Committee, we underwent much of the same learning that its members undertook—about Indigenous history and perspectives, the harm that mascots inflict, and the Indigenous and settler histories of where we grew up. The two of us had lived in "Warrior Country" without much of an objective perspective from which to critique our culture's use of Native imagery. And we, too, had a vague and romanticized understanding of the Indigenous history of our hometown. Over the course of following the Mascot committee and talking with Indigenous people in Maine, we came to understand how little we knew, and to appreciate the importance of learning more.

We hope that viewers will have a similar experience while watching this film: that they will open their minds to the perspectives of others, recognize the gaps in what they know, and seek to learn more with curiosity and openness to what they might learn.

We believe that *We Are The Warriors* can serve as a case study of how to have a difficult conversation about not just Native mascots, but any societal conflict that is entangled with deeply ingrained narratives and emotions. We hope that watching *We Are The Warriors* and discussing its themes will help many people in many communities to consider how we can all better talk with and listen to each other. We thank you for being part of the conversation.

David Camlin and Megan Grumbling
January, 2024

Composer's Statement

The music for *We Are The Warrior*s was imagined with the intention of featuring Wabanaki musicians and musical traditions. Recorded in Parsonsfield, ME, the score featured Abenaki, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Mi'kmaq songs, including greeting songs, a round dance, a mourning song, and George Paul's Mi'kmaq Honor Song which has become an anthem across Wabanaki country and is sung today in all five dialects. The score also features our contemporary musicians on acoustic and electric guitars with "rock" production. I am proud to have been able to weave in the sounds of today's Wabanaki musicians in support of the strong community members featured within the film. Kci wliwni to Dwayne Tomah, Eric Greene, and Jason Brown for your performances, knowledge, and time.

Mali Obomsawin
January, 2024

For Educators and Facilitators
About these guides

We created these materials for educators and facilitators to use in helping classes and groups discuss the themes of *We Are The Warriors*, consider how these themes connect with issues in their own communities, and explore further learning about both Indigenous peoples and how to engage in difficult civic conversations.

We Are The Warriors offers especially rich material for discussion in the subjects of Social Studies, Indigenous Studies, Sociology, Education, History, Social Justice, Psychology, Communications, and Conflict Resolution.

Our discussion materials are appropriate for use in middle school, high school, and college classes, as well as for organizations such as civic, church, and alumni groups; school and sports boosters; and summer camp administrators and staff.

The key themes presented in these discussion materials are: "Native Mascots and their Impact"; "Identity and Cultural Appropriation"; "Impacts of Colonialism; Indigenous Justice"; "Conflict Resolution and Civic Conversation"; and "History, How We Tell It, and Who Tells It."

We include two different discussion guides to the film, for more flexibility in the classroom and in groups:

The "Nutshell Discussion" guide offers a distilled series of prompts on all five of the film's key themes, meant for briefer discussions.

The "Deep-Dive Discussions" guides, organized by theme, present more robust references, including references to relevant scenes from the film, with time codes, and film outtake scenes, as well as more in-depth discussion prompts. Educators and group facilitators can pick and choose from these guides to best engage their particular cohorts.

Both guides include discussion prompts, ideas for further research, activities to apply these ideas to participants' own communities, and links to external learning resources.

In a final Resources section, all resources are gathered by theme. Among these are the outtake scenes from the film, which provide additional context and stories. Students in small groups might be assigned to watch one of these outtakes, to relate it to the discussion theme, and to report back to the larger group.

The goal of all of these discussion materials is to encourage open-minded reflection, imaginative empathy and problem-solving practice, and curiosity for new learning about Indigenous issues, our own history, and how to best hear and receive each other's stories.

IV Nutshell Discussions
A short guide to the film's main themes

Native Mascots and their Impact

1. **Recall and Consider:** After watching the film, what seem to you to be the most important ways that Native mascots harm Indigenous people?
   - **Imagine** a scenario of how an Indigenous child's sense of self and future possibilities might be affected by a Native mascot.

2. **Reflect:** Have you ever felt that someone inaccurately stereotyped you or made you feel limited in what you could become? How did this affect you?

3. **Define:** What does it mean to you to "honor" a person or people? Do you think the Wells school district was honoring Native people with their mascot?
   - **Brainstorm:** What might be better ways for a school district to honor Native peoples?

4. **Speculate:** Why do you think Native mascots continue to exist, despite the harm they have been shown to cause? Why do you think people are reluctant to give them up?

