

# NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

6-8

Subject

Social Studies

Lesson Title

Olympic Champ Billy Mills Lives His Lakota Values

**Activity Description:** Billy Mills, a Lakota athlete from the Pine Ridge Reservation, overcame great odds to win the 10,000 meter race in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. He is still the only American to even win this race and continues to travel today and inspire youth, especially Native Americans, to work hard for their dreams. In this inquiry-based activity, learn more about his life, activism, and the values of the Lakota that helped Billy Mills be successful. This activity also includes the full-length film about his Olympic journey.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- WiFi access (required)
- Device for playing movies (smart tv, laptop, phone, tablet, etc.)
- print or digital version of ["7 Values of Lakota Life"](#)
- print or digital version of the article ["About Billy Mills"](#) from Running Strong for American Indian Youth
- YouTube version of ["Footprints"-Billy Mills' TEDx speech](#)
- [Running Brave \(1983\)](#) full length film on YouTube

## STEPS

During this activity, you will complete an *inquiry*. That means that you will answer a question by reading or watching several sources of information. Think of an inquiry as an investigation into something new. For this activity, the inquiry goal is to answer this question: **How does Billy Mills' life journey demonstrate the values of the Lakota people?**

### Inquiry Activity Steps:

1. As you start your inquiry, first read this list ["7 Values of Lakota Life."](#) You may want to write these down or have a printed version.
2. Next, learn about the struggles, accomplishments, and community work of Billy Mills by reading the article ["About Billy Mills"](#) from Running Strong for American Indian Youth. This article speaks about the work that Billy Mills does to support Native youth around the nation.
3. After reading the article, listen to Billy Mills give a TED Talk. These talks are very popular speeches about important topics that people around the world give at TED events to share ideas and thoughts about life. Watch his [TED Talk called "Footprints"](#) at Yale University. As you watch, try to answer these questions:
  - a. What are the three lessons or values that Mills took from his Olympic win?
  - b. What are some of the pains and challenges Mills had to go through to make his dreams come true?
4. Finally, watch [Running Brave \(1983\)](#), a full-length film on YouTube about Billy Mills' Olympic journey. Ask your friends and family to join you while you watch.
  - a. Before starting the film, share the Lakota values and what you have learned about Mills.
5. When the movie is finished, answer the inquiry question at the top of the activity guide. If your friends and family joined you, ask them to share their thoughts as well.
6. To complete the activity, choose one of the Lakota values and think about how you can live that value in your own life and community.

# NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

6-8

Subject

Social Studies

Lesson Title

Olympic Champ Billy Mills  
Lives His Lakota Values

## HELPFUL TIPS

**Parents and caregivers:** This activity is most effective when done together with your child and/or family. Learning about Billy Mills and how he represented his tribe and Native Americans on his journey to success is a way to teach character and perseverance as well as other life values. He is a spokesperson for *Running Strong*, a foundation that supports Native youth across the nation. Mills also travels speaking to young people about achieving their dreams despite conflict, stereotypes, and inequality. Mills' life reflects the 7 values of Lakota life which he speaks about in the [TEDx talk "Footprints"](#) in the activity guide above. During this activity, discuss these values with your child(ren) or share the values your own tribe or community hold for them.

For more parent support on teaching values, visit this webpage: ["Values Matter: Using Your Values to Raise Caring, Responsible, Resilient Children"](#) by the Center for Parenting Education

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

**Families and educators:** This activity loosely follows an inquiry-based design. That design poses a broad or specific question/problem to answer and then provides sources and a guide for students to search for the answer or solution. This activity can be duplicated using other Native American athletes or Hall of Fame inductees.

- Educators, if you want to know more about inquiry-based design, visit the [C3 Framework Resources](#) page from National Council of the Social Studies
- For a collection of lesson plans from the Native American Hall of Fame, which includes Billy Mills and other inductees, download this printable document [National Native American Hall of Fame Curriculum](#).

### Activity Resources:

- "7 Values of Lakota Life" on SGU Virtual Center for Teaching Excellence <https://sites.google.com/site/sguvcte/seven-values-of-lakota-life>
- "About Billy Mills" at *Running Strong for American Indian Youth* <https://indianyouth.org/billy-mills>
- "Footprints-Billy Mills-TedX Yale" YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkrhWE1TSKM>
- *Running Brave* (1983) full-length film on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CY5PrJl8e0>

### Additional Resources:

- "Values Matter: Using Your Values to Raise Caring, Responsible, Resilient Children" by the Center for Parenting Education <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/indulgence-values/values-matter-using-your-values-to-raise-caring-responsible-resilient-children-what-are-values/>
- "C3 Resources from the C3 Literacy Collaborative" by National Council of the Social Studies <https://www.socialstudies.org/c3/c3lc>
- *National Native American Hall of Fame Curriculum* <https://nativehalloffame.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/NNHOF-Curriculum-Final.pdf>