

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a dark green velvet dress with a high collar and long sleeves. She is adorned with extensive turquoise jewelry, including a large circular pendant, multiple necklaces, a wide belt with turquoise stones, and several rings and bracelets. She stands in a rugged, rocky landscape under a cloudy sky. The text "THROUGH INDIAN EYES: NATIVE AMERICAN CINEMA" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**THROUGH INDIAN EYES:
NATIVE AMERICAN CINEMA**

THROUGH INDIAN EYES: NATIVE AMERICAN CINEMA

Program generously supported by
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
and Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

SAN  MANUEL
BAND OF MISSION INDIANS



SERIES CURATORS: *Jan-Christopher Horak, Dawn Jackson (Saginaw Chippewa),
Shannon Kelley, Paul Malcolm and Valerie Red-Horse Mohl (Cherokee).*

ASSOCIATE CURATOR: *Nina Rao.*



TRANSMITTING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANCESTORS: NATIVE AMERICAN FILMMAKERS TODAY

I.

In his seminal film, *Imagining Indians* (1993), Victor Masayesva, Jr. discusses a litany of complaints made by Native Americans about how they are perceived by mainstream American society, given the 100+ year history of racist imagery emanating from the Hollywood filmmaking establishment: All Indians are blood thirsty savages; The genocide of Native Americans has disappeared into history; All Indians who are not savages are dead or doomed to die; Americans have a romantic love of images of Indians as noble savages; Indians are never individualized, especially Indian women, but rather objectified as objects, or like animals, rather than humans; Indians are never depicted in modern dress; White people are better actors in Indian roles than Indians; All Indians look like plains Indians without tribal or regional differences; All tribal customs are the same for all Indians; White people go insane if they live with Indians; White men are inherently superior, while Indians are inherently stupid; Since these old stereotypes are no longer politically correct, Indians are now completely invisible.

While these polemically formulated statements are essentially true even today of the American media industry, Native Americans over the past twenty-five years have fought back and “talked back,” producing an amazing array of films. After being almost totally excluded from any meaningful role in the production of their own images for close to a century since the invention of film in 1895, Native Americans have seized the means of production. Film making became affordable to Native communities, thanks to the invention of digital cameras and the technical revolution in computer based digital editing systems in the 1990s, which resulted in an accompanying drop in production costs. Yet this phenomenon was not sui generis. Indeed, since the 1970s, Native communities have worked incrementally to take command of both their destinies and their representation, often in tandem with public institutions, like the National

Film Board of Canada and the Smithsonian Institution, and private ones such as Sundance Institute, in order to establish film training programs, local Native television networks and other distribution platforms. However, the success of filmmaker Chris Eyre's *Smoke Signals* (1998), the first all Native American film to break Hollywood's stranglehold on the domestic, commercial film market, opened the gates for numerous other indigenous filmmakers. Some of the resulting films have been financed independently through Native American tribal councils, others through non-Native sources. They have all been guided by Indian eyes, i.e. directed by Native Americans. Far from being relegated to a particular genre, the films of Native American filmmakers include comedies, dramas, shorts, documentaries, and experimental and animated works.

UCLA Film & Television Archive has a long-standing commitment to internationalism and multi-culturalism, and to making invisible cinemas and their makers visible. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Archive has organized a yearly program of Iranian cinema. Other programs have featured Brazilian, Mexican, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Asian Indian cinema. In 2011, we presented a series commemorating “L.A. Rebellion,” the first generation of independent African-American filmmakers in this country. With this series, “Through Indian Eyes: Native American Cinema,” the Archive is addressing the concerns of a significant ethnic and cultural community, both in California and throughout North America. As a mainstream, non-Native institution, which has shown and continues to show Hollywood Westerns, this exhibition has been an intense learning process for programming Archive staff, sensitizing us to many issues that previously had remained invisible.

This program had its genesis approximately two years ago, when the Archive was approached by UCLA graduate and prominent filmmaker, Valerie Red-Horse, who wanted to bring together UCLA-trained Native American directors for a film screening. We seized the opportunity and asked her and her

colleague, Dawn Jackson, a veteran film producer and Los Angeles Native American Indian Commissioner, to join our curatorial committee, which consisted of myself, head programmer Shannon Kelley, and programmer Paul Malcolm, with programming assistant Nina Rao curating a children's program. Our collective goal was to present a retrospective of films made by Native Americans, essentially as a partnership between UCLA as a mainstream cultural institution and our Native American neighbors, in order to amplify their voices above a cacophony of mainstream media, thus bringing the diversity and richness of Native American culture to audiences which have previously received little exposure to American Indians and their tribal communities. Secondly, we address the industry, exclaiming that it no longer needs to traffic in the racist and demeaning stereotypes of Native Americans that have been its shameful legacy. An intermediate goal is to make the film industry in Los Angeles and elsewhere aware of the incredible Native American talents that are blossoming in tribal communities. We hope, then, that this program and a subsequent tour to select North American cultural institutions will ultimately result in creating economic opportunities for Native American filmmakers, if they wish to engage mainstream audiences.

Every such programming initiative at the Archive requires devoted funding from generous partner agencies, commensurate with the scale of the project. San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association have both provided significant funding in support of our program's research and implementation. We are extremely grateful to these funders for their support of this important work.

In organizing our research, we set out to compile as complete a list as possible of Native American film productions in the United States and Canada over the past twenty-five years. While Indigenous festivals and cultural organizations often track production activities in Latin America and the South Pacific,

we decided to focus intensively on the activity and the saga of filmmakers and communities situated in these two North American countries, acknowledging distinctions between their funding and exhibition structures, as well as their artistic traditions, but also parallels in their historic, cultural and linguistic contexts. Utilizing sources like the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian website, which lists every film screened there since 1995, as well as Sundance Film Festival catalogs, we identified hundreds of films that were directed by Native Americans. In making our selection for the final retrospective program, we hoped to present a broad representation of work from the past twenty-five years with a brief, instructive excursion into the earlier 20th century. We also wanted to present a cross-section of genres, and to represent the many indigenous nations that have taken the power of media into their own hands. Our series now includes films by Inuit, Comanche, Hopi, Navajo, Choctaw, Cree, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Seminole, Creek, Mohawk, and Pomo peoples, among others, representing a total of thirty different Indian nations.

II.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the U.S. government implemented a policy of genocide against Native Americans, which has ever since been morally justified as an inevitable historical necessity imbedded in "Manifest Destiny." By the end of the century, the last Indian wars had been fought, but the survivors in the 20th century were subjected to a policy of cultural genocide, which segregated Native Americans into economic dead zones, i.e. reservations, but simultaneously enforced total assimilation by forcibly removing all children from their parents, their traditional culture, and their language by placing them in reservation schools. The result was total alienation, the loss of identity, and the acceptance of inferiority, undergirded by a steady diet of media stereotypes of Native Americans as violent or "noble" savages, doomed to extinction. The

destruction of Native American customs and rituals weakened the community, making it susceptible to land appropriation, rampant alcoholism, and a legacy of poverty and violent crime. Analogous stories riddle the histories of Aboriginal communities in Canada, where territorial disputes and government assimilation programs are painfully recent social phenomena. Not until the 1970s with the founding of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and other self-help grassroots political organizations, many advocating at the local tribal level, did many Native Americans begin to regain their self-respect as a people. Those first steps then led to the establishment of Native American media organizations and efforts by individuals to produce films and television that reflect the reality of Native Americans and communicate elements of their various tribal cultures.

Hollywood's continuing legacy of stereotyping Native Americans, making them invisible in depictions of contemporary life, has created a negative space which of necessity forms the backdrop to every Native American film production. Even if we discount simplistic stimulus response theories on the effectiveness of stereotyping, we can't ignore the sheer all-pervasiveness of radio-film-television media within the larger context of social, political, and ideological messages directed against Native Americans. Only then can we understand the degree to which a Native American collective imaginary, even with numerous tribal differences, must have withered away in the onslaught of negative imagery. And without such a collective vision and belief system, no society or nation can expect to survive. Anecdotal evidence of Native American children rooting for the white heroes on television shows suggests the validity of such theories. The creation of a Native American cinema in the last few decades, a renaissance that finds its parallels in other indigenous arts, then, becomes part of a larger social project to recuperate Native American stories, languages, traditions and values, to rebuild a collective imaginary that is positive and for-

ward-looking, rather than negative and wholly materialistic. These new films by Native American voices must therefore be understood collectively as an act of sovereignty against the backdrop of over a century of racist imagery, "talking back" and declaring a people's independence. Our approach has been to select multivarious films, which speak to history in many different ways, some from an absolute outsider perspective, others from within the system, still others with a more radical bent.