Activity In Your Own Community

- **In small groups, Reflect:** Did or does your school have a Native mascot? What does its name refer to? What associations or history does it hold? To what extent do group members identify with this mascot?
- **Then, Research:** How many schools in your state have Native mascots? (See this map provided by People Not Mascots.)
- **Analyze:** How do these mascots depict Indigenous people? Consider: What might be the impact of these particular mascots on Indigenous people? On the attitudes of non-Indigenous people?

Identity and Cultural Misappropriation

1. Many Wells residents based their identity as Warriors on a history that they were unclear and even misinformed about.
   - **Define:** What *is* identity? Who defines it, and how, and for whom? How might it change or evolve?
   - **Consider:** How should we ensure that an identity isn't based on a misunderstanding or even a lie?

2. **Consider:** Why do you think some schools want to identify with a Native American symbol as their mascot and part of their identity in the first place – especially in communities composed largely of settler/colonizer descendents?

3. The United States has historically attempted to erase Native identity and culture in many ways—including separating Native children from their families, punishing them for speaking their languages, and re-acculturating them in government- and church-run boarding schools designed to "kill the Indian and save the child."
   - **Imagine:** How might it affect a community, and an individual child, to have their identity forcibly erased in these ways?
   - **Reflect:** Have you ever felt pressure to hide or discard any part of your identity? How did it affect you?

4. To **misappropriate** something – for example, a sacred feather, headdress, or drum – is to take it wrongfully or without permission and to use it in an inappropriate or offensive way.
   - **Reflect:** What objects or rituals from your own culture do you consider important or sacred? Have you ever felt that they were misappropriated or mocked? If so, how did that feel?
   - **Consider:** What might be ways to appreciate and celebrate someone else's culture without misappropriating it?

Activity: In Your Own Community

- **In small groups, list** the key elements of identity in your own school, town, or state. These might include imagery, nicknames, songs, rituals, or other cultural aspects.
- **Then, Reflect and Research:** What history or story are your community's elements of identity based on? Who created them? Has the basis of your community's identity ever been called into question or revised? Do you think it should be?

Identity and Cultural Misappropriation

1. Many Wells residents based their identity as Warriors on a history that they were unclear and even misinformed about.
   - **Define:** What *is* identity? Who defines it, and how, and for whom? How might it change or evolve?
   - **Consider:** How should we ensure that an identity isn't based on a misunderstanding or even a lie?

2. **Consider:** Why do you think some schools want to identify with a Native American symbol as their mascot and part of their identity in the first place – especially in communities composed largely of settler/colonizer descendents?

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   - **Imagine:** How might it affect a community, and an individual child, to have their identity forcibly erased in these ways?
   - **Reflect:** Have you ever felt pressure to hide or discard any part of your identity? How did it affect you?

4. To **misappropriate** something – for example, a sacred feather, headdress, or drum – is to take it wrongfully or without permission and to use it in an inappropriate or offensive way.
   - **Reflect:** What objects or rituals from your own culture do you consider important or sacred? Have you ever felt that they were misappropriated or mocked? If so, how did that feel?
   - **Consider:** What might be ways to appreciate and celebrate someone else's culture without misappropriating it?

Activity: In Your Own Community

- **In small groups, list** the key elements of identity in your own school, town, or state. These might include imagery, nicknames, songs, rituals, or other cultural aspects.
- **Then, Reflect and Research:** What history or story are your community's elements of identity based on? Who created them? Has the basis of your community's identity ever been called into question or revised? Do you think it should be?

Impacts of Colonization; Indigenous Justice

1. **Imagine:** In what ways might the legacies of colonialism addressed in the film—including violence, bounty hunting, intergenerational trauma, addiction, poverty, and displacement from homelands—affect an Indigenous person's pursuit of goals, education, career, family, and/or general well-being?

2. **Reflect:** How much about the colonization of Native peoples in your area did you learn in school? What do you think students *should* learn about the colonization of Indigenous peoples? What would you like to learn more about?

3. **Consider:** What do you think should be done to acknowledge and redress the wrongs done to Native individuals and cultures?

Activity In Your Own Community

- **Research** which Indigenous peoples live or have lived in your own state or area. What is their history, and how did colonial settlement affect them? Who are they today? What issues most affect them and what justice movements do their citizens lead? What would you be interested to learn about or from them?
- **Choose one** Indigenous justice movement to research further. How might you explore being an ally to them in these efforts?

