Critical Acclaim For
‘UP HEARTBREAK HILL’
By Erica Scharf

“An uphill climb that results in a crowning success.”
— Adrian Gomez, Albuquerque Journal

“Poignant.”
— Neal Conan, host, “Talk of the Nation,” NPR

“For many young people across the country, the transition from high school to college can be a difficult time. It’s . . . even more challenging . . . in the largest Indian reservation in the U.S. Up Heartbreak Hill features two kids who are trying to break into the modern world while dealing with their Native American history.”
— Terrell Brown, host, CBS News “Up to the Minute”

“A fascinating and under-documented subject, and the placing [of] Native coming-of-age rituals alongside contemporary teen life makes it all the more compelling. . . . A refreshing, original film about the challenges of indigenous youth.”
— Ryan Little, Washington City Paper

“An eye-opening . . . view into Native American adolescence . . . Viewing Up Heartbreak Hill . . . is to recognize that these teens carry burdens far weightier than those of most 18-year-olds.”
— Blair Howell, Deseret News

“Wrenching . . . clearly the ‘Heartbreak Hill’ of the title is not only the name of a hill the runners must conquer in a race, but also the emotional hurdles they face growing up.”
— Curt Schleier, The Jewish Daily Forward

“Poetic. . . . All too aware that Native traditions are at risk, that language and rituals are slipping away, [the subjects] also look forward, wanting to change the experiences they’ve had. . . . The film provides glimpses of . . . the prayers and rituals that mark transitions as well as continuities.”
— Cynthia Fuchs, PopMatters.com

“Gives viewers a perspective on modern Native American culture as they witness the students struggling to discover their paths while staying true to their traditions. . . . Highlights community strengths, from sustaining family ties to the deep connection people have to the land.”
— Laura Watilo Blake, New Mexico Magazine

“Emphasizes the challenges in taking advantage of educational opportunities for contemporary Indian youth.”
— Robert Nott, Santa Fe New Mexican

“Certainly gives us hope that a new generation will take up the challenges of leading the Navajo Nation.”
— Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, Spirituality & Practice.com
“[A] rare journey inside Indian families. . . . There are enough unguarded moments here with the teens that we are able to hear their voices loud and clear.”

—David Crumm, Read the Spirit.com

“Through the [subjects’] own experiences, the viewer sees that the struggle of Native Americans is not an issue of the past.”

—Jenny Kane, The Daily Times