







Studio	TriStar Pictures		
Producer/Distributor	Robert De Niro/Jane Rosenthal		
Director	Michael Apted		
Novel	Original Screenplay – Fusco		
Screenplay	John Fusco		
Year	1992		
Filmed in	Spherical Color		
Nominations	Human Rights		
Cast	Role		
Val Kilmer	Ray Levoi		
Sam Shepard	Frank Coutelle		
Graham Greene (NA)	Walter Crow Horse		
Fred Ward	Jack Milton		
Fred Dalton Thomas	William Dawes		
Sheila Tousey (NA)	Maggie Eagle Bear		
Ted Thin Elk (NA)	Elder Sam Reaches		
John Trudell (NA)	Jimmy Looks Twice		
Julius Drum (NA)	Richard Yellow Hawk		
Sarah Brave (NA)	Maisy Blue Legs		
Allen R. J. Joseph (NA)	Leo Fast elk		
Sylvan Pumpkin Seed (NA)	Hobart		
Patrick Massett	FBI Agent		
Rex Linn	FBI Agent		
Dennis Banks (NA)	Himself		









Thunderheart – Janet Maslin of the New York Times

The "Washington redskin" of "Thunderheart," as he is derisively called by the film's American Indian characters, is an F.B.I. agent who is sent from Washington to an Oglala Sioux reservation to investigate a crime. **Raymond Levoi** (**Val Kilmer**) does not welcome this assignment. Part Sioux himself, and too culturally assimilated to acknowledge that heritage, he resents having been selected for the job on the basis of his background. He refers contemptuously to various Indians as "Geronimo" and "Tonto" as a means of registering his unfamiliarity with their world. But during the course of the story, Ray is freed from his high-handed superiority to Indian culture, made to understand the many problems of the violence-torn Indian community (the film is set in the late 1970's) and forced to accept his own past. "The same blood that was spilled in the grass and snow at Wounded Knee runs through your heart like a buffalo," he is told by one of the story's far more spiritually aware Indian characters.

"Thunderheart" isn't really about Ray anyhow. He provides the foreground interest for a film whose background is much more authentic and important, and much more fully realized. **Michael Apted**, the remarkable documentary film maker whose dramatic films often have an anthropological accuracy, addresses himself to life on an Indian reservation with the same curiosity and intelligence he has brought to

other subjects. Mr. Apted displays too much respect for his material to overdramatize it or otherwise create a Hollywood gloss. Though "Thunderheart" is about a murder investigation and has the shape of a thriller, it also has a documentary's attentiveness to detail. So the film, which deals reasonably well with the progress of Ray's spiritual awakening and with a murder plot, also dwells on many Indian customs, ceremonies and beliefs.

Filmed on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, "Thunderheart" is loosely based on violent events that took place there and elsewhere during the 1970's. The film employs many Indian actors, some of whose screen roles mirror their real lives. The fiery **John Trudell**, who plays an Indian activist suspected of murder in the movie, is in fact an Indian activist, as well as a poet and singer. **Chief Ted Thin Elk**, who plays an honored Lakota medicine man with a winning combination of courtliness and guile, is a Lakota elder himself.

A film this intent on authenticity might easily grow dull, but this one doesn't; Mr. Apted is a skillful storyteller. He gives "Thunderheart" a brisk, fact-filled exposition and a dramatic structure that builds to a strong finale, one that effectively drives the film's message home. That message concerns corruption and reform battling for supremacy within the Indian community, widespread neglect on the part of the Federal Government and the urgent need for change.

Sam Shepard co-stars as the sardonic, hard-boiled F.B.I. agent who shows Ray some of the ropes, though not all of them. Fred Ward appears briefly but effectively as the swaggering tribal president who is head of the reservation's most repressive faction. The film's outstanding performance comes from **Graham Greene**, an Oscar nominee for "Dances with Wolves," a film that looks like an utter confection beside this plainer, harder-hitting drama. In the role of a tribal police officer, serving as Roy's wry tour guide through various Indian rituals, Mr. Greene proves himself a naturally magnetic actor who deserves to be seen in other, more varied roles.

Sheila Tousey, making her film debut, conveys a quiet, stirring integrity as a schoolteacher and activist caught up in the story's violent events. "Sorry I got your family involved in this," Ray eventually tells her. "Ray, my family's been involved since Columbus landed," she replies. In paying its respects to that figurative family and its traditions, the film depicts a large ceremonial powwow, a sweat lodge ceremony and other authentic aspects of Indian life, including the rusted-out trailers and appalling medical facilities that are present-day features. The reservation is pointedly described by one character as "a third world right here in America."

FINAL IMPRESSIONS ABOUT NATIVE PEOPLE FROM THIS FILM? $+$ $$ -					