Conflict Resolution and Civic Conversation

1. **Assess:** In Wells's difficult community conversation, what do you think were the most effective aspects of the Mascot Committee's approach to communication, listening, and conflict resolution? How might these be applied to other conflicts?

2. **Predict:** What work might remain to be done in Wells to continue to resolve this conflict?
   - **Propose:** What might the community do next to further this ongoing work?

3. **Analyze:** Why do you think hearing stories is so powerful? How can stories be misused, and how can they be used for the greater good? How have you used them in your own life?

Activity: In Your Own Community

- **In small groups,** think of one conflict in your own community that is difficult and divisive. What makes the issue so difficult? What approaches have been taken so far to resolve it, and how effective have they been? What lessons from the film might be applied to this local conflict?
- **Then, Enact:** Assign each group member a position on the issue, and have a conversation in which each person shares their perspective and listens to those of others. Practice strategies from the film and from these guidelines for active listening and non-violent communication.

History, How We Tell It, and Who Tells It

1. Until hearing from the panel of Indigenous people, Mascot Committee members had never learned very much about the trauma experienced by Native people in Maine.
   - **Consider:** How should we go about teaching our children the parts of our histories that are difficult, violent, or unjust? What are the consequences of getting our history wrong, or telling it with gaps or inaccuracies?

2. **Apply:** As we educate ourselves about and confront other unjust parts of our history, what aspects of the Mascot Committee's process might be useful? How might we handle any discomfort, defensiveness, or guilt we might feel about these parts of our history?

3. In the film, chairs and mats branded with the old mascot are sold to residents who want to hold on to these artifacts as emblems of the "before times" [1:01:19-1:02:40].
   - **Consider:** What should we do with historical artifacts that bear images or language we no longer think appropriate?

Activity In Your Own Community

- **Reflect** on your own history education. Whose history is told, and whose is not, in your own school district's history classes? What would you have liked to learn more about?
- **Propose:** If you were to join your local school board, what would you put on a list of what should be included in all young people's education about the history of where they live?

V Deep-Dive Discussions
Guides for in-depth conversations, by theme

1 Native Mascots and Their Impact • Discussion Questions

"Honoring" and Intent vs. Impact

Many Wells residents believed that they were "honoring" Native Americans by their use of the mascot.

But in the film, Penobscot Tribal Ambassador Maulian Bryant says the problem with this is that white mascot enthusiasts are "picking and choosing what they want from that whole identity," without understanding the struggles of real Indigenous people, and that "kids from other races and cultures are being taught that they're not people–they're mascots. And there's no honor in that." [5:29-6:07].

Barbara Giammarino, whose uncle was a star athlete at Wells, tells Wells residents at the Public Forum that her uncle "was a very honorable person. But he is not a mascot." [54:45-55:01].

The Maine ACLU's letter to the Wells High School Superintendent cited a range of impacts of Native Mascots.

And in the outtake clip "1A Intent vs Impact - Barry Dana," former Penobscot Chief Barry Dana talks about his experiences as a high school athlete and as Chief. He tells the Wells Mascot Committee that he sees the mascot as "not honoring" Native people, but rather as "mockery, appropriation, taken out of context."

After hearing these perspectives, Wells High student Megan Schneider reflects that her community doesn't actually know that much about the area's Indigenous history, "We're not educated enough about the mascot itself and the tribes that were here, and I think that's part of the reason why we can't really claim it as an honor – because we don't know that much about it." [45:35-46:26]

- **What do you believe it means to honor a person or a people?**
- **What are good ways to demonstrate honor?**
- **How do you react to the contention that Wells was honoring Native Americans by its use of the mascot?**
- **What might be other examples of a person or group's good intentions resulting in negative impacts?**
- **How can we as individuals and communities determine whether our intentions justify the impact of our actions?**
- **What can we do when we find that our intentions do not align with their impact?**

Reductive Stereotypes

Indigenous people in the film discuss how Native mascots perpetuate stereotypes about Native people and keep them "stuck in the past," rather than present them as diverse and complex individuals succeeding in the present.

Harry Tomah, for example, makes it clear that Native Americans are "people who are achieving, now" and says, "I don't think the Indian mascot depicts us correctly." [36:44-37:10]

And in the outtake clip "1B Reductive Stereotypes - Maulian Bryant," Maulian Bryant asks the Wells Mascot Committee, "When you ask little kids what do you think of when you hear 'Indian," are they going to say 'feathers, headdresses warpaint'?"

