

FILM REVIEW OF 'ROUND UP'

The Journey to Cultural Reclamation

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Narcisse Blood's *Round Up* captures the redemptive journey of Pete Standing Alone as he reclaims his culture and spiritual ways following the genocide that took place at residential schools. With age and wisdom, Pete Standing Alone's goal is to guide other Indigenous people to do the same. This documentary displays the overarching theme of cultural reclamation, as Pete Standing Alone details his journey in regaining the culture of his people. Another theme of *Round Up* is recovering the spiritual ways of Standing Alone's Nation, and how vital it was for him renounce Catholicism and recover the spiritual ways of his ancestors.

Scars are designed to show where someone has been, but they do not dictate where someone is going, and these words have never been more applicable than in the case of Standing Alone. The documentary *Round Up* displays how he reclaims his culture and rediscovers the spiritual ways of his people, even after the government and church's joint operation to aggressively assimilate the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Standing Alone, like many other Indigenous people throughout Canada, experienced an

attempted genocide at the hands of the Canadian government and Catholic church. This calculated genocide was carried out by residential schools, which were designed to remove the cultural connection and assimilate Indigenous children. The documentary *Round Up* explains how Standing Alone was able to reclaim his culture and rediscover the spiritual ways of his people after surviving residential schools. Just surviving was an accomplishment in itself, because now we understand many Indigenous children lost their lives while attending residential schools. Standing Alone's journey began as an individual, but now his goal is to show other Indigenous people that they too can regain what was once stolen.

Standing Alone explained the goal of residential schools was to remove the cultural connection and assimilate Indigenous children, because the Canadian government and church felt Indigenous people were nothing more than savages. In order to reform these so-called savages, the government and church forced children to renounce their cultural ways and practices. By doing so they could assimilate them into what they deemed an acceptable culture, which was a Eurocentric culture.

Round Up perfectly illustrates the theme of reclaiming one's culture, as *Standing Alone* explains that he could not fit into the 'white man's world'. His logic for cultural reclamation is simple, his people already have a culture, and their Indigenous culture was designed for Indigenous people, by Indigenous people. Also, this culture served his people for centuries, long before colonization.

Round Up also displays how healing reclaiming one's spiritual ways can be. *Standing Alone* explains that residential schools deemed their spiritual ways as 'pagan'. He goes a step further and describes how residential school teachings were designed around fear. How children were told if they continued with their spiritual ways, they would go straight to hell. *Standing Alone* explains that, as a result, he would rather be a spiritual man than a Catholic. He notes his life was not better off when he was forced into Catholicism, and he only found real change in his life when he returned to his peoples' spiritual ways. In the documentary, the audience is given access to one of the spiritual ceremonies. We see Pete *Standing Alone* and fellow Indigenous people smoking from a pipe and speaking in their native language as they exhale the smoke. So, not only do we see Pete *Standing Alone* rediscover his ancestor's spiritual ways, but we see him guiding other Indigenous people as well. By regaining his true religion, Pete *Standing Alone* can experience true change in his life; this could be

directly correlated to his deep connection with his ancestor's spiritual ways, along with him renouncing a religion that was forced on him through fear.

Round Up is a redemption story of the ages, as it shows that no matter how dark days become, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. *Standing Alone* shows how one man can arise from the darkness of residential schools to reclaim his Indigenous culture and recover his ancestor's spiritual ways, while simultaneously guiding others to do the same. Following the destructive teachings at residential schools, he was able to reclaim a culture that was designed for him and suited his people long before the settlers arrived. The documentary shows how vital it is for Indigenous people to reclaim their culture, and through reclamation they can reverse the damages of residential schools that sought to destroy the Indigenous people's way of life. What many may fail to understand is Pete *Standing Alone*'s life is not just a one off; there are thousands of Indigenous people in Canada who endured residential schools, and it is important to understand that even though *Standing Alone*'s journey is exceptional, there are many other lost souls who did not experience such an incredible triumph. However, by watching *Round Up* it could spark other Indigenous people to rise of up and reclaim their people's way of life.

REFERENCES

Blood, Narcisse, *Round Up*, (National Film Board of Canada: Montreal, 2010)