What we are in fact witnessing is evidence of a "national" cinema in formation, as individual filmmakers grapple with the destruction of tribal traditions, and with legacies of alcoholism, poverty, and the appropriation of tribal lands, while attempting simultaneously to recuperate tribal languages, spirituality, and community. The very act of documenting Native American arts and culture, traditions and religions, as well as creating stories in locations that are recognizable to Native American audiences, allows those audiences to locate their own world within a system of values; these films thereby promote identity formation on an individual and group level. Simultaneously, moving images created by Native Americans offer a window to non-Natives into their world. As Elizabeth Weatherford and Beverly Singer have each noted, Native filmmakers today have taken over the role of oral storytellers, transmitting knowledge which is not simply their own, but belongs to the community.

What we also see is the beginning development of a Native American film aesthetic. Quoting Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay, Michelle Raheja defines Native American cinema as a "Fourth Cinema," which in contradistinction to our First cinema, Europe's Second cinema, and Third Cinema's post-colonial, liberation politics, is based on Indigenous aesthetics. While some films respond to American genres (*Smoke Signals*, *Johnny Tootall*), others seem more in dialogue with international traditions (*Atanarjuat*, *5th World*). Indigenous films offer different ways of perceiving space and time. Stories are often circular rather

than linear, as in Western First Cinema; geographies are integrated into narrative, constructing landscapes are both real and allegorical. The increasing use of Native American languages is another indicator of Fourth Cinema. Finally, there is anecdotal evidence that Native American filmmakers prefer longer shots, keeping humans and their environment in the same frame, rather than classical Hollywood's invisible editing principles that encode and valorize an individual protagonist's point of view. As Houston Wood reminds us, quoting Victor Masayesva Jr., Native American film aesthetics often involve the sacred. At the same time, conflicts between the sacred and the profane, between tradition and modernity are also visible on screen, reflecting similar conflicts within the community. It remains to be seen to what degree such aesthetic forms continue to develop in the next twenty-five years.

Having said that, we must be conscious of the fact that the concept of a Native American cinema is and always will be an artificial construct. The fact is that cultural differences between members of different tribes can be just as great as between non-Native and Native peoples. As a non-Native viewer and English speaker, I will always only be privy to some of the messages and meanings inherent in Native American films, while local tribal audiences may read the work in completely different ways. Sam Pack demonstrates in his Native American reception study that Native American filmmakers received negative comment, when they treated subjects not related to their own tribal membership. We must also understand that indigenous people may make films for themselves and their own people, not necessarily for Western eyes. Indeed, some films produced with the cooperation of the tribe are in fact not distributed outside their limited community. Indeed, only a portion of Native filmmakers have ambitions of entering mainstream media distribution. Phil Lucas' *The Honour of All* (1986), for example, was probably only made for internal

circulation and discussion, but gives rare insight into the self-healing processes of Native American communities.

Finally, the efforts of Native American filmmakers have been accompanied by a strong surge in academic interest within Native American and film studies. The recent publication of numerous books on Native American Cinema indicates that the time is indeed propitious for a major retrospective of this particular Fourth Cinema. Certainly, our understanding of these films has benefited from this growing literature, including Neva Jacquelyn Kilpatrick's *Celuloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (1999), Beverly Singer's *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (2001), Dean Rader's *Engaged Resistance* (2011), M. Elise Marubbio and Eric L. Buffalohead's anthology, *Native Americans on Film* (2013), which includes essays by Wood, Singer, Pack, and others, Michelle H. Raheja's *Reservation Realism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty and Representations of Native Americans* (2013), and Lee Schweningen's *Imagic Moments: Indigenous North American Film* (2013).

We are therefore grateful to all the participating filmmakers and their communities for allowing us to partner with them on this important program. We also hope that UCLA Film & Television Archive can be instrumental in assisting Native American communities to preserve their work far into the future for all our children's children.

Dr. Jan-Christopher Horak
Director, UCLA Film & Television Archive

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

The adventure that our curatorial team at UCLA Film & Television Archive has enjoyed in researching and planning the film series *Through Indian Eyes: Native American Cinema* has inspired us to reflect anew on the astounding phenomenon that the series documents. It was already our assumption that Native American cinema represented a social and artistic fact of significant proportions, evident from exciting new work that circulated each year in festivals, and that such a body of work deserved a repertory program of this kind. The hundreds of films we encountered, however, revealed a richness, diversity and ferment that we little anticipated.

The figure of the American Indian has been a crucial component of American entertainment since the dawn of cinema, animating screens and providing a key obstacle against which the European push for westward expansion could be dramatically intensified. It is greatly pleasing, and a little breathtaking, then, to encounter a Native American cinema, writ large, that is so little invested in this grand narrative, and so resourceful at thematically upending and dispensing with it.

One might indeed expect Native-directed media to be distinguished by matters of content; key topics and themes. But if this is true to a point, it is also evident that distinct fascinations give rise to distinct forms. And so among the films featured here, one encounters alternatives to mainstream narrative models, in favor of others that present richly drawn internal states and metaphorical suggestions, whether in the oblique, poetic imagery of Victor Masayesva Jr.'s *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* (1984), Alanis Obomsawin's stately and measured telling of a violent, contemporary story in the documentary *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), Blackhorse Lowe's *5th World* (2005), which suggests the work of unseen forces behind the everyday, or Zacharias Kunuk's *Qaggiq (Gathering Place)* (1989), in which individual subjectivity inhabits only the margins of a larger depiction of a community dynamic, with its own compelling energy and thrust.

Though divergent in their respective forms, these stimulating works, among many others, share a sensitivity to the theme of returning, whether to home, harmony, balance, self-knowledge, or social order. These are journeys reflecting different philosophical values from those which mainstream cinema often privileges, but no less fascinating in the dramatic turns to which they give rise. In other Native films that emphasize a character's forward drive, again the

goal could be enlightenment or inner peace, though the attendant circumstances may be turbulent, as in Shelley Niro's *Kissed By Lightning* (2009), Shirley Cheechoo's *Johnny Tootall* (2005) or Randy Redroad's *The Doe Boy* (2009)—all fascinating examples of the hero's journey. Not that Native filmmakers don't make use of American genres, adapted to accommodate culturally specific situations: witness the charged melodrama of *Naturally Native* (1999) by Valerie Red-Horse and Jennifer Wynne Farmer, or Chris Eyre's iconic road picture *Smoke Signals* (1998) and his delightful dramedy *Edge of America* (2005), whose generic structures fit their given stories like comfortable old clothes.

Documentary occupies a place of importance in any identity-based film culture, as an activity for reflecting on past legacies and possible destinies. Clint Alberta's *Deep Inside Clint Star* (1999) deftly scales these thematic heights, artfully and deceptively disguised as a mere romp. Documenting cultural losses, transitions, and attempts at cultural renewal, Billy Luther's poignant *Miss Navajo* (2007), Arlene Bowman's introspective *Navajo Talking Picture* (1985) and Sandy Osawa's *Myaamiaki Eemamwiciki: Miami Awakening* (2009) evoke, through pacing, cinematography and other means, the past still living within the present. Gil Cardinal's *Tikinagan* (1991) and Alanis Obomsawin's *Richard Cardinal: Cry From a Diary of a Métis Child* (1986) distinguish themselves by a rare quality of listening in a realm of storytelling where things are often over-explained. Heather Rae in *Trudell* (2005) freely experiments with documentary form, by way of responding to the radicalism and unconventionality of her fascinating subject.