- **How might stereotyped depictions of Indigenous people, including those that keep them "stuck in the past," limit individual Native people in their lives, education, or careers?**
- **Have you ever felt that someone inaccurately stereotyped an element of your own identity, or did not recognize you as you are in the present? How did you feel and react?**

Diminished "Possible Selves"

In the film, Penobscot anthropologist Dr. Darren Ranco discusses the concept of **"possible selves,"** which social scientists Shawna Lee and Daphna Oyserman define as "the selves one believes one might become" (See "Possible Selves Theory," 2012).

Dr. Ranco argues that mascots diminish these possible selves for Native children, especially given how little representation there is of Indigenous people in films and on television (27:39-28:44).

This idea is among the reasons why the American Psychological Association issued a statement recommending retirement of American Indian Mascots, which both Dr. Ranco and Donna Loring reference in the film.

- **How do you think Native mascots might diminish Indigenous children's sense of possibilities for their future selves?**
- **Imagine a specific scenario of how an Indigenous child's sense of self and future possibilities might be affected by a Native mascot.**
- **Did anything from your own childhood and identity ever make you feel limited in what you could accomplish or become?**
- **Why do you think Native mascots continue to exist, despite the harm they have been shown to cause?**

In Your Own Community

Did/do you have a Native school mascot? Does your school compete with other schools that had/have a Native school mascot? What does its name refer to? What associations or history does it hold? How does it depict Indigenous people?

What do you think is the purpose of mascots generally? When do they represent a positive part of school spirit, and when might they become problematic? In your view, what are acceptable examples of mascots, and what should be off-limits?

The advocacy group People Not Mascots reports that 1 in 19 high schools in the country have Native mascots. How many schools in your own state have Native mascots? (See this map provided by People Not Mascots.) Have there been movements in your state to retire them, and if so, how have the schools and towns reacted thus far? If your state has retired all of its Native mascots, how has this happened?

What Indigenous advocacy groups exist in your area that are fighting for the retirement of Native mascots or other Indigenous issues? What would you be interested in learning about and from them? How might you be able to help support them?

Further Resources

The Maine ACLU's letter to the Wells High School Superintendent cited a range of impacts of Native Mascots

Penobscot Tribal Ambassador Maulian Bryant, who appears in the film, gave a TEDx talk, "Indigenous Peoples in Maine are Not Mascots," in which she explains the harm inflicted by Native mascots and related her personal journey advocating for the removal of them.

The advocacy group Not Your Mascots on Facebook

The People Not Mascots website and Instagram. Website includes a map showing Native mascots by state.

The American Psychological Association issued a statement recommending retirement of American Indian Mascots, which both Dr. Ranco and Donna Loring reference in the film.

In the film, Penobscot anthropologist Dr. Darren Ranco discusses the concept of "possible selves" that Native mascots diminish in Indigenous people. See social scientists Shawna Lee and Daphna Oyserman "Possible Selves Theory," 2012 .

The National Congress of American Indians page includes resource links about the harm of Indian mascots.

2 Identity and Cultural Misappropriation • Discussion Questions

In Your Own Community

Many Wells residents had based their identity as Warriors on a history that they were ultimately unclear and even misinformed about.

"We've talked about it in the committee a bit, about how there was an Abenaki tribe in Wells. But we've discussed it, and we don't even know if that's the case. We don't really know much about if there were tribes and who they were." [45:36-45:59]

As Coach Tim Roche puts it in the film, "When I start to listen to the Native American people, I'll be honest with you - I don't know that our history is completely accurate. And that's starting to scare me recently. Because I've lived on the history." [39.22-39:47].

Dr. Ranco acknowledges that Native mascots as school identities can feel **"as real as anything,"** despite being based on inaccurate narratives or histories [1:08:21-1:08:34].

In the outtake clip "2A Defining Identity — Barry Dana," former Penobscot Chief Barry Dana discusses with the Mascot Committee how a town's identity should reflect its bond, work ethic, and known history.

And in the outtake clip "2A Defining Identity — Sarah Moody," Mascot Committee member Sarah Moody talks about how her understanding of her identity as a Warrior has changed having listened to the Indigenous panel.

