

# The Buffalo Post

*A news blog about Native people and the world we live in*

**‘A Good Day to Die,’ film about Dennis Banks & American Indian Movement, wins best documentary at festival**

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The best documentary at the 10th Annual deadCENTER Film Festival gave a voice to a movement overlooked by mainstream America and unknown to a new generation of Native Americans.

“A Good Day to Die”, by filmmakers David Mueller and Lynn Salt (Choctaw), won best documentary at its world premiere at the deadCENTER Film Festival in Oklahoma City. It is also the first film of its kind to be executive produced by a tribal nation, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation of California. It tells the story of Dennis Banks, co-founder of the American Indian Movement.

This is a story of American history I did not learn growing up.

In grade school and high school I knew nothing about the American Indian Movement or the takeover of the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in Washington, D.C., or the confrontations in Custer and Wounded Knee, S.D.

I did not know who Dennis Banks was until I was in college. It was there that I took classes on Native American history and read books such as “Like a Hurricane: The American Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee.”

Banks co-founded the AIM in 1968 to call attention to the atrocities that were occurring to Native Americans in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The film explains how his life was shaped by his experiences in the boarding schools, the military and time spent in state prison.

This documentary brought to life what I have read in books. Interviews from AIM members, politicians, lawyers, judges and law enforcement officers gave various perspectives on a turbulent era.

There is a line from an interview in the documentary that resonated this period, "If you let the bully just keep smacking you in the face, and you never do anything about it, then one day you jump up and hit him with a rock, things are going to change."

This documentary pays tribute to those who endured before us. It tells the story of man, but more so of a movement whose actions reverberate today.

Salt wiped away tears as a nearly full house gave the documentary and the directors a standing ovation. The film premiered on Saturday night, but many showed up for an additional screening on Sunday afternoon.

"A Good Day to Die" was one of more than a hundred independent films screened over a five-day period. Founded in 2001, the deadCENTER Film Festival attracts filmmakers from across the globe. Mueller and Salt both felt it was appropriate to unveil the film in Oklahoma because of the state's Native American population and history.