Short films are an equally vital staple of expression, at their best, acting as distillations of complex cultural experience. Again, we see here culturally specific settings and situations, enlivened by formal excellence and experimentation. Andrew Okpeaha MacLean's lyrical *Seal Hunting with Dad* (2005), Kevin Lee Burton's aural (and visual) deconstruction of language in *Nikamowin (Song)* (2007) and Helen Haig-Brown's uncanny invocation of the hereafter in *?A?ENX: The Cave* (2009) dazzle with their inventiveness and mastery of the short form. We also offer a program of comedic short films, emphasizing the delectable strains of humor that run through Native American storytelling and discourse, as well as a delightful selection of shorts addressed to children.

Acknowledging the long shadow of Hollywood, which is invoked by various filmmakers in the series, we have consulted specific moments of film histo-

ry seeking precursors to a century's worth of Native American representation: first, in a selection of silent works (William K. L. Dickson's 1894 *Buffalo Dance*, James Young Deer's 1910 melodrama *White Fawn's Devotion*, and Norbert Myles' recently rediscovered 1920 feature *The Daughter of Dawn*). These films pre-date the calcified Indian figure of the studio era, but point to different characteristics that depictions of Native people would tend to follow throughout the coming century: usually exploitative, at best sentimental, and only rarely characterized by hints of Native American perspective. The 1966 ethnographic project described under the rubric "Navajo Film Themselves," represented here by seven landmark short films by novice Navajo filmmakers, offers an early glimpse at some of the types of new information that would later be revealed as more and more Native filmmakers undertook to make films on their own authority.

Flashing forward, we are greatly pleased to offer a number of new and exciting works, still rolling out in their festival and commercial exhibition journeys. Examples include Sterlin Harjo's penetrating documentary *This May Be the Last Time* (2014), Sydney Freeland's moving drama *Drunktown's Finest* (2014), and Jeff Barnaby's impressive and chilling feature (and our Halloween night offering) *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (2013).

Even in so relatively large a film series, showcasing numerous landmark works, we are acutely aware that many of the artists we celebrate here have established long careers, and are already counted as leaders in the fields of Indigenous media and international cinema. The existence of these legacies is of course a joy, and we hope this series may hint at the riches that await attentive audiences.

Select programs will be graced by visits from filmmakers themselves, and our series will also feature panel discussions on questions pertaining to the state of Native American media culture and practice. Both in these settings, and at individual screenings, we greatly look forward to enriching dialogue among film professionals, artists and audiences, about the meaning and the future of Native American Cinema.

Shannon Kelley

Head of Public Programs, UCLA Film & Television Archive

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

During the course of the film series **THROUGH INDIAN EYES: NATIVE AMERICAN CINEMA**, two panel discussions will take place in the Billy Wilder Theater.

10.05.14 SUNDAY | 3:00 PM **SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE**

The scope of the cultural achievement represented by the films in this series is gigantic, but how may it be best understood historically? Native American filmmakers have attained increasing notice in the last quarter-century, and communities and artists have been energized to create more, and more elaborate, films and videos. Yet their aims have often been widely divergent, and differently infused with politics, cultural information and artistic ambition. This panel will explore the individual and group achievements made by myriad artists and communities, and the place of emergent Native American cinema within the contexts of North American and international cinema culture.

11.23.14 SUNDAY | 3:00 PM **ENTERING THE ARENA**

As Native American films and filmmakers become more familiar in film festival settings and the commercial marketplace, what are the remaining challenges specific to these films and artists? In the race for resources, attention, and positioning within dwindling theatrical markets, how may producers minimize the challenges and maximize the advantages specific to Native-themed productions? A panel of filmmakers and industry experts will offer insights and advice, and compare notes about ways of seizing and creating opportunity within contemporary systems of finance, distribution and exhibition.

SCREENING SCHEDULE

10.04.14 **SAT** | 7:30 PM | page 10

SMOKE SIGNALS

Preceded by:

TENACITY

10.05.11 **SUN** | 7:00 PM | page 12

KISSED BY LIGHTNING

THE DOE BOY

Preceded by:

THE CAVE

10.06.14 **MON** | 7:30 PM | page 14

TRUDELL

TUSHKA

10.24.14 **FRI** | 7:30 PM | page 22

DRUNKTOWN'S FINEST

MISS NAVAJO

Preceded by:

SHIMASANI

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NAVAJO FILM THEMSELVES

OLD ANTELOPE LAKE

SPIRIT OF THE NAVAJO

A NAVAJO WEAVER

THE SHALLOW WELL PROJECT

THE NAVAJO SILVERSMITH

INTREPID SHADOWS

SECOND WEAVER

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DEEP INSIDE CLINT STAR

HONEY MOCCASIN

Preceded by:

SILLY RABBIT

11.12.14 **WED** | 7:30 PM | page 34

DAUGHTER OF DAWN

Preceded by:

BUFFALO DANCE

WHITE FAWN'S DEVOTION

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NATURALLY NATIVE

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DIVIDED BY ZERO

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BARKING WATER

JOHNNY TOOTALL

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WALK-IN-THE-FOREST

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TRUE WHISPERS: THE STORY OF THE NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

Myaamiaki Eemamwiciki: MIAMI AWAKENING

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GESTURE DOWN (I DON'T SING)

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TKARONTO

SLEEPDANCER

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NIKAMOWIN (SONG)

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LADONNA HARRIS: INDIAN 101

A GOOD DAY TO DIE

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HUMOR IN NATIVE AMERICAN FILM

DO INDIANS SHAVE?

NTV

**COW TIPPING:
THE MILITANT INDIAN WAITER**

**SEARCH FOR THE WORLD'S
BEST INDIAN TACO**

RETURN OF THE COUNTRY

MAC V. PC

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RHYMES FOR YOUNG GHOULS

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TIKINAGAN

THE HONOR OF ALL: PART I

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**RICHARD CARDINAL: CRY FROM A DIARY OF
A MÉTIS CHILD**

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THIS MAY BE THE LAST TIME

Preceded by:

A BENTWOOD BOX

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**KANEHSATAKE:
270 YEARS OF RESISTANCE**

Preceded by:

LYE

11.07.14 **FRI** | 7:30 PM | page 30

NAVAJO TALKING PICTURE

ON & OFF THE RES'

W/ CHARLIE HILL

SONG JOURNEY

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ON THE ICE

QAGGIC (GATHERING PLACE)

Preceded by:

**NATCHILIAGNIAQTUGUK AAPAGALU
(SEAL HUNTING WITH DAD)**

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**NATIVE AMERICAN
CHILDREN'S SHORTS**

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EDGE OF AMERICA

Preceded by:

CARRYING FIRE

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IMAGINING INDIANS

Preceded by:

TAKE A PICTURE WITH A REAL INDIAN

**IMAGES OF INDIANS PART I:
THE GREAT MOVIE MASSACRE**

TONTO PLAYS HIMSELF

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ATANARJUAT: THE FAST RUNNER

Preceded by:

FROM CHERRY ENGLISH

11.22.14 **SAT** | 7:30 PM | page 44

5TH WORLD

ITAM HAKIM, HOPIIT

Preceded by:

I LOST MY SHADOW

12.15.14 **MON** | 7:30 PM | page 58

**CALIFORNIA INDIAN
OLDER THAN AMERICA**



Directed by Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho).

ShadowCatcher Entertainment. **Producer:** Scott Rosenfelt, Larry Estes.
Screenwriter: Sherman Alexie. **Cinematographer:** Brian Capener.
Editor: Brian Berdan. **With:** Adam Beach, Evan Adams, Irene Bedard, Gary Farmer, Tantoo Cardinal.
35mm, color, 89 min.

*35mm print courtesy of the Sundance Collection
at UCLA Film & Television Archive.*

SMOKE SIGNALS 1998

Chris Eyre's monumental first feature announced the advent of a major talent in American independent film, and of an extraordinarily powerful voice in the Native American filmmaking community. The first feature to be produced, written, directed and acted by Native talents and to receive a general theatrical release, the film went on to be embraced by both indigenous communities and the general filmgoing public, who gravitated to the sharply drawn characters and the universal themes and emotions that Eyre and *Smoke Signals* brought to life so irresistibly on the screen.