- **What is identity? Who defines it, and how, and for whom? What happens when an identity is based on a misunderstanding or even a lie? How should we take stock of the basis of our identities?**
- **What are the benefits and dangers of embracing a symbol as a representation of an identity? How should a community decide what that symbol should be?**
- **Why do you think some schools want to identify with a Native American symbol as their mascot and part of their identity-especially if they are in communities composed largely of settler/colonizer descendents?**
- **What are some of the different elements of your own personal or family identity? How have these elements become part of your identity - did you inherit them or choose them? How much do you know about their basis or origins? What else would you like to know about the origins of your identity?**

Erasing Identity

To erase an identity or culture is to make it difficult or impossible to express, practice, or even remember. The word "ethnocide," coined in 1944 by a Jewish exile named Raphael Lemkin, refers to the systematic erasure of a people's language, rituals, religion, and other traditions.

The United States has historically attempted to erase Native culture in many ways, including separating Native children from their families, cutting their hair, punishing them for speaking their languages, and re-acculturating them in government- and church-run boarding schools designed to "kill the Indian and save the child."

In this outtake clip "2B Erasing Identity - Bridgid Neptune," from the Indigenous panel that visited Wells High School, Passamaquoddy citizen Bridgid Neptune talks about how Natives were subjected to deliberate cultural erasure–including bans on practicing their religion–even as non-Native people were encouraged to dress up and "play Indians" and identify with Native mascots.

In the interview outtake "2B Erasing Identity - Darren Ranco," Dr. Darren Ranco talks about the irony that Native mascots became popular at the same time that a surge of cultural erasure was being enacted on Native people.

And in this outtake "2B Erasing Identity - Maulian Bryant," Maulian Bryant talks about how Native people have historically felt pressure to pass as non-Native and to internalize their shame and oppression.

- **How might it affect a community to have their culture forcibly erased? How might it affect an individual child as they grow, learn, and make goals for their lives? What challenges and traumas might these children struggle with as they become adults?**

- **Have you ever felt pressure to hide or discard any part of your identity? How did you feel and react? How might you feel if somebody was telling you that you couldn't practice or display parts of your identity?**

Cultural Misappropriation

To misappropriate something is to take it wrongfully or without permission, and to use it in an inappropriate or offensive way.

In the film, Amelia Tuplin, tells the Mascot Committee that she was offended by Wells fans' casual use of objects and actions – feathers, headdresses, and drums – that are sacred in her culture [12:45–13:42].

In the outtake "2C Cultural Misappropriation — Maulian Bryant," Maulian Bryant talks of encountering Native mascots as a teenager, and compares the misappropriation of sacred feathers to disrespectful use of a rosary or crucifix.

And in the outtake "2C Cultural Misappropriation — Darren Ranco," Dr. Darren Ranco connects Native mascots with larger issues of cultural appropriation and one culture's control over the representation of another culture.

- **What other examples of cultural misappropriation have occurred in the world, either historically or in the present?**
- **Do you have any objects or rituals from your own culture that you consider important or sacred? Have you ever felt that they were misappropriated, misused, or mocked? How might you feel if you saw somebody who is not part of your culture imitating your tradition without your permission?**
- **In what ways might cultural misappropriation connect back to colonization, cultural erasure, and the attempted eradication of Indigenous peoples?**
- **What might be ways to appreciate and celebrate someone else's culture without misappropriating it?**

Throughout American history and into modern times, some white Americans have claimed Native ancestry that is very distant or simply false. Some Indigenous scholars and others sometimes refer to these people as "pretendians," arguing that having a distant Native ancestor does not make someone Native American, since that is only a tiny portion of their ancestry and is not a culture that they actively belong to.

This op-ed in High Country News and this op-ed in the *Globe and Mail* examine the phenomenon of "pretendians" and its impact.

- **Why do you think people are moved to falsely claim Native ancestry?**
- **What might be the harm of such claims of identity? How might this phenomenon be related to Native mascots?**
- **How can we determine whose identity is authentic, and whom to reach out to as authentic Indigenous organizations or advocacy groups?**

In Your Own Community

What are the key elements of local or regional identity in your own town or state? What or whom is this identity based on, and how did your region come to identify with it? Has the basis of your community's identity ever been called into question or revised? Do you think it should be?

Further Resources

Playing Indian, by Philip J. DeLoria. This book explores how white Americans have used their ideas about Native Americans to shape national identity across the nation's history.

3 Impacts of Colonization; Indigenous Justice • Discussion Questions

History and Ongoing Impacts of Colonization

Several characters in the film reference the violence of settlers against Native people and culture, including Dr. Ranco on the violence toward Indigenous people in Southern Maine [42:00-43:19] and James Francis talks about the 1755 proclamation incentivizing the bounty hunting of Wabanaki people – which was the origin of the work "redsk*n" [1:02:48-1:03:23].

Other characters in the film also discuss the ongoing effects of this violence. Maulian Bryant speaks to the intergenerational trauma and higher rates of suicide, addiction, and poverty faced by Indigenous peoples today [5:35-5:57]. Mali Obomsawin recounts how her Abenaki ancestors were forced to become a warrior society as a result of settler violence, and reminds us that the Abenaki, like many Native peoples, are still not living in their ancestral lands [43:40-45:21].

In the outtake clip "3A History and ongoing impacts of Colonization - Darren Ranco," Dr. Darren Ranco explains how colonizer history might connect with white settler descendents' desire to identify with Native mascots. Here, he suggests that a Native mascot that "honors" Native Americans allows whites to "construct a narrative that they can feel better about."

- **How do you imagine these impacts might affect a community? A family? A child?**
- **How much about the colonization of Native peoples in your area did you learn in school? What do you think students *should* learn about the colonization of Indigenous peoples? What would you like to learn more about?**
- **What do you think should be done to acknowledge and redress the wrongs done to Native individuals and cultures?**
- **How might Native American mascots be related to the legacy of colonization and the ongoing struggles of Native Americans?**

Indigenous Justice Movements

In addition to movements to retire Native mascots, Indigenous activists advocate for issues such as the repatriation of cultural objects, water rights, environmental justice, and food sovereignty.

- **How might these Indigenous-led movements benefit not just Indigenous peoples, but all people?**
- **What do you think should be done to acknowledge and redress the wrongs done to Native individuals and Native Nations?**

In Your Own Community

Which Indigenous peoples live or have lived in your own state or area? What is their history? Who are they today? What issues most affect them? What might you be interested to learn about or from them?

Research how colonization began and played out in your specific area. What would life have been like then for settlers? What would life have been like for Indigenous people then?

Choose one Indigenous justice movement in your region to learn more about. What are its goals, and why is it important to Indigenous peoples? What obstacles do members of this movement face? What are ways an ally might help in their efforts?

Further Resources

The Doctrine of Discovery was used as a political, legal and religious justification for colonization.

The film *Dawnland* chronicles Maine's truth and reconciliation efforts to acknowledge the harm of residential schools and family separation.

The film *Gather* follows several Native people of different nations as they strive to regain food sovereignty and knowledge of their ancestral crops and animals used for food.

The film *Homeland: Four Portraits of Native Action* follows environmental activists from four different Tribal Nations as they work to protect the health of their communities and lands.

The film *The River is Our Relative* explores the Penobscot nation's "intrinsic kinship connection to and tireless environmental advocacy for the Penobscot River."

National Indigenous advocacy organizations include: the Indigenous Environmental Network, the National Congress of American Indians, the NDN Collective, and the Native American Rights Fund

4 Conflict Resolution and Civic Conversation • Discussion Questions

The Mascot Committee's Process

Rick Coyne explains that his main goal in leading the Mascot Committee's process was to give everyone a chance to be heard [59:37-59:55]. Several Wells Mascot Committee members say that hearing the personal stories of people on the Indigenous panel was a turning point in their thinking about the mascot.

- **What do you think were the most effective aspects of the Mascot Committee's approach to conflict resolution?**
- **What communication styles, skills, and techniques did you observe people using in the film, both in their speaking and in their listening?** Which seemed effective, which not?
- **In the film, Donna Loring explains that as a legislator, she felt it was important to talk to people and provide education about Native mascots, rather than banning it without discussion [3:32-4:01]. Why does she take this stance, and do you agree?**
- **Why do you think hearing stories is so powerful? How can stories be misused, and how can they be used for the greater good?**
- **When have you been part of a conversation about an emotionally conflicted topic? What was that like? What was difficult and why? What was helpful and why? Might any techniques or ideas from the film have helped you negotiate this disagreement?**

Beyond Consensus

- **At the end of the film, a Wells resident who hasn't been part of the Mascot Committee's process voices his disappointment with the decision to retire the mascot image [1:07:21-1:08:08]. What do you think remains to be done in Wells to continue to resolve this conflict and those who disagree with the decision?**
- **How might any community handle disagreement about an issue even after a consensus decision has been made?**

Lessons

- **What are some ways to hear and process uncomfortable information without jumping to judgements, dismissiveness, or defensiveness?**
- **What are some ways to express an opinion about a stressful and emotionally divisive topic without being hurtful to or dismissive of those who hold the opposite opinion?**

