

New Native American Curriculum and Documentary Film Illuminate the Life and Legacy of Chicago's Billy Caldwell

This curriculum not only educates students about Caldwell's life but also encourages a more inclusive narrative about the history of the city and the Midwest."

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, January 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new educational curriculum and film [documentary](#) are available to provide middle and high school students a deeper understanding of one of Chicago's most significant yet often overlooked [Native American](#) figures: Billy Caldwell, a prominent leader of 19th century Chicago-area tribes.



The Negotiator: Billy Caldwell

A collaboration of Native American scholars, educators, and filmmakers, the new curriculum and film seek to bring Caldwell's story to a wider audience, highlighting his role in shaping the history of Chicago and the American Midwest.

“

This curriculum not only educates students about his life but also encourages a more inclusive narrative about the history of the city and the Midwest.”

Susan Kelsey

Susan L. Kelsey, a Chicago-area filmmaker, first began pursuing Caldwell's story more than 30 years ago. In 1993, she was walking near the north branch of the Chicago River when she saw a plaque indicating the site of the edge of Fort Dearborn and the signing of the treaty with Billy Caldwell/Chief Sauganash.

“From that moment, I was intrigued with Billy Caldwell's connection with Chicago,” Kelsey says. “Who was the man

and what was his legacy?”

Following Caldwell's trail from his birthplace in Canada as the son of an Irish soldier and Mohawk woman to the tribes' migration to Iowa and Kansas, Kelsey published a book in 2019 and then, in 2024, premiered "The Negotiator: Billy Caldwell," which she co-produced with members of the Potawatomi Nation.

The curriculum, based on Kelsey's research and film, is intended to provide an engaging representation of Native American history and culture, specifically through the lens of Billy Caldwell's life and legacy. It focuses on his work as an intermediary between Native American tribes and the United States government, his role in the Treaty of Chicago (1833), and his influence on the region's history, including the founding of Chicago itself.

"Billy Caldwell's contributions to Chicago and the broader Native American community are often forgotten or misunderstood," Kelsey said. "This curriculum not only educates students about his life but also encourages a more inclusive narrative about the history of the city and the Midwest."

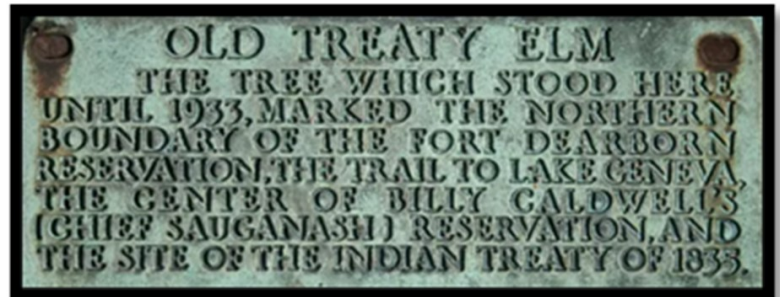
The 40-minute documentary, titled "Billy Caldwell & Great Lakes Treaty-Making," offers a visual exploration of Caldwell's life, incorporating interviews with historians, Native American leaders and community members, as well as rare archival footage and reenactments. Produced by Kelsey, Michelle Simon (Potawatomi) and Joe Mitchell (Potawatomi), the film examines Caldwell's complex relationship with both Native communities and the U.S. government, his legacy of land negotiations, and his efforts to secure the safety and rights of his people.

"It does a tremendous job of conveying the history of treaties and Indian removal in Chicago with the breadth and complexity that it necessitates," said Jeanne Schultz Angel, associate vice president of humanities for the Naper Settlement, an award-winning outdoor museum in Naperville. "Extensively researched and captivating to watch, the film incorporates first voices into the interpretation of this intensely local, yet nationally significant, under told story.

"To add to the impact of this film, a teaching curriculum deepens the understanding for students



Susan Kelsey



Marker

and aligns with the Native American teaching mandate in Illinois.”

Kelsey worked with Jennifer Ciok of the University of Chicago’s Urban Education Institute to develop the curriculum for grades 5-12, along with workbooks and activities.

For more information about the curriculum and documentary, visit www.thebillycaldwellmovie.com.

Joanne Levine
Lekas & Levine PR
+1 847-327-9530
joannepr@aol.com

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/776955774>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.