Written by poet, writer and filmmaker Sherman Alexie (and based on his short story, "This Is What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona"), the film presents two families with intertwined histories. Victor Joseph is an angry young man raised by his mother and abandoned by his father, Arnold Joseph. Victor is deeply affected upon receiving news that Arnold has died, many miles away, and that a stranger is offering his ashes to the family. Victor decides to undertake the journey, but lacks the necessary bus fare. Help comes from his childhood friend Thomas, a nerdy and cheerful fellow given to flights of spontaneous storytelling. It happens that, as a baby, Thomas was rescued by Arnold Joseph from a roaring house fire that killed his parents. Thomas' eccentricities annoy Victor to no end, but he grudgingly accepts the offer of help and companionship on the journey, coaching Thomas in the manner and look of a true Native man, as the obliging Thomas gently admonishes Victor to let go of

his deep-seated anger. When they reach their destination and meet Arnold's last friend, the beautiful Suzy, they learn more about the demons that drove Arnold away from the life he had known. All of this brings renewed pain, as well as a chance of lasting peace.

Nimbly shifting between deeply emotional passages and sunny comedy, Eyre's sure-handed storytelling offers an extraordinary catharsis, conjuring experiences of forgiveness and rebirth with exceeding grace. An audience award winner at the Sundance Festival, the film went on to garner several other awards and much critical praise, beginning its apotheosis into film legend, as an indispensable emblem of Native America.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

TENACITY 1994

Directed by: Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho). **Producer:** Paul S. Mezey.
Screenwriter: Chris Eyre. **Cinematographer:** Patrick Cady. **With:** Peter Benedict, David Lyons, Hannah Elliot, Derek Hoffman, Michael Weingourt.
Digital video, b/w, 10 min.

Boyhood games near a reservation highway lead to a cataclysmic encounter.

10.05.14 SUNDAY | 7:00 PM

Directed by Shelley Niro (Mohawk).

Kissed By Lightning Productions. **Producer:** Annie Frazier Henry, Stephen Paniccia, Norman Denver, Shelley Niro. **Screenwriter:** Shelley Niro. **Cinematographer:** Kim Derko. **Editor:** Jeremy Munce. **With:** Kateri Walker, Eric Schweig, Michael Greyeyes, Rachele Whitewind, Monique Mojica.
HDCAM, color, 89 min.



KISSED BY LIGHTNING 2009

Mavis Dogblood is a Mohawk painter from Canada, haunted by the tragic death of her husband, who was hit by lightning. She paints the stories he used to tell her, but she seemingly can't come to grips with her loss, even though there is a new boyfriend, Solomon "Bug" King, waiting in the wings. He, like her husband, is a musician, and tries to get closer to her, but she resists. Only during a drive to New York City, where she has an art opening for her large format paintings, does Mavis reconcile herself to her new life.

Mavis is depressed not only because of the loss of her partner for life. She feels cut off from her family, even though she lives with and around extended family members, including her husband's ex-wife. On her journey across ancient tribal lands (and a US-Canadian border that artificially divides those lands), where she sees Mohawk warrior spirits running through the cold, snowy woods in the dark of night, Mavis is connected to the larger family of her clan. Her great-grandmother even reminds Mavis that it is okay to start a new family with Bug, who, like Mavis, is also rooted there. Both Mavis and Bug are visited by ancestors in their dreams, suggesting an experience of time, familiar from Native storytelling, that is non-linear, intertwining past, present, and future.

Shelley Niro began writing the script for *Kissed by Lightning* in 1998 and spent eleven years completing the picture, garnering the award for Best Indigenous

Film at the 2009 Santa Fe Film Festival. Niro also painted the portrait series of the "Peacemaker's Journey," visualizing the Iroquois legend of Hiawatha and the Peacemaker, that are on display as Mavis's work. Beautifully photographed, with haunting images and sounds, Niro's proto-feminist film meditates on loss of identity, Indian traditions, and the role of Native American women in keeping families and traditions alive.

Jan-Chrisopher Horak

Preceded by:

?E?ANX: THE CAVE 2009

Directed by: Helen Haig-Brown (Tsilhqot'in). National Film Board Canada. **Producer:** Adrian Cox, Leena Minifie, Natalia Tudge. **Screenwriter:** Helen Haig-Brown. **Cinematographer:** Randy Che. **Editor:** Alec MacNeill Richardson. **With:** Edmond Lulua, Elaina William, Kelly William, Loni Solomon, Daana Gilpin.
DigiBeta, color, 11 min.

A man going about his daily business accidentally sees scenes not meant for his eyes... not yet.

Directed by Randy Redroad (Cherokee).

Easton LTD. Partnership, Curb Entertainment. **Producer:** Anothny Vozza, Chris Eyre. **Screenwriter:** Randy Redroad. **Cinematographer:** László Kadar. **Editor:** Matthew Booth. **With:** James Duval, Kevin Anderson, Andrew J. Ferchland, Jeri Arredondo, Judy Herrera.
Digital video, color; 82 min.



THE DOE BOY 2001

Writer-director Randy Redroad's debut feature *The Doe Boy* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2001 where it confirmed the emergence of a new generation of defiantly personal Native American filmmakers. The film, which Redroad has described as "semiautobiographical," expands in fresh and surprising ways the exploration of cultural and ethnic identity that he began in his first two short films *Haircuts Hurt* (1992) and *High Horse* (1994).

James Duval delivers an endearing performance as Hunter, the son of a Cherokee mother and white father struggling to find his place among the multiple identities and allegiances he is forced to straddle in his small town in Cherokee County, Oklahoma. Adding to his troubles—and the film's metaphoric richness—Hunter is also a haemophiliac. His condition prompts Hunter's protective mother to forbid him from all the activities—football, working on the family car—that he hopes will help him bond with his emotionally distant father. On a rare hunting trip with his father as a boy, Hunter shoots a female deer after mistaking it for a buck, an accident that earns him the mean-spirited nickname that gives the film its title and renders his actual name a poignant reminder of his father's expectations for him.

Through turns tragic and humorous, Hunter's search for himself leads him to his Cherokee grandfather and back to the ways and knowledge of his native heritage. Learning to hunt with a bow and fashion his own arrows, Hunter enters confidently into the wider world of adulthood as well as a wider understanding of his place within it.

Throughout the film's loose, episodic structure, Redroad hints always at deeper currents running beneath even everyday incidents. Employing what is possibly a standard feature of coming-of-age tales that take the intensity of adolescence seriously, Redroad also brings a mythic quality to bear right from the beginning of the film, which opens with Hunter's grandfather recounting, "There once was a boy who was part deer and part bird." Recurring dream-like sequences of deer running through the woods strike a spiritual note at key moments in the story but Redroad never loses sight of the contemporary, immediate realities that shape Hunter's experience. It's a careful balancing act on the part of the filmmaker that resonates deeply with Hunter's own journey.

Paul Malcolm

10.06.14 MONDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Heather Rae (Cherokee).

Appaloosa Pictures. **Producer:** Elyse Katz, Heather Rae. **Cinematographer:** Gilbert Salas. **Editor:** Gregory Bayne, Rongotai Lomas, Heather Rae. **With:** John Trudell, Robert Redford, Kris Kristofferson, Sam Shepard, Amy Ray, Val Kilmer.
35mm, color, 80 min.

*35mm print courtesy of the Sundance Collection
at UCLA Film & Television Archive.*



TRUDELL 2005

Heather Rae's documentary about American Indian activist and poet John Trudell (Santee Sioux) admirably meets its multi-faceted subject with a complexity worthy of the man. Approaching the illustrious activist, poet, actor and recording artist with a combination of archival sources, exclusive interviews, and flights of poetic abandon in both image and sound, Rae constructs Trudell as an amalgam of convictions and energies; political, philosophical and spiritual.