- **Tim Roche talks about how difficult it was for him to rethink his beliefs and his understanding of Wells history [39.22-39:47]. What are some strategies we might try to help us reflect and process new and/or uncomfortable information about an emotionally charged issue?**

- **What lessons might We Are the Warriors hold about how to have a difficult conversation about a contentious issue in a community?**

In Your Own Community

What's one conflict in your own school or community that you feel was resolved successfully, and what did that process look like? How does it compare and contrast to the process undertaken by the Wells Mascot Committee?
What's one conflict that your school or community is still contending with? What approaches to resolution have been taken so far, and why do you think the conflict is so difficult to resolve? What other approaches might be taken to resolve this issue?

Further Learning

Explore these guidelines for active listening and non-violent communication.

5 History, How We tell It, and Who Tells It • Discussion Questions

In the film, Barbara Giammarino talks about why it can be difficult for settler descendents to confront the history of Indigenous peoples: "There's a problem with them accepting the history because they don't want people to feel guilt. But in order to fix a wrong, it should be out in the open, so that the injustices can be changed and made positive again—for everyone" [25:55–26:20].

- **What strategies should we take in learning about and confronting the racist and unjust parts of our history? Should we feel guilty about this history? What should we feel or do?**

In the scene of the memorabilia sale, chairs and mats branded with the old mascot are sold to residents who want to hold on to these artifacts as emblems of the "before times" [1:01:19–1:02:40].

- **How did you react to the memorabilia sale of the mascot-branded school gear?**
- **What are other examples of problematic depictions or artifacts that have been or should be retired? What should we do with artifacts with such images or ideas that we no longer think are appropriate?**

Near the end of the film, Wells High alumnus Jon Finch applauds the retirement of the mascot logo, then comments that as Wells moves forward they should not "erase" this history–because when we erase problematic histories, we might repeat them [58:02–58:30].

- **Do you agree, and why/why not? Should all historical artifacts be treated in the same way?**
- **How can we as communities acknowledge problematic histories and artifacts without condoning them?**

In the outtake montage "5 History and How we Tell It - Megan Schneider, Sarah Moody, Bill Spiller," three Wells residents discuss what they learned in school about Native Americans and what they think we *should* learn in school.

- **What should we teach our children about the past, and how should we decide? Whose stories should be included in the histories we teach?**
- **How should we handle the teaching of histories that are difficult or violent?**
- **What are the stakes of getting our history wrong, or telling it with gaps or inaccuracies?**

In this outtake clip "5. History and How We Tell it - Darren Ranco," Dr. Darren Ranco critiques the idea that American "history" begins with European contact, and that everything before that is considered "pre-history."

And Mali Obamsawin bemoans the fact that Abenaki people living in what is now Canada do not have legal standing to have their ancestors' artifacts repatriated from the U.S., and explains the importance of these artifacts for her community [31:44–32:27].

- **When should our "history" begin when we teach it?**
- **How might we all benefit from extending the scope of what we teach as history?**
- **Who should determine who has access to Indigenous artifacts? What should be their role in the teaching and telling of history?**

In Your Own Community

What historical artifacts are most important to your own community? Have any of them been reconsidered, revised, or retired over time? If so, why, and what was that process like? Are there any artifacts in your community that you think *should* be reconsidered, revised, or retired? How might you propose to your community to do so?

What history did you learn in school about your own town's history? When did that history begin, whose stories were included, and from whose perspective was the history told?

What did you *not* learn in school about your town's history? What do you wish you had learned then, and what do you still wish you knew more about?

What do you think the youth *should* be learning in school about your area's history? If you were to join the school board, what would you put on a list of what should be included in all young people's education about the history of where they live?

Further Learning

Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History, edited by Susan A. Miller (Seminole) and James Riding In (Pawnee)

VI Further Resources List
Gathered by theme

Native Mascots and their Impact

The Maine ACLU's letter to the Wells High School Superintendent cited a range of impacts of Native Mascots

Penobscot Tribal Ambassador Maulian Bryant, who appears in the film, gave a TEDx talk, "Indigenous Peoples in Maine are Not Mascots," in which she explains the harm inflicted by Native mascots and related her personal journey advocating for the removal of them.

The advocacy group Not Your Mascots on Facebook

People Not Mascots website and Instagram. Website includes a map showing Native mascots by state.

The American Psychological Association issued a statement recommending retirement of American Indian Mascots, which both Dr. Ranco and Donna Loring reference in the film.

