

“I Belong to This”

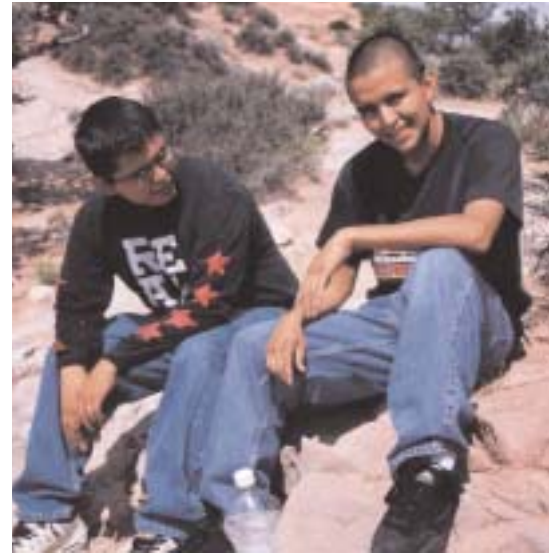
Overview

“I Belong to This,” the final film in *MATTERS OF RACE*, is a personal look at culture and heritage. Filmmaker Dustinn Craig, a White Mountain Apache, lives in Tempe, Arizona, with his wife Velma, a Navajo, and their four children. The couple considers what aspects of their cultural heritage they would like to pass on to their children.

Curriculum Connections

The film may be used in US history, literature, anthropology, sociology, and ethnic studies courses to explore the way history and culture shape the choices parents make about their children.

Central Question: How do parents decide which parts of their heritage to pass on to their children?



Dustinn Craig and his brother Nephi share childhood stories
Credit: Dustinn Craig

CONNECTIONS

I BELONG TO THIS

Reread the poem “The Past” by Ha Jin in the PreView section. How does Dustinn Craig view the relationship between past and present? Between culture and identity? How do his answers explain the title of the film? What does Craig mean when he says, “When you’re outside you adapt, but there are always costs. Some of those costs I’ve carried into adulthood? What are the costs of adapting? Of leaving the place he considers “home,” the place “where my history lives”? What does he suggest may be the costs of staying on the reservation?



As Craig struggles to find a place for himself and his family, he tells three stories—how he acquired a gerbil in third grade, a family debate as to

whether his daughter Ashlee will have a sunrise dance, and his return to the reservation for his uncle’s funeral. What insights does he gain from each of these incidents? How do they lead to the following conclusion?

How we choose to teach our children is where real power lies. I know my children will be different from me. But I have a feeling that those differences will be the strengths we longed for.

What does he mean? What do his remarks suggest about the way he defines the relationship between past and present, identity and culture? If you were to make a film entitled “I Belong to This,” what stories would you tell? How have those stories shaped your efforts to find a place for yourself in society?