Recounting Trudell's rise from humble beginnings in Northern Nebraska, the film tracks his phenomenal rise to intellectual maturity and leadership as a young man, choosing the activist's path following a four-year enlistment in the U.S. Navy. As spokesperson for the Indians of All Tribes occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1968-1969, Trudell projected a clarion voice and consciousness to a public both bewildered and dazzled by this landmark, revolutionary political action. When this occupation was quelled by the U.S. government, Trudell next leant his talents to the American Indian Movement (AIM) from the mid-to late-1970s, giving voice and inspiration to the group, decrying the government's history of bad faith in the prosecution of its treaties and dealings with

Indian nations, and providing a moral vision during the brutal crackdowns on Oglala Sioux people of Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Trudell's voice expands to a new arena, that of spoken-word performance, following the tragic loss of his partner, the activist Tina Manning, and their three children in a catastrophic fire that followed closely on the heels of his own burning of an American flag in front of FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. The film powerfully illustrates the respected statesman's new commitment to poetry, performance, acting and recording. Collaborations with numerous artists bring him an expanded audience, and praise from the likes of Jackson Brown, Bonnie Raitt, Kris Kristofferson and Robert Redford (who are all interviewed here, among others). Employing her subject's captivating voice and crafting visual metaphors to interact contrapuntally with his poetry, Rae has powerfully evoked the moral and visionary force of a leader who continues to instill the American scene with a sterling note of conscience.

Shannon Kelley

Directed by Ian Skorodin (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma).

Producer: Orvel Baldrige, Ian Skorodin. **Screenwriter:** Ian Skorodin.
Cinematographer: Brett Reynolds. **Editor:** Jonathan Goldner. **With:**
Orvel Baldrige, Robert Eades, Tim Johnson, Roy Rains Jr.
Beta SP, color; 90 min.



TUSHKA 1996

FBI Agent Williams has been assigned to the Agency's Counterintelligence Program, which has the goal of infiltrating supposedly radical groups, such as the Black Panther Party and TUSHKA, the fictionalized version of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Tushka is actually the name of a town in Oklahoma. Every time the FBI attempts to arrest tribal leaders in flagrante or create compromising situations, they are outwitted by TUSHKA's organization. Williams' superior is convinced that the group's leader, Marcus Beams, must be neutralized, which leads to the death of the leader's innocent family.

Based on actual events during the 1970s, including the occupation of Wounded Knee and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, the film fictionalizes the real biography of AIM's intellectual leader, John Trudell. Williams, who is part Native American himself, is written as a morally ambiguous character, caught between the radical methodologies of AIM's leaders and corrupt FBI superiors,

hell-bent on destroying all threats to the white establishment's power. Skorodin's film visualizes power politics in the American government, the defiance of Native American leaders, and the power of the human spirit to survive.

Tushka has been called the first narrative feature film produced and directed by a Native American. Ian Skorodin is a graduate of New York University's film program, now working out of Los Angeles through his company, Barcid Productions. *Tushka* was the winner of the Award for Best Narrative Feature at the 1998 Arizona International Film Festival, and was screened at the Sundance, Munich, and Amiens Film Festivals in the same year; it has been distributed by DirecTV since 2000.

Jan-Christopher Horak

HUMOR IN NATIVE AMERICAN FILM

This whimsical selection of short films offers a wide-ranging sampling of modes of humor that inform many of the works in our larger selection. Speculative fiction, parodies of advertising and commando-style, man-on-the-street documentaries offer smiles and laughs, and no small amount of observation of social realities underlying the wry and knowing humor.

Shannon Kelley

DO INDIANS SHAVE? 1972

Directed by Chris Spotted Eagle (Houma).
Digital video, color, 10 min.

A comedy plucked from thin air, this documentary quizzes American men and women on the street as to their knowledge of Native American people.

NTV 1994

Directed by Hulleah Tsihnahjinnie (Seminole/Creek/Navajo). National Museum of the American Indian. **With:** Harold Littlebird, Soni Moreno-Caballero, Allen DeLeary, Lance Belanger, Josephine Wapp.
Digital video, color, 20 min.

A hilarious assembly of comedic sketches and impressions, this work views Native experience through a filter of vapid societal forms and rituals (e.g., the workout video), pinpointing the absurd effects of culture clash.

COW TIPPING: THE MILITANT INDIAN WAITER 1991

Directed by Randy Redroad (Cherokee). **Screenwriter:** Randy Redroad.
Cinematographer: Frank Perez. **Editor:** Randy Redroad. **With:** M. Cochise Anderson, Rachael Bones, Hilary Hallett, Tim Marbeck, Richard Register.
Digital video, color, 17 min.

Randy Redroad's hilarious short illustrates an interminable, impossible situation: the confrontation of cultural insensitivity and cultural oversensitivity, leading to a seemingly endless cycle of the same old, same old.

SEARCH FOR THE WORLD'S BEST INDIAN TACO 2010

Directed by Steven Judd (Kiowa/Choctaw). Intertribal Entertainment. **Producer:** Pamela Peters. **Screenwriter:** Steven Judd. **With:** James Anderson, Kiya Chacon, Tazbah Chavez, Tokala Clifford, Vivian Garcia. HDCAM, color, 12 min.

Love blooms between strangers who meet at an Indian fair, appreciating the glories of an essential Native delicacy.

RETURN OF THE COUNTRY 1982

Directed by Bob Hicks (Creek/Seminole). **Producer:** James A. Noyd, Bob Hicks. **Screenwriter:** Bob Hicks. **Cinematographer:** Jack Wallner. **Editor:** Burton Lee Harry. **With:** Linda Phillips, Granville Jett, Alex Cox, Dusty Iron Wing McCrea, Woodrow Haney. Digital video, color, 25 min.

Bob Hicks' wry comedy from 1982 posits the (outrageous?) possibility of a United States controlled by Native American leaders.

MAC V. PC 2008

Directed by Steven Judd (Kiowa/Choctaw), Tvlj Jacob (Choctaw). Restless Natives Motion Picture Production Company. Digital video, color, 1 min.

A wickedly funny send-up of the ultimate corporate commercial, this short pits an indigenous archetype against the image of the European *invader*, to finally settle an old score: who's cooler?



Directed by Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki).

National Film Board of Canada. **Producer:** Wolf Koenig, Alanis Obomsawin. **Screenwriter:** Alanis Obomaswin. **Cinematographer:** Philippe Amiguet, François Brault, Zoe Dirse, Andre-Luc Dupont, Salvas Kalogeras, Jean-Claude Labrecque, Barry Perles, Roger Rochat, Jocelyn Simard, Susan Trow. **Editor:** Yurij Luhovy.
With: Alanis Obomsawin.
HDCAM, color, 119 min.

KANEHSATAKE: 270 YEARS OF RESISTANCE 1993

Alanis Obomsawin's landmark documentary chronicles the cataclysmic 1990 confrontation between the Canadian Army, Quebec police, and members of the Mohawk Nation at the community of Kanehsatake, determined to defend their land against rampant and unprincipled appropriation. Originating as a supposedly simple municipal matter, the "Oka crisis" of 1990, instigated by the mayor of the city of Oka in Quebec province, entailed the planned encroachment of a luxury housing development and golf course into wooded areas (including burial grounds) comprising part of a land parcel promised to the Mohawk by successive British and French colonial powers, and a traditional home since time immemorial.

Coming on the heels of successive land grabs occurring well into the 20th Century, this latest outrage sparked a 78-day standoff at Kanehsatake, replete with barricades, armed confrontations and fraught negotiations between Mohawk statesmen and government and Army representatives, as well as courageous acts of solidarity by Mohawk compatriots at the nearby community of Kahnawake.

Obomsawin went to Kanehsatake to cover the early stages of the confrontation for the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and soon assumed a position behind Mohawk lines with the warriors, as negotiations hardened into impasse and siege. She stayed there through the climax of the crisis more than two months later, offering an Aboriginal point of view that was breathtakingly novel. Her exclusive footage revealed tenacity and resolve behind the lines, petty

cruelties, mental torments and unprincipled tactics undertaken by officialdom in the midst of its feigned search for a negotiated outcome (read: capitulation), and appalling views of Canadian citizens wantonly persecuting elderly and very young Mohawk leaving the scene for their own safety.

An erstwhile singer and storyteller, and director (by then) of several NFB shorts, Obomsawin brought an extraordinary dignity to the finished film, privileging the Mohawk story as worthy of sustained, honest attention, without descending into polemic. Her measured and beguiling narration constructs both history and anecdote with the patience and momentum of indeed, a master storyteller, wonderfully supported by the spare but stirring music of Francis Grandmont and Claude Vendette. This film would be the first of four by Obomsawin to analyze the Oka crisis and its place in Canadian political history.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

LYE 2005

Directed by Dax Thomas (Laguna/Acoma).
Beta SP, color, 5 min.

Dax Thomas' impressionistic short, appropriating existing footage, deconstructs the inexorable images of empire and its violent expansion.





10.20.14 MONDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Victor Masayesva, Jr. (Hopi).

Independent Television Service. **Producer:** Victor Masayesva, Jr.

Cinematographer: Victor Masayesva, Jr. **Editor:** Victor Masayesva, Jr.

With: Patty Runs After Swallow, Ed Jones, Shirley Atene.

Beta SP, color; 56 min.

IMAGINING INDIANS 1993

Hopi filmmaker and visual artist Victor Masayesva Jr. takes the moment of *Dances With Wolves* (1990) to dismantle Hollywood's new "sensitivity" towards representing Native Americans and to position it within the centuries-long history of cultural appropriation it still maintains just with a friendlier face. But Masayesva goes further than interrogating images. He interviews the Native extras hired to work as Indians in Hollywood productions, including *Dances and Thunderheart* (1992), extending the issue to include exploitation of Native labor and resources. He also talks with tribal leaders about the economic pros and cons of working with filmmakers seeking greater "authenticity," finding that even cooperating in the creation of accurate depictions—and the short term financial benefit this may bring—can come at the price of commodifying one's own sacred practices. It's a Gordian Knot of spectacle and exchange that Masayesva finds at work from the earliest photographs and moving pictures of Native Americans into the present day.

Most compellingly, Masayesva refuses to absolve himself from culpability as an artist seeking to represent his own people through the technologies that have long been instruments of their oppression. Within a critical layering of interviews, film clips and historic photographs, Masayesva weaves a recurring, fictional sequence in which a Native woman pays a visit to a white dentist, that serves to enact the legacy of the representational crimes that Masayesva exposes elsewhere. Pushed the limits of her tolerance, the woman attacks the dentist with his own instruments, before, finally, turning on Masayesva's camera itself.

Paul Malcolm

Preceded by:

TAKE A PICTURE WITH A REAL INDIAN 1993

Directed by James Luna (Luiseño).

Betacam, color; 12 min.

In a highbrow gallery setting, performance artist James Luna invites art patrons to indulge in a time-honored tradition.

IMAGES OF INDIANS PART I: THE GREAT MOVIE MASSACRE 1979

Directed by Phil Lucas (Choctaw). **With:** Will Sampson.

Digital video, color; 29 min.

The first part in a three-part television documentary series was a groundbreaking historiographic examination of the legacy of culturally insensitive cinematic representations of Native Americans, reaching back through film history and even further to the tradition of Wild West shows. Authoritative and entertaining, the program represented a dignified response to the din of popular entertainment and its distortions.

TONTO PLAYS HIMSELF 2010

Directed by Jacob Floyd (Creek/Cherokee).

Digital video, color; 23 min.

This filmmaker embarks on a journey of discovery upon learning that an actor often seen in diverse "Indian" roles onscreen is actually a distant relative.

10.24.14 FRIDAY | 7:30 PM

HONORING SUNDANCE INSTITUTE'S COMMITMENT TO NATIVE AMERICAN CINEMA

Tonight's program honors Sundance Institute's Native American and Indigenous Program, which since 1994 has built and sustained a unique circle of support for Indigenous film by identifying noteworthy filmmakers, offering grants and labs to support their work, exhibiting significant films at the Sundance Film Festival, connecting filmmakers with audiences in a variety of settings, and taking filmmakers and their works back to Native lands to inspire new generations of storytellers.

Directed by Sydney Freeland (Navajo).

Indion Entertainment Group. **Producer:** Chad Burris, Mateo Frazier. **Screenwriter:** Sydney Freeland. **Cinematographer:** Peter Holland. **Editor:** Harry Yoon. **With:** Jeremiah Bitsui, Carmen Moore, Morningstar Angeline Wilson, Tailinh Agoyo, Loren Anthony. HDCAM, color; 89 min.

DRUNKTOWN'S FINEST 2014

In her impressive first feature, Sydney Freeland unfurls a suite of stories about contemporary life among Navajo youth. Her astute drama presents a small, reservation-adjacent town in which epic, individual stories churn.

The film follows three residents of the town of Dry Lake, and its environs. Each of these three is on a journey informed by very different forces. Nizhoni is a young woman bound for college, but with unfinished emotional business at home. Adopted as an infant by a White, Christian family, she longs to find and connect with her birth parents, and undertakes a clandestine search, surmising that social services and her adoptive family would only block her. Sickboy, a new father, plans to join the military in order to support his family but must make it to his deployment date without getting into trouble. Unfortunately, trouble threatens his plan, as alcohol, fighting and scrapes with the law have long represented his normalcy, and reach out to him now for a last dance. Felixia is a transgender woman living with her traditional grandparents, nursing a dream of being featured in a newly-announced calendar of Navajo women, while secretly turning tricks on the side. Skating on the razor's edge of emotional disclosure and concealment, she little realizes the deep respect traditionally accorded to differently-gendered individuals within her own culture.

Cutting every which way through received stereotypes of Native life, *Drunktown's Finest* updates and diversifies this catalog of images, accounting for years



of accumulated history that have brought modern and traditional cultures into a rich and complex dialogue. Supported by the Directors Lab, Screenwriters Lab and Native American and Indigenous Program of the Sundance Institute, Freeland brings a firsthand authority to bear from her own Reservation upbringing, along with a perspective that pinpoints the beauty in each of her characters without judging their choices or circumstances. Premiering at the Sundance Film Festival in 2014, the film has continued a vigorous festival tour, and garnered major awards at Outfest in Los Angeles and at the Albuquerque Film and Media Experience.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

SHIMASANI 2009

Directed by Blackhorse Lowe (Navajo). **Producer:** Nanobah Becker, Chad Burris, Heather Rae, David Stevens. **Screenwriter:** Blackhorse Lowe. **Cinematographer:** Smokey Nelson. **Editor:** Blackhorse Lowe. **With:** Brigadier Brown, Carmelita B. Lowe, Noelle Brown, Larry A. Lowe, Mark Camrud. Blu-ray, b/w, 15 min.

This elegiac period piece set in 1934 captures a moment of decision for two restless sisters living with their grandmother on the reservation.

Directed by Billy Luther (Navajo/Hopi/Laguna Pueblo).

World of Wonder. **Producer:** Duana C. Butler, Billy Luther.
Cinematographer: Gavin Wynn. **Editor:** Mike Rysavy. **With:** Crystal Frazier, Sunny Dooley, Tiffany Tracy, Roberta Diswood, Janene Yazzie.
DigiBeta, color, 53 min.

MISS NAVAJO 2007

"Some people will only see Miss Navajo one time in their lifetime and never see another Navajo in their lifetime. But that one impression is what they are going to think of us as a people," says Crystal Frazier, a shy twenty-one-year-old hopeful in the Miss Navajo pageant, at the beginning of Billy Luther's film.

Held annually on the Navajo Nation since 1952, the Miss Navajo pageant is a contest unlike any other: the young women who compete must answer complex questions about Navajo history and government, demonstrate Navajo language fluency, and proficiency in traditional skills such as fry-bread making, rug weaving, and sheep butchering. Winners of the pageant take on great responsibility, serving as role models and mentors, keepers of tradition, and cultural ambassadors to the world at large.

