A young Native American struggles to hold onto his identity in the face of a nation that attempts to strip him of his culture in *Bright Path: The Jim Thorpe Story*, a feature film that is quickly coming together from Pictureworks Entertainment. Spurred on by the last words his father ever spoke to him, “Son, you’re an Indian, I want you to show other races what an Indian can do,” Jim Thorpe transcends overwhelming obstacles to become a beacon of hope for his people and “The World’s Greatest Athlete.”

**Who Was Jim Thorpe?**

Jim Thorpe is considered by many to be the greatest all-around athlete in the history of modern sports. He won Olympic Gold Medals in the pentathlon and decathlon in the 1912 Swedish games, representing a United States that did not recognize his citizenship.

Professionally, he played baseball for the New York Giants and football for the Canton Bulldogs, where he won three national championships. In 1920, he became a founding member and the first president of the National Football League.

**The Carlisle Indian Industrial School**

**“Kill the Indian, Save the Man”**

The Indian Wars officially ended with the ‘Massacre at Wounded Knee,’ but the government continued its campaign against the ‘Red Man,’ in a far more subtle and vicious way – in the Indian boarding school system where the mission was cultural annihilation.

Often taken from their families, Carlisle students were wards of the government, essentially, prisoners of war. At Carlisle, they were forbidden from: speaking Native languages, wearing traditional Native regalia, practicing Native religions, and using Native names (they had to choose new Christian ones). Boys were forced to cut their hair – a symbol of pride and great honor. They also contracted diseases for which they had no immunity. Over its nearly three-decade existence, Carlisle had a ten percent mortality rate; more than 1,000 Carlisle children never came home.

National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman Emeritus and one of the film’s Executive Producers, Rick Hill, said, “Thorpe’s life is the perfect backdrop to tell the authentic story of the failed attempts to assimilate Native people to the ‘American way of life.’ This film will become an important voice for our communities and can help us in the generational healing process.”

**Football in 1912**

Despite growing up in an age where their world was being ripped away from them, Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian football players found confidence and meaning in the white man’s game. Football at the time was not the game we know today. In the early 20th century, it was a glorified shoving match where size and brute strength were paramount; it was a uniquely American sport, a battle for territory.

Pop Warner and the Carlisle Indians re-invented the game as they had to devise a way for their smaller players to compete with the much bigger white teams. What the Indians lacked in size, they made up for in speed and agility. They played the biggest white colleges in the country – Harvard, Brown, Pitt, Georgetown, Syracuse, Army and others – all on the road. They were the ultimate underdogs. In Thorpe’s final season at Carlisle, he faced off with future president, Dwight Eisenhower, who recounted: “My memory goes back to Jim Thorpe. He could do anything better than any other football player I ever saw.”

**The Production**

Casting on the film has begun with Hawaiian Native star Jason Momoa (*Game of Thrones, Aquaman*) joining the picture to portray Jim’s imposing father Hiram. Prominent Casting Director, Rene Haynes (*Dances With Wolves, The Revenant, Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee, Into the West*) is casting the picture. She said, “It is rare that a project has come along with so much mainstream commercial potential for success while having at the center of the story a Native American lead and hero. I believe an exciting sports film about
the real birth of modern football as we know it today, will bring in an audience well beyond what past Native-themed films have reached.” The Tuolumne Band of Mewuk Indians and The Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut are the first to partner with Pictureworks Entertainment on the film.

What Is Being Said About BRIGHT PATH

Tuolumne Chairman Kevin Day said, “By honoring our ancestors and telling our story, we strengthen our tribal nations and prepare our youth for tomorrow.” Mohegan Chairman Kevin Brown “Red Eagle” stated, “Native Americans are a proud people, but traditionally – like Jim – are soft spoken and their humility often limits the reach of stories about their accomplishments. This is a film that we believe can educate and entertain a wide audience and we are proud to be a part of it.”

National Indian Gaming Association Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. commented, “Congratulations and special thanks to Tuolumne and Mohegan for making sure this important project is realized. This film will share an inspirational story about a Native American man who was one of the greatest athletes in the world and how, in spite of his boarding school experience, he was able to win two Olympic Gold Medals, play professional baseball and football and be one of the founding members and first President of the National Football League. His inspiration lives on today. Thorpe’s life is the perfect backdrop to inspire generations of Native youth to strive for their dreams, to overcome all odds and to create a ‘Bright Path’ not only for themselves, but for all of mankind.”

“Jim Thorpe’s transcendent story is universal,” said the film’s producer, Abraham Taylor. “No matter where you come from, no matter what language you speak, no matter how great your challenges are in life, Jim’s story of overcoming every obstacle can speak to us all. His is the ultimate human story.”

Jim Thorpe’s family is also involved in the picture. “My brother Richard and I are the only surviving children of Jim Thorpe,” commented Bill Thorpe. “Our father’s accomplishments in life are a great source of pride to us and we honor his name. In the more than six decades since Burt Lancaster’s Jim Thorpe: All American, our family has heard of dozens of attempts to bring this story to modern audiences, but we have never shared the vision of a movie until the authentic portrayal in BRIGHT PATH: The Jim Thorpe Story.”

It Is Time

With the important and ongoing events at Standing Rock, BRIGHT PATH has never been more timely nor has there ever been a greater need for a film that can reach a general audience in this unique way. “At its core, BRIGHT PATH is a powerful human rights story,” said Robert Williamson, Clan Leader and Committee Member of the Sac and Fox Nation. “It will help the nation understand our people and our struggle and the courageous movement at Standing Rock.”

BRIGHT PATH is slated to begin production in 2017 with a release in 2018.

For more information about BRIGHT PATH: The Jim Thorpe Story, visit www.brightpathmovie.com.