

REMAINING NATIVE

A FILM BY PAIGE BETHMANN



The feature documentary *Remaining Native* tells the story of Ku Stevens (Yerington/Paiute), who at 18 years old dreams of running towards a future as an elite athlete, but when the remains of thousands of Native children are discovered across North America, Ku's painful family history is unearthed and Ku begins to reexamine his own identity. For over a century, tens of thousands of Indigenous children were forced into boarding school institutions, including Ku's Great Grandfather, many never returned.

In an act of remembrance and reconciliation, Ku runs the 50-mile escape route his great grandfather took as he fled from Indian boarding school at only 8 years old. As America begins a long-overdue reckoning for the atrocities at Indian boarding schools, *Remaining Native* reveals a coming-of-age story that asks if it's possible to run from home without running away from who you are.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Paige Bethmann is a Haudenosaunee director and producer based in Reno, Nevada. Over the last 10 years, Paige has worked in nonfiction television for various digital and broadcast networks such as Vox Media, Facebook, YouTube Originals, USA, and NBC. Her latest project, the Emmy-nominated series "Glad You Asked," centered around issues of racial injustice and premiered in July 2021.



Paige graduated cum laude from Ithaca College with a bachelor's degree in Film, Television, and Radio. Paige is a Logan Non-Fiction Fellow and is currently in production on her first feature documentary *Remaining Native* which follows a young Native American athlete who retraces the footsteps of his great grandfather's escape from Indian Boarding Schools.

WATCH THE TRAILER



SYNOPSIS

When the remains of hundreds of Indigenous children are discovered in unmarked graves at former Indian Residential Schools in Canada, intergenerational wounds reopen across Indian Country and beyond, especially for 18-year-old Ku Stevens, a Native American runner from rural Nevada. Frank Quinn, Ku's great-grandfather escaped from the Stewart Indian School, and running may have saved his life. When he was just 8 years old, in the middle of the night, young Frank trekked 50 miles, crossing over mountains and deserts, avoiding dangerous wildlife to make it back home to the Paiute reservation, only to be recaptured, punished, and brought back twice. Despite two failed attempts, Frank was still determined to escape the brutal conditions of Indian boarding school, and finally, on the third try, he succeeded. For 150 years, hundreds of these schools across the country committed cultural genocide, stripping children away from the family, community, and language and subjecting them to severe physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Many children never returned.

The recent discoveries and resurfaced memory of Frank Quinn's escape prompts Ku to run the same 50-mile escape route his great-grandfather ran as a small boy, not for personal glory but to connect with his past and perhaps discover a new path forward. Through his "Remembrance Run," Ku begins to see the parallels between Frank's story and his own, as he excavates his personal relationship with intergenerational trauma and reconnects to his cultural identity through running. Although the stakes are different, both Ku and his great-grandfather, rely on their legs to overcome significant obstacles and guide them towards a better future where they can live up to their full potential.

Growing up in Northwest Nevada, home to onion farms and an old copper mine, Ku lives with his Mother (Misty) and Father (Delmar) on the Paiute reservation. A senior in high school, where few share his background, Ku dreams of following his idol Steve "Pre Fontaine" to the University of Oregon. However the road to Oregon is long and despite being the fastest kid in town, Ku doesn't have a coach or a cross country team and lacks the resources to travel to meets and catch the eye of recruiters. Ku is caught between worlds as he fights to break into the circle of elite runners, where individual triumph is valued above all else, without losing connection to his Native heritage, which teaches that no one is above anyone else and everything and everyone is interconnected. As the film unfolds, Ku battles rivals on the track garners international support through his "Remembrance Run" and discovers a new role model in a Native American Olympian. As Ku navigates this pivotal point in his life and delves into his family's past he understands the complexities of Native American identity and finds greater meaning in running and his future. Most importantly, Ku learns that determination beyond anything else is a tool of survival both on and off the track.

PRODUCTION TIMELINE

Development: May 2021 - August 2021
Filming: August 2021 - September 2022
Post Production: April 2022 - Fall 2023
Completion: Fall 2023
Premiere: January 2024

KEY CREATIVE TEAM

Director: Paige Bethmann (Haudenosaunee)
Cinematographer: Shai Ben-Dor
Producers: Jess Epstein, Judd Ehrlich
Post Producer: Stina Hamlin (Choctaw, Cherokee)
Impact Producers: Charlene Sanjenko (Splitsin Band of the Shuswap Nation) & Ariana Kruszewski Aftahi
Associate Producer: Jarrette Werk (A'aniih and Nakoda Tribe)

CURRENT PARTNERS

Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), Tracksmith Running, Patagonia, Tuscarora Woodworks, Tsionii, Galban, Gotham Sound, Sigma Lenses, Morning Star Designs, PowerHerHouse, Logan Non-Fiction Fellowship, PGA Create

BUDGET: \$943,000

Production: \$426,067
• Spent to date, April 2022: \$38,420
• Funding gap: \$371,067
Post Production: \$517,135
• Funding gap: \$517,135

Income total: \$55k as of April 2022
• Producer Investment: \$24k
• Donations: \$11k
• Grants: \$20k



IMPACT

Change the narrative around trauma and disrupt systems of exclusion. with a three-pronged approach – **reconcile, remember and reclaim.**

Remaining Native amplifies the true history of Indian Boarding Schools, leading the conversation around the current US investigation into boarding school policies, centering an Indigenous story led by Indigenous storytellers in an industry where Native leads, Native directors, and female directors are significantly underrepresented.

In the long term, the film will be an educational tool for teaching the truth about Indian Boarding Schools and can provide a space for healing through hope, centering the resilience of Native people, & addressing generational trauma with reverence.

