

Movie Review – The Knowledge Keepers

Review by Justin Bowler

“NRMA Insurance is proud to support the making of this film in partnership with Campfire x, an Indigenous creative-led agency. Our goal is to share Indigenous preparedness knowledge through storytelling.”

The goal of any documentary is to illuminate a subject of which the viewer may not be aware. With so much going on in the world, a documentary slows things down. It looks at a moment: an ordinary person, a quiet corner, a geographically distant story...and says, “Look. This matters.”

It’s a subject wrapped in curiosity. It can show us who we are, and what we might become. Sometimes it gives voice to the unheard, light to the unseen, and visibility to the overlooked. A great documentary should invite you in, answer questions, make you feel, understand, and take notice.

The Knowledge Keepers does just that. From tribal knowledge derived from interviewing indigenous people, this documentary “draws on some 65 thousand years of Indigenous knowledge, to help us better prepare for the future.” The main narrative is presented as a warm and friendly parental campfire chat among kids and their elders. “I love the land.” “And I’m very proud of the history we have.” “I want my you and my kids to enjoy that.”

This is intercut with news footage and interviews with scientists who back up the “simple” knowledge of the indigenous. The effect is a comfortable softening of an overwhelming subject, making it more accessible. One child questions “What can I do?”. This becomes a simple call to action that people of all ages can understand and take on, no matter who you are. If you feel you can’t do something, simply “help by supporting, showing respect and coming on the journey with us”.

Broken up into sections, the first focuses on the fires of 2019/2020, which gave Australia the worst fire season it has ever seen. This doc offers simple solutions to complex problems. For example, it illustrates the importance of cool burning. “Cool burning involves low fires in small areas on foot. These fires are closely monitored, ensuring that only the underbrush is burnt.” This helps to alleviate the “sick land”.

Another section focuses on the floods from the past few years. Side note: If you live near a river where frogs are always croaking, when you notice they are climbing trees, that means a flood is coming (sure, this seems intuitive, but, I’ve never lived near a river, so I didn’t know this!).

A common through line is invasive species and non-native plants as an aggregate of fire attraction. "The more you burn and rejuvenate the land, the more opportunity for native (plants) and other trees and grasses to grow here." There is an emphasis on using native plants, plants that are a part of the land, that are a part of their history.

All this as seen through the eyes of the Aboriginals presents a compelling story about climate with a very real and human touch. This is not a heavy handed doc that preaches and dwells on past atrocities. It is a documentary about hope "for our future, for our kids". It is about changing for the better and "believing that we can."

Link - <https://www.themovieguys.net/2025/07/19/movie-review-the-knowledge-keepers/>