The first feature by filmmaker Billy Luther, whose mother, Sarah Johnson Luther, was crowned Miss Navajo 1966, *Miss Navajo* follows Crystal's journey from her family's rural home in Table Mesa, New Mexico, where she helps



raise livestock, to the Navajo Nation Fair where she must leave her family behind as she undertakes the five day competition along with several other young Navajo women. A self-described introvert still working on her Navajo fluency, Crystal is confronted with many challenges, but her perseverance and determination, and the solidarity displayed between the young women competing, reveal a compelling inner strength, and deeply felt sense of community engagement.

Interviews with former Miss Navajos, who guide the young women through the competition, demonstrate the resiliency of Navajo tradition and the influential role that women chosen as Miss Navajo play as community leaders and transmitters of Navajo culture. A powerful and affirming look at the vibrancy and importance of traditional skills, *Miss Navajo* honors a unique tradition in passing on these skills and in preparing a new generation of Navajo leaders.

Nina Rao

10.25.14 SATURDAY | 3:00 PM

Directed by Mike Anderson, Al Clah, Susie Benally, Johnny Nelson, Mary Jane Tsosie, Maxine Tsosie, Alta Kahn (Navajo).
DigBeta from 16mm, b/w, silent, TRT 116 min.

Video materials courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

NAVAJO FILM THEMSELVES 1966

In 1966, filmmaker and communications scholar Sol Worth and anthropologist John Adair undertook a project to impart documentary filmmaking skills to Navajo people. They sought to investigate several questions. Among these, they wished to learn whether it would be possible actually to teach filmmaking to members of a culture so different from their own, what forms such films might take if the makers were invited simply to film what was important to them, and which (if any) culturally specific characteristics might emerge in their films, especially as compared with similar films from other social contexts. Additionally, Worth and Adair wished to conclude whether these results might represent promising new directions for ethnographic practice, as a means of gathering and discerning information not readily available by other means of description and documentation.

The story of this engagement with a specific group of novice Navajo filmmakers at Pine Springs, Arizona has been documented in the 1972 monograph *Through Navajo Eyes* by Worth and Adair. Its conclusions, comprising a measured conviction that such experiments do reveal valuable understanding, have been debated ever since within social scientific circles, and in fact the experiment's methodology has never been exactly replicated. However, the resulting (silent)

films do exhibit characteristics that lay audiences may find intriguing: a privileging of process (healing rituals, artistic production, and construction projects are depicted), an appreciation for location and duration, and little apparent concern with indicating emotion or "character" motivation. Also, though most of the films may be called "documentary" in their general approach, the figurative *Intrepid Shadows* forms a noteworthy formal exception.

Together the films offer a fascinating look at something rarely attempted: the possibility of identifying new patterns and possibilities of communications between cultures, by the sharing of a privileged communications apparatus. They may be viewed as a Navajo patrimony, or a more problematic and highly mediated set of artifacts, necessarily overdetermined by the scientists who originated the project. In light of all these considerations, the films have come to be valued by various communities (and not incidentally, named to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress) for their invocation of the very question of Native authorship, and for the guidepost they represent in the fields of cognitive and visual anthropology.

Shannon Kelley



OLD ANTELOPE LAKE 1966

Directed by Mike Anderson.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 13 min.

A portrait of a lake: its sources, and its place in natural and human cycles.

SPIRIT OF THE NAVAJO 1966

Directed by: Mary Jane Tsosie, Maxine Tsosie.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 17 min.

The filmmakers' father, a respected medicine man, enacts a ceremony.

A NAVAJO WEAVER 1966

Directed by Susie Benally.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 22 min.

Susie Benally's mother Alta Kahn, a renowned rug-weaver, demonstrates the many processes of her art.

THE SHALLOW WELL PROJECT 1966

Directed by: Johnny Nelson.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 15 min.

Johnny Nelson documents the construction of a water well, supervising both the project and the filmic record.

THE NAVAJO SILVERSMITH 1966

Directed by Johnny Nelson.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 22 min.

Elaborate silver figures are cast in sandstone molds by a master craftsman.

INTREPID SHADOWS 1966

Directed by Al Clah.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 18 min.

Mystic powers are suggested in this cryptic, captivating film.

SECOND WEAVER 1966

Directed by Alta Kahn.

DigiBeta from 16mm, b/w, 9 min.

Alta Kahn, featured in A Navajo Weaver, recorded several rug-weaving processes performed by her daughter, Susie Benally.

10.27.14 MONDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Clint Alberta (Dene).

National Film Board of Canada. **Producer:** Silva Basmajian. **Cinematographer:** Marcos Arriaga. **Editor:** Katharine Asals. **With:** Clint Star, Hugo, Tawny Maine, Harvey, Gerald, Becky, Michael, Betty.
DigiBeta, color; 88 min.



DEEP INSIDE CLINT STAR 1999

Clint Alberta's stylish, surprising documentary renders a fascinating group portrait of young Aboriginal Canadians in and around Toronto at the turn of the millennium. Eschewing and upending the standard gestures of documentary practice and figuratively pulling the rug from beneath his subjects' and his audiences' feet, Alberta effectively personifies a trickster, blurring staid lines separating fact and fiction in pursuit of deeper truths. In so doing, his film suggests entirely new possibilities (still largely unexplored) for Native-directed media, and for Native discourse.

The games begin immediately, as Alberta deconstructs his own authority as a documentary guide, effectively calling into question his very identity (who is Clint "Star" anyway?), and his agenda, in the very first instance. Ostensibly a narcissistic diarist bent on making a "porno," he is soon found in a succession of encounters with intimate friends, both young men and women, who gamely submit themselves to his brand of interviewing. Often depicted in provocative settings (in bed, in the back seat of a car), they are soon subjected to probing questions about sexual preference, proclivities and experience. Before long, each is somehow engaged in a broader dialogue, in which Native identity is probed from many sides. These conversations reveal legacies of pain, loss, grace and triumph. Personal narratives involving displacement from family or community, lead to outcomes involving self-loathing, extreme pessimism, alcohol abuse, sexual violence, and alienation from Native culture and iden-

tity. And yet, every subject of the film also emerges as a survivor in progress, rendered lovable, powerful and beautiful. Some porno.

The film packages this mélange of complex experiences and emotions into a stylish, kaleidoscopic whole involving non-linear editing, variations in image quality and resolution, and goofy non-sequiturs accompanied by cut-rate disco and house music. The effect is astonishingly lucid: the film's subjects are figured as participants in the world of today, rather than as vessels of yesterday's traumas. Philosophically, as well as artistically, it suggests a new posture and agenda for discussions of Native identity and well-being, and still retains its disarming power.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

SILLY RABBIT 2006

Directed by Dax Thomas (Laguna/Acoma).

Digital video, color; 3 min.

A proliferation of rapid-fire images, ranging from the quotidian to the erotically charged, testify to contradictory experiences of sexuality in modernity as something joyful, absurd, objectified, marketed, and sometimes giggle-worthy.

Directed by Shelley Niro (Mohawk).

Producer: Lynn Hutchison, Shelley Niro. **Screenwriter:** Shelley Niro.
Cinematographer: Marcos Arriaga. **Editor:** Sarah Peddie. **With:** Tantoo Cardinal, Billy Merasty, Berenelda Wheeler, Florene Belmore, Kelly Henhawk.
Digital video, color, 47 min.



HONEY MOCCASIN 1998

Someone's stealing all the women's powwow clothing on the fictional Grand Pine Indian Reserve and the rivalry between two local bars, The Smokin' Moccasin and The Inukshuk Cafe, is heating up. Is there a connection? Director Shelley Niro deploys a cabaret-style mash-up of styles and genres—from mystery to musical to performance art—in this deliriously funny and inventive comedy about identity and gender.

The owner of The Smokin' Moccasin, as well as its sultry, torch-song-singing main attraction, Honey Moccasin also hides a secret identity as a crime fighting super sleuth. Taking on the clothing theft crime wave that's been sweeping the community, Honey follows a trail of clues to the front door of The Inukshuk Cafe, owned by her nemesis, Zachary John, a closeted drag queen with a jingle dress fetish.

