

## Video Spotlight: Powerful Student Film Asks For Apology and Understanding

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### Video Spotlight: Powerful Student Film Asks For Apology and Understanding in Minnesota

The first word that came to mind to describe the 60-minute documentary by lecturer Carter Meland's introductory American Indians in Minnesota class was "powerful." From the historical photos to the use of present-day interviews and statistics, these students make a statement.

The **University of Minnesota** students dubbed their movie An Overdue Apology in the hopes of getting the state to acknowledge past injustices inflicted upon the Native American people of Minnesota.

Below, the documentary is broken up into five parts. The first part gives an overview of Dakota and Ojibwe **history** in the state, a timeline of events and touches on treaties, boarding schools, the Dakota War of 1862, important Indian legislation, and Indians in Minnesota today, including **Anton Treuer**.


 The beginning of part two focuses on the **Dakota**, their ways of life and delves deeper into the atrocities of the Dakota War. Towards the end of part two, Ojibwe lifeways are touched on including **traditional foods** and how **birch bark** was integral to daily life.

Part three focuses on the allotment of land and blood quantum by discussing what happened to the White Earth Reservation, which was created in 1867, when the Nelson Act was passed in 1889. **Boarding schools** are also discussed more in depth in this segment.

"One of the first Native traditions to come under assault at the boarding schools was the names of the Indian students," one of the students says in the video. "Symbolically, the casting off of the Indian name and the assumption of a Christian name was the first sign that civility had indeed touched the savage."



Part four starts the discussion about **economic revitalization** through **American Indian gaming**, how it has helped not just Natives and the pros and cons of the industry. Toward the end, see how much a random sampling of people around the university know about Native Americans.



The final installment of the documentary discusses working toward justice and how an apology will begin the healing process.



As the students point out in their video, an apology is just the beginning.

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“The fight for indigenous rights fits into a larger struggle for social **justice**. Social justice is the upholding of the natural law that all persons irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, possessions, race, religion, etc. are to be treated with equity and without prejudice,” the students say in the video. “The path to justice for American Indians in Minnesota starts with recognizing the implications that these historical events have on relations between Native and non-Native communities. Things like the Dakota War and the dispossession of White Earth are part of a colonialist system that damages Native sovereignty and identity.”

They also say that beyond an apology it is up to everyone to learn the truth about the state’s **history**. In March 2010 Minnesota Rep. Dean Urdahl introduced “a house concurrent resolution expressing regret for conflicts between Native Americans and European settlers,” but there was no further action on it.

The thoughtful way the students chose to end the video did not go unnoticed. Meland said that at a **May 1 viewing** on the University of Minnesota campus “that final segment was repeatedly mentioned as a very nice capstone to the video.” To hear some reaction from the May 1 viewing and see some pictures from the event, check out Paul Udstrand’s **blog**.

It shows nine University of Minnesota students who worked on the project expressing their support for the Minnesota Native American community by issuing personal, heartfelt apologies for the injustices that occurred in Minnesota.

Part 1 of 5

Part 2 of 5