



Bago Boys Teacher's Guide



“They know they did something special.”

--Jeff Berridge, Head Coach

Winnebago Indians

2015 Class C1 State Basketball Champions

Synopsis

Bago Boys is a thirty-minute look at the 2015 Winnebago Indians high school basketball team and the challenging journey to their school's first state championship win in 75 years. Through first person interviews, images, and news accounts, viewers meet a squad of exceptional young men who see their teammates as brothers and share a lifelong love of basketball. The Bago Boys grew up in Winnebago, a once-impooverished reservation community in northeast Nebraska in the process of renewing itself economically. From toddlerhood to teenage years, each boy took full advantage of the local gym and the town's three outdoor courts to play basketball with and against each other. Parents coached and encouraged their own children as well as others. The players the stereotype of having talent but lacking the drive to win. They experienced personal challenges such as family illness.

At the same time, the Winnebago community was rocked when tribal leaders were accused of financial wrongdoing. Basketball provided a needed relief from many pressures. The boys played what is sometimes called Rez Ball, a high-speed style of play that emphasizes defense and hustle. "You keep running and you don't stop," explained one player. They learned to share the ball, run fast, and work harder than their opponents. Their lifetime of playing together on "the slab" helped them learn each other's strengths and weaknesses. They used everything they knew to win their district and advance to the Class C1 state championship in March, 2015. Townspeople made the 100-mile trip to Lincoln to see the Indians play.

Their first game victory over Wahoo led an online sports show to refer to an insulting stereotype about Native Americans and alcohol abuse. Instead of folding or getting rattled, the team chose to use the negativity as fuel. They defeated Grand Island in their second game. They now had the chance to win a state championship for the first time in three quarters of a century. Despite the pressures and against the expectations of many, the Winnebago Indians defeated Columbus Scotus and took home the trophy (after bringing it to the hospital room of a player's ailing father), cheered by their whole community. The program concludes with a short follow-up segment on players, coaches, and community members, noting that the high school enjoyed a record number of graduates going on to college or the military that year.



Context

Winnebago the community— <http://www.winnebagotribe.com/>

Winnevegas controversy—

http://ftpcontent.worldnow.com/ktiv/News/Winnebago_Tribe_Findings.pdf

“Firewater” racial insult—

<http://www.ketv.com/article/online-broadcaster-apologizes-for-derogatory-comment/7651323>

<http://www.foxsports.com/basketball/story/firewater-remark-draws-ire-of-american-indian-teams-fans-031215>

Indian v. Native American v. American Indian—

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/bismarck_200504A16.html

Vocabulary

Bago- short for Winnebago

Rez ball- short for Reservation Basketball, referring to either the game or a style of high-speed play that involves quick shots, turnovers, rebounds, and constant running to keep pressure on opponents and make the most of all opportunities

Stereotype- an oversimplified idea or image of a group of people or things with a particular characteristic, often involving judgments or assumptions made without firsthand experience

Indian-one of several terms, including American Indian and Native American, used to refer to indigenous peoples of North America; no one term is favored by all groups

Firewater- defined by the dictionary as ‘strong alcoholic liquor’ but considered an insulting reference, linked to stereotypical images of tribal members as alcohol abusers and/or people who speak broken English

Talk About It Discussion Questions

“All the negativity that was surrounding them at the time didn’t show on the court.”

What challenges did the individuals on the team face?

- Death in the family
- Father’s illness
- Tribal leaders resigning over improper money handling

“They made us all proud.”

How did expectations affect the team?

- Pressure to win the first championship in 75 years
- Stereotype of not having the drive to win
- Not having played a top ten team in their division

“It isn’t about you. It’s about the whole team on the court...”

What did the boys accomplish as a team?

- Stayed focused despite sports commentator’s insult and resulting media attention
- Raised morale of community
- Showed high level of mutual support by taking trophy to hospital room of an ailing parent

“We’ve been playing together almost our whole lives.”

Action Ideas for Teamwork Experiences

As a class, set a goal for improving some aspect of performance and work collaboratively to achieve it. For example, the goal might be for each class member to participate at least twice each week in class discussions.

As a class, discover a common interest related to the school or the community. Set a goal to make a positive change related to that shared interest. Chart progress. Revisit progress on a regular basis. Celebrate the achievement of the goal.

“Adopt” one of the school’s teams or squads, in academics or in sports. As a class, take actions to support the team. Have class members take turns reporting on the team’s efforts.

Choose an existing community project and support its work. (For example: form a team for a fundraising walk, collect pantry items, or donate gently used clothing or toys to a non-profit.) Set a goal and recognize the final outcome with a celebration. Reflect on what went well, what could go better next time, and how each stage of the project felt.



Resources

State Championship

- http://journalstar.com/sports/high-school/basketball/boys/state-hoops-2015/boys-c--state-basketball-winnebago-caps-amazing-run-with/article_26536341-da1e-5418-94b4-547b4e71b1c9.html
- http://www.omaha.com/neprepzone/basketball/class-c--winnebago-wins-first-title-in-years-by/article_478713ec-5e32-5db9-877c-8f3b6871c7f9.html
- http://www.omaha.com/neprepzone/basketball/chatelain-winnebago-shines-on-big-stage/article_3424a078-7b44-57ba-b772-ofa462ab1da4.html
- http://www.omaha.com/sports/chatelain-fueled-by-love-and-hate-winnebago-wins-respect/article_911e45db-83db-558a-a10b-e927c4433d81.html

Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame

- <http://nebhallowfame.org/>

Rez ball national event, popularity

- <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/culture/sports/128-teams-rezball-is-in-the-limelight-at-the-native-american-basketball-invitational/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/03/sports/amid-the-red-rock-a-fever-pitch-for-rez-ball.html>

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