A punked-out powwow fashion show, an arty student film within the film directed by Honey's college student daughter, recurring community access news reports and nostalgic movie flashbacks, all drawn together in Niro's unapologetic pastiche, make the Grand Pine one of the liveliest reserves you've ever seen. One of the most original and exciting films associated with the post-*Smoke Signals* wave of Native American cinema, *Honey Moccasin* riotously expands the Native imaginary in ways wonderful and unexpected.

Paul Malcolm

10.31.14 FRIDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Jeff Barnaby (Mi'g Maq).

Prospector Films. **Producer:** John Christou, Aisling Chin-Yee.

Screenwriter: Jeff Barnaby. **Cinematographer:** Michel St. Martin.

Editor: Jeff Barnaby. **With:** Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs, Glen Gould, Brandon Oakes, Mark Anthony Krupa, Roseanne Supernault.

Blu-ray, color, 85 min.

RHYMES FOR YOUNG GHOULS 2013

Indigenous peoples rarely fare well in the representational hands of Hollywood genres—the Western being the most obvious—as dominant cultural forces work out their self-sustaining, colonialist fantasies at the expense of the Other in broad, stereotypical terms. With his ferocious and wildly entertaining feature debut, writer-director Jeff Barnaby seizes the generic reins and turns the table on those colonialist tropes. Drawing from the tragic history of Canada's Indian Residential Schools as well as social and economic neglect directed at First Nations people, Barnaby fuels a full-throttle action revenge fantasy with no time for quaint notions of feel good empowerment.

Steeped in a post-apocalyptic atmosphere of dread and instability, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* is actually a period piece, set on the fictional Red Crow Mi'g Maq reservation circa 1976. The law of the land makes it compulsory for all Mi'g Maq children under the age of 16 to attend St. Dymphna's, the government-run, brutally authoritarian boarding school. The only way out is to pay a "truancy tax" to the reserve's sadistic Indian agent, Popper. Already world-weary at the age of 15, Aila (Devery Jacobs) has been on her own since she was little

when her mother committed suicide and Popper dragged her father off to jail all on the same night. Slings dope for her uncle to stay out of St. Dymphna's, she draws and paints images of avenging Mi'g Maq spirits, building an imaginary world-within-a-world for herself in order to survive. When her father finally returns home he hardly recognizes the fierce, withdrawn young woman as his daughter. Their reunion, however, is interrupted when an unexpected police raid leaves Aila unable to pay the truancy tax and she's forced to fight for her freedom.

Throughout, Barnaby breathes life into his dark vision with a graphic sense of composition and lighting that seems informed as much by comic books as Aila's own artistic outlets. No mere escapism, Aila's personal history, not to mention newcomer Jacobs' powerhouse performance, keeps Barnaby's flights of fatalism rooted in real emotions and trauma that give the film a particularly personal, if disurbing, edge.

Paul Malcolm



11.07.14 FRIDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Arlene Bowman (Dine').

Women Make Movies. **Producer:** Arlene Bowman. **Cinematographer:**

Arlene Bowman, James Mulryan. **Editor:** Arlene Bowman, James Mulryan.

With: Arlene Bowman, Ann Ruth Biah.

Digital video, color, 40 min.



NAVAJO TALKING PICTURE 1985

While a film student at UCLA, Arlene Bowman set out to document her grandmother's life raising sheep on the Navajo reservation. When her grandmother refuses to participate mid-way through the project, Bowman is drawn more deeply than she seemingly expected into an encounter with her personal history, her Navajo heritage and her own motives as a filmmaker. As Bowman struggles to complete her project in opposition to the will of her fiercely independent grandmother, filming every step and misstep along the way, *Navajo Talking Picture* grows ever more fascinating, not only for the complex issues that Bowman grapples with but also for the multiple poses that she herself seems to assume in the process.

Is Bowman a naive, would-be ethnographer stumbling through the pitfalls of representation or is she, in fact, assuming this role to dismantle from the inside the presumptions of those well-meaning outsiders who, for centuries, have assumed the right to "preserve" the cultures of Native peoples? The thoroughness with which Bowman undermines the whole ethnographic project suggests the latter even as the increasingly uncomfortable position into which she forces her viewers as complicit interlopers means we can never be quite sure. (At several points we witness Bowman filming her grandmother as she explicitly refuses her permission to be filmed.)

On one level, Bowman illuminates the fissures and chasms that inevitably exist between any documentarian and their chosen subject but she also uses the specifics of her own story to make the point powerfully personal. Even though Bowman herself is Navajo, she must nevertheless negotiate the generational and geographical differences between her grandmother, who remained on the reservation, and herself, who sought other opportunities in urban areas. Most strikingly, Bowman reveals how the camera itself is a charged object for the tensions that exist between them. Where for Bowman the camera might represent a chance to reconnect with her culture, for her grandmother it is a cutting reminder of a traumatic history of cultural theft.

Ultimately, Bowman offers up her own difficulties in negotiating such divisions as an object lesson in the responsibilities and sensitivities required in representing Native peoples no matter who's behind the lens.

Paul Malcolm

Directed by Sandi Osawa (Makah).

Upstream Productions. **Producer:** Sandi Osawa. **Cinematographer:** Yasu Osawa. **With:** Charlie Hill, Dennis Banks, Vine Deloria, Floyd Westerman, Richard Pryor.
DVCAM, color; 58 min.

ON & OFF THE RES' W/ CHARLIE HILL 2000

Sandi Osawa's portrait of pioneering Native American comedian Charlie Hill captures the gutsy journey of this beloved and groundbreaking artist, who nurtured his childhood wish of becoming a comedian from an Indian reservation in Wisconsin all the way to the nightclubs of Los Angeles, and appearances on numerous television shows including *The Richard Pryor Show* and *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson.

Hill, who sadly passed away in December 2013, was a much-loved and inspirational figure. The struggles and skepticism he faced as a Native American breaking into the comedy scene, confronted with questions such as "An Indian comedian? Isn't that an oxymoron?" are candidly recounted. Challenging these stereotypes with wry humor and determination, Hill used his perspective as a Native American to turn the tables on white culture and expose the irony laden in touchstone issues such as the immigration debate, and to counter the absurdity of Hollywood stereotypes of Native Americans.

With contributions from such legendary figures as Floyd Westerman, Dick Gregory, Vine Deloria Jr., and Dennis Banks, filmmaker Sandi Osawa, who studied at UCLA School of Theater Film and Television, crafts a moving chronicle of Hill's remarkable determination and ability to "turn poison into medicine" in this testament to the power of humor.

Nina Rao

Directed by Arlene Bowman (Dine').

Women Make Movies. **Producer:** Jeanine Moret, Arlene Bowman. **Screenwriter:** Jeanine Moret, Johanna Hofmann **Cinematographer:** Jeanine Moret. **Editor:** Jeanine Moret, Arlene Bowman. **With:** Arlene Bowman, Mary Ann Anquoe, Vernon D. Atkins, Cheryl Between Lodges, Bonnie Peigan.
Digital video, color; 57 min.

SONG JOURNEY 1994

Made almost a decade after her seminal documentary, *Navajo Talking Picture* (1985), *Song Journey* finds filmmaker Arlene Bowman still searching for a deeper understanding of and connection to her Native roots. Here, she hits the road on the U.S. and Canadian powwow circuit to meet and document Native women singers and dancers and their vital, evolving role within these important cultural and social gatherings.

The film opens with Bowman driving out of Los Angeles, its concrete maze of freeways in sharp contrast to the rural highways and reservation roads of the northern and southern plains. Traditionally a feature of plains Indians, contemporary powwows are intertribal and range from deeply spiritual events to more commercial manifestations. From Tulsa, Oklahoma to the Carry-the-Kettle Reserve in Saskatchewan and various points in between, Bowman visits powwows large and small, held in stadiums and living rooms, delineating the multiple dance, song and outfitting traditions that inform each.

Speaking with women who participate in these events, Bowman finds that access to given roles in the powwow has not always been as easy for women as in the confluence of cultural practices that powwows now represent. The often moving stories of what the powwow means in the lives of these women leads Bowman to return to the home of her now-deceased grandmother, the subject of *Navajo Talking Picture*. It is a personal