



# BAD RIVER

By [Chris Salce](#) | March 15, 2024

Every once in a while, a documentary comes along that can turn the culture upside down and absolutely move you. Mary Mazzi's *Bad River* is that film for me.

In 2018, a helicopter crashed on Bad River, located near Lake Superior, the largest freshwater system by area in the world. During the crash investigation, an exposed pipeline was elevated from the ground. A Canadian company, Enbridge, owns the pipeline. If the pipe were to leak (which is highly likely due to its elevated position), it could be catastrophic.

Although the main topic of *Bad River* is the exposed pipeline that was never agreed upon in the first place, it is, on the whole, about Indigenous heritage. In 1850, President Zachary Taylor ordered the Lake Superior Ojibwe out of their land. This order violated treaties already in place, which had already given millions of acres to the federal government. This, my friends, is also known as colonization – dividing the Indigenous people and forcing them to do as the settlers said or be killed or tortured. Several tribal chiefs attempted to negotiate with newly elected president Millard Fillmore so that they could stay in their homeland. The cost was giving up more land.



“...dividing the Indigenous people and forcing them to do as the settlers said...”

The pipeline, those treaties, as well as more historic Indigenous events are brought up not only to tell the Indigenous people's side of the story but to prove a point. The point is that Natives have been unfairly treated since settlers came to America, and it is still happening. The Natives' stories display how strong these people are and how much fight they have in them. It wasn't until college that I learned about how big of a jerk Christopher Columbus really was. Documentaries like this can help identify what really happened (and continues to) on this land many years ago, as it will allow people to think for themselves.

Quannah ChasingHorse and Edward Norton add their notable voices by narrating *Bad River*. The mix of both voices works powerfully as we hear a Native telling a story of her ancestors, as well as a celebrity name that will add more eyes and ears on the project. It is always great to see people tell their stories. It is also fantastic to have high-profile celebrities use their platform to spread awareness on important world issues.

*Bad River* made me angry in the intended way. The injustice that the Indigenous have faced for many years is only one story in a huge history that needs to be told. This is a movie that should be included in every American history curriculum. It is time that we teach the real history of America and stop glorifying false heroes.

## BAD RIVER (2024)

Directed and Written: Mary Mazzi

Starring: Quannah ChasingHorse, Edward Norton, etc.

MOVIE SCORE: 10/10



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