In the film, Penobscot anthropologist Dr. Darren Ranco discusses the concept of **"possible selves"** that Native mascots diminish in Indigenous people. See social scientists Shawna Lee and Daphna Oyserman "Possible Selves Theory," 2012.

The National Congress of American Indians page includes resource links about the harm of Indian mascots.

Relevant Film Outtakes

Former Penobscot Chief Barry Dana talks about his experiences as a high school athlete and as Chief. He tells the Wells Mascot Committee that he sees the mascot as "not honoring" Native people, but rather as "mockery, appropriation, taken out of context":

"1A Intent vs Impact — Barry Dana",

Maulian Bryant asks the Wells Mascot Committee, "When you ask little kids what do you think of when you hear 'Indian," are they going to say 'feathers, headdresses warpaint'?": "1B Reductive Stereotypes — Maulian Bryant"

Identity and Cultural Misappropriation

A resource from the National Museum of the American Indian on the government- and church-run boarding schools designed to "kill the Indian and save the child."

The word "ethnocide," coined in 1944 by a Jewish exile named Raphael Lemkin, refers to the systematic erasure of a people's language, rituals, religion, and other traditions.

Playing Indian, by Philip J. DeLoria. This book explores how white Americans have used their ideas about Native Americans to shape national identity across the nation's history.

Relevant Film Outtakes

Former Penobscot Chief Barry Dana discusses with the Mascot Committee how a town's identity should reflect its bond, work ethic, and known history: "2A Defining Identity — Barry Dana."

Mascot Committee member Sarah Moody talks about how her understanding of her identity as a Warrior has changed having listened to the Indigenous panel: "2A Defining Identity — Sarah Moody"

Dr. Darren Ranco talks about the irony that Native mascots became popular at the same time that a surge of cultural erasure was being enacted on Native people: "2B Erasing Identity — Darren Ranco"

Maulian Bryant talks about how Native people have historically felt pressure to pass as non-Native and to internalize their shame and oppression: "2B Erasing Identity — Maulian Bryant"

Passamaquoddy citizen Bridgid Neptune, in the Indigenous panel, talks about how Natives were subjected to deliberate cultural erasure–including bans on practicing their religion–even as non-Native people were encouraged to dress up and "play Indians" and identify with Native mascots: "2B Erasing Identity — Bridgid Neptune"

Maulian Bryant talks of encountering Native mascots as a teenager, and compares the misappropriation of sacred feathers to disrespectful use of a rosary or crucifix: "2C Cultural Misappropriation — Maulian Bryant"

Dr. Darren Ranco connects Native mascots with larger issues of cultural appropriation and one culture's control over the representation of another culture: "2C Cultural Misappropriation — Darren Ranco"

Impacts of Colonialism; Indigenous Justice

Resource from the Upstander Project on the Doctrine of Discovery, used as a political, legal and religious justification for colonization.

The film *Dawnland,* by the Upstander Project, chronicles Maine's truth and reconciliation efforts to acknowledge the harm of residential schools and family separation.

The film *Gather* follows several Native people of different nations as they strive to regain food sovereignty and knowledge of their ancestral crops and animals used for food.

The film *Homeland: Four Portraits of Native Action* follows environmental activists from four different Tribal Nations as they work to protect the health of their communities and lands.

The film *The River is Our Relative* explores the Penobscot nation's "intrinsic kinship connection to and tireless environmental advocacy for the Penobscot River."

National Indigenous advocacy organizations include: the Indigenous Environmental Network, the National Congress of American Indians, the NDN Collective, and the Native American Rights Fund.

Relevant Film Outtakes

Dr. Darren Ranco explains how colonizer history might connect with white settler descendents' desire to identify with Native mascots. Here, he suggests that a Native mascot that "honors" Native Americans allows whites to "construct a narrative that they can feel better about": "3A History and ongoing impacts of Colonization — Darren Ranco"

Conflict Resolution and Civic Conversation

Guidelines for active listening and non-violent communication

History, How We Tell It, and Who Tells It

Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History, edited by Susan A. Miller (Seminole) and James Riding In (Pawnee)

Relevant Film Outtakes

Three Wells residents discuss what they learned in school about Native Americans and what they think we *should* learn in school: "5 History and How we Tell It — Megan Schneider, Sarah Moody, Bill Spiller"

Dr. Darren Ranco critiques the idea that American "history" begins with European contact, and that everything before that is considered "pre-history": "5. History and How We Tell it — Darren Ranco"