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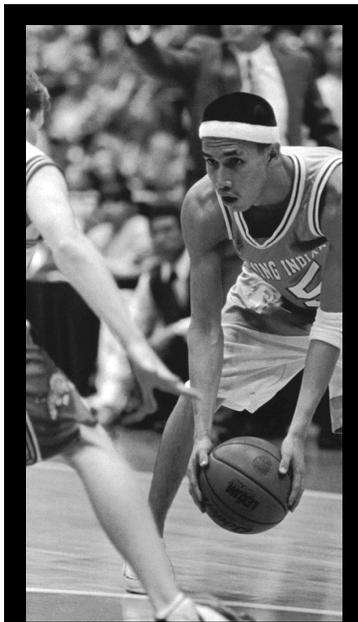
INDEPENDENT LENS: "CHIEFS"

**By Daniel Junge, Donna Dewey
and Henry Ansbacher**

to premiere nationally on ITVS's new series on PBS

Film Follows Championship Native American
Basketball Team Over Two Years

CHIEFS Airs Nationally on *Independent Lens*
April 1, 2003 at 10:00 P.M. on PBS



CHIEFS -
Al C' Bearing playing in the 2001
State Champions.

"Once upon a time, among the Arapaho, there was a group of highly respected young men that served as messengers. In the Arapaho language, we referred to them as 'those that fly.' They wore special moccasins. When they ran, it appeared that their feet did not touch the earth."

— TRIBAL ELDER

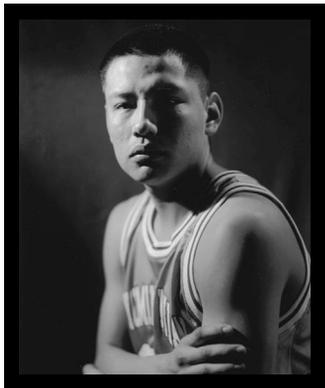
"At first glance, CHIEFS is an 87-minute documentary based on a Native American team's quest for a Wyoming state basketball championship. But beware: it is no more just about hoops than 'Remember the Titans' was just about football."

— ELLEN SWEETS, DENVER POST

(San Francisco, CA)—Every November for the last 18 years, Al Redman has unlocked the cage for Wyoming Indian High School's first day of boys' basketball practice. And every year so far he's found a way to win. The silver-haired Redman has chalked up an impressive record as head coach of the powerhouse Chiefs, including five state championships and a record 50-game winning streak. But it has been eight years since the Chiefs have won a state title, a long time for a team that is the focal point for the community of Wind River, Wyoming. **CHIEFS**, a film directed by Daniel Junge and produced by Donna Dewey and Henry Ansbacher, follows the team through two seasons of heart-stopping basketball that prove critical for the futures of the athletes. The film will air nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens* on April 1, 2003 at 10:00 P.M. (check local listings).



Wind River Indian Reservation, where traditional enemies Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone were confined by the U.S. government on 3,500 square miles of central Wyoming, is hardly conducive to success. Poverty, alcoholism, racism and youth suicide are just a few of the challenges the cultures face. But despite all of this—or perhaps because of it—basketball is played on the rez and played very well.



Why are the Chiefs so good? Because they grow up playing together from the time they can walk? Because they come from a warrior tradition? Because they are naturally gifted athletes? Because they play for a school built as an alternative to the non-Indian schools they compete against? Because they attend sweat lodges and observe other tribal traditions together? Or because there is nothing else to do on the rez? The film explores the complex factors that contribute to the Chiefs playing an incredible game of basketball.

Success on the court has not always carried over into other arenas, such as higher education and employment. Over the two years captured in the film, however, there are signs that this legacy might be broken, with role models like Assistant Coach Owen St. Clair returning to the community to help out after obtaining his college degree.

Through triumph and heartbreak, **CHIEFS** shows the whole reservation, from babies to grandmas, coming out to support the team, especially at the state tournament, where as many as 3,000 show up to cheer them on. "Last one on the rez, turn off the lights," has become the slogan every March.

It is a truism that basketball tends to thrive in the direst of circumstances. More than escapism, it provides youth with a sense of belonging and camaraderie, a means of achieving some sort of victory, an opportunity to explore life off the rez. In **CHIEFS**, we see a group of young men trying to convert the pride and success they experience on the basketball court and move ahead with the rest of their lives. By chronicling the experiences of these young players over the course of two years, **CHIEFS** shows what it's like to grow up Native American in the 21st century.

For more information, go to www.pbs.org/independentlens/chiefs

CHIEF Credits

DIRECTOR
PRODUCERS
EDITOR
ORIGINAL MUSIC
CAMERA
ADDITIONAL CAMERAS

Daniel Junge
Donna Dewey & Henry Ansbacher
Dena Mermelstein
Jim Wilson
Daniel Junge
Scott Jones
Rich Lerner
Jim Goldsworthy
Mark Kroll
Rock Obenchain
Mark Junge

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

FEATURED INTERVIEWEES:

Ramon Castillo Aparicio LABORER FROM MEXICO
Al Redman CHIEF HEAD COACH
Owen St. Clair ASSISTANT COACH

Season of 1999–2000

Brian Soundingsides SENIOR
Gerry Redman SENIOR
Al C’Bearing JUNIOR
Tim Robinson JUNIOR
Beaver C’Bearing SENIOR

Season of 2000–2001

Tim Robinson SENIOR
Al C’Bearing SENIOR
Gerry Redman SENIOR

AWARDS

Best Documentary, 2002 TriBeCa Film Festival

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Daniel Junge DIRECTOR / CAMERA

Daniel Junge received his bachelor’s degree from Colorado College and attended film school at New York University. His 40-minute film *Road Movie* screened at the Denver and New Orleans Film Festivals. Since 1994, he has worked within the American and British film industries as an assistant director, assistant editor and researcher. Junge was born in Wyoming and played basketball for his high school, which won the state championship. “We knew about the Chiefs but we didn’t play them,” says Junge. “We didn’t want to play them because it was a losing proposition.”

Donna Dewey PRODUCER

Donna Dewey won the 1997 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short for her film *A Story of Healing*, which followed a group of volunteer plastic surgeons as they traveled to the Mekong Delta of Vietnam to perform reconstructive facial surgery on children with severe deformities. She has been writing, producing



and directing films for over 20 years, and her documentaries have screened at film festivals around the world. Some of her projects include *House on Fire*; *Sister's Keeper*; *Coming to Life*, a three-part series documenting the AIDS epidemic in the African American community; *Homeboys, I, II and III*, a series which followed 10 members of the Crips and the Bloods over eight years; and *Elijah's Story*, a case history of a 16-month-old boy who was shaken to death by his father in an uncharacteristic fit of rage. Her work has been broadcast on PBS, the Learning Channel, BET and national cable networks. Dewey's production company, Dewey-Obenchain Films, is the most successful commercial production company in the Rocky Mountain region and has produced commercials for a national clientele, including General Foods, Ford Motor Company and McDonalds. Dewey also serves as a commissioner for the Denver Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film.

Henry Ansbacher PRODUCER

Henry Ansbacher attended New York University film school, received a Bachelor's degree from Colorado College and a master's degree from the University of Denver. **CHIEFS** is his first feature producing credit, although he has produced and directed shorter work that has screened at festivals in Vienna and Denver. In addition to producing independent documentaries, Ansbacher currently serves as the executive director of The Just Media Fund, a nonprofit production company and media foundation.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS HOST ANGELA BASSETT

Academy Award-nominated actress Angela Bassett, a long-time champion of independent filmmaking, will host the first season of *Independent Lens*. Says Bassett, "There are so many talented independent filmmakers working today. I'm excited that ITVS and PBS are bringing these films to primetime television. I'm inspired by the diversity and depth of the *Independent Lens* series." Bassett, whose career includes outstanding work in television, on Broadway and in film, has also consistently worked with independent filmmakers, including John Sayles, with whom she collaborated on the recent *Sunshine State*, *Passion Fish* and *City of Hope*. A skilled producer with numerous projects to her credit, Bassett served as executive producer of the recent highly acclaimed CBS film "The Rosa Parks Story," for which she earned an Emmy nomination as Best Actress. Bassett received an Academy Award nomination and a Golden Globe Award for her unforgettable portrayal of Tina Turner in *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Her many other film roles include *The Score*, *Boesman & Lena*, *Supernova*, *Music Of The Heart*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *Contact*, *Waiting To Exhale*, *Strange Days*, *Malcolm X* and *Boyz In The Hood*.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is a groundbreaking weekly primetime PBS series that airs on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. and presents American and international documentaries and a limited number of dramas. Each week *Independent Lens* bursts onto the screen and presents a unique individual, community or moment in history to bring viewers gripping stories that inspire, engage, provoke and delight. From pioneering women surfers to brilliant composers to brave resistance fighters, *Independent Lens* introduces people whose stories are unforgettable. *Independent Lens* is for curious viewers of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds; all that's required is a TV and an inquiring mind. The Executive Producer of *Independent Lens* is Sally Jo Fifer, ITVS Executive Director. *Independent Lens* is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), with additional funding provided by PBS.

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by the vision of media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans.



ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

For ITVS press releases, visit the ITVS Press Room online at <http://www.itvs.org/pressroom>

Downloadable images of this program are available to press at www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos