

CROW COUNTRY

OUR RIGHT TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



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LOG LINE On the Crow Reservation, where food sources are already scarce, the one affordable grocery store has burned down and tribal members are restricted from their traditional hunting grounds. *Crow Country: Our Right to Food Sovereignty* follows several tribal members who are fighting for better food and a better future for their community.

SYNOPSIS *Crow Country: Our Right to Food Sovereignty* is a 20-minute documentary that enlightens its audience to one tribe's struggle to retain food security. The Crow Indian Reservation is the largest reservation in Montana, encompassing 2.2 million acres of land. There are approximately 8,000 Crow (Apsáalooke) tribal members who live there.

In 2017, the Crow Agency laid off 1,000 of its 1,300 employees due to federal government cutbacks, ultimately straining tribal operations and leaving many families struggling to make ends meet. In 2019, the only grocery store on the reservation burnt down, and the owners are not planning to rebuild. For the Crow, the federal and tribal governments are both failing its people.

The Crow Tribe— like most tribes— have been reliant on federal, tribal and non profit food distribution centers. As a result, tribal nations across the country are exploring the idea of 'food sovereignty,' the inherent right of a community to identify its own food systems. Returning to traditional and nutritious foods have been shown to be an effective way to restore Native food systems and create

employment. However, restrictions on ancestral hunting grounds are preventing tribal members from providing for themselves and their families.

Crow Country will tell the stories of three tribal members: a journalist; an elder; and a hunter. This film will show how resilient the Apsáalooke people continue to be despite the hardships that they face.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As an avid follower of news throughout Indian Country-- a community of people that encompass over 500 tribes across the U.S.-- I only read about Clayvin Herrera because his court case reached the nation's highest court.

In spring of 2019, I was wrapping up my first year as a graduate student and preparing for a summer internship at Indian Country Today. This is when Herrera's case was heard at the Supreme Court and the judges ruled in his favor. Indian Country celebrated the victory because it validated his tribe's hunting rights from a treaty made in 1868.

At the end of my summer internship, I was able to speak with my editors about my work performance. I took this opportunity to ask what stories they felt would make for a good documentary. I remember ICT's editor, Mark Trahan, sat in his chair thinking it over.

"What about the Herrera case?" he said.

"Wasn't that already settled?" I asked.

We discussed it more, and he explained that even though Herrera won, the state of Wyoming still needs to set boundaries for Crow tribal members to hunt. It wasn't over. I recall that he described the story as "fascinating." This is a word that I adopted when I talk about it now, because after learning more I too became fascinated.

After days of working the phone and reaching more people on the reservation in Montana, I learned that the issue was far more dire and even bigger than the court case alone. Luckily, I was able to go to Montana to meet with people and learned even more about the food apartheid and how important this story was. Its magnitude grew when I found in further research that over 300 tribes across the country live in a food apartheid.

I hope that *Crow Country: Our Right to Food Sovereignty* enlightens its viewers to modern-day issues tribal communities face due to being forcibly moved to reservations. But moreover, how resilient and vibrant these communities are-- and that a fascination grows in you too.

--Tsanavi Spoonhunter

CREDITS

FEATURING

Peggy White Well Known Buffalo
Luella Brien
Prinz Three Irons
Clayvin Herrera
Conrad Yellowmule
Juanita Yellowmule

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Chris O'Dea

POST PRODUCTION SOUND

IMRSV SOUND

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Becky Korman, project manager

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DIRECTOR'S BIO

Tsanavi Spoonhunter was born in Bishop, Calif., and raised in the Owens Valley (Payahuunadü) in Central California. As a descendant of the Northern Paiute, Lakota and Northern Arapaho nations, most of her storytelling has centered on Indian Country. Some of her published works have included federal government funding for tribes, jurisdictional issues between governing agencies and economic development on tribal lands.

In 2020, Spoonhunter earned her master's degree from the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley with a focus in documentary filmmaking. Her documentary thesis, *Crow Country: Our Right to Food Sovereignty*, follows several tribal members from the Crow Tribe of Montana, in the Southeastern region of the state, and how they're navigating through a food apartheid.

As a Native American reporter and filmmaker, Spoonhunter is passionate when telling stories about her community. She hopes to make the film industry a more inclusive space for groups of people who have been historically underrepresented.