Shooting Indians explores the representation of Indigenous people in photography

By Hina Imam

The title of Shooting Indians is double-edged and timely. The documentary by Jeffrey Thomas shines a light on the broader and distressing context of photography in Indigenous communities.

Shooting Indians is double-edged and instantly demands attention. At first glance, “shooting” reminds one of the many atrocities committed against Indigenous people, and it is heart-wrenching to see photographs of Indigenous people destroyed—that their culture destroyed. I think Curtis was indicative of the attitude at that time and essentially his creative process.

Though we see only glimpses of Kazimi, one can feel the resonance shared between the characters and viewers. The documentary brings to light that there’s a great deal of potential for curation and understanding in the documentation of Indigenous people, about representation or lack thereof, and about the early 20th century Indigenous photographers like Curtis,” Thomas says.

Shooting Indians: A Journey With Jeffrey Thomas

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The film follows the journey of Thomas, his quest to document Indigenous people, and essentially his creative process.

“Shooting” reminds one of the many atrocities committed against Indigenous people. But this film released in 1997 is not really about that. It is about understanding Indigenous culture in Canada, and he then asked himself why he had never done this with anyone else. He says, “You talked about being an outsider in Canada and the kind of problems that we both had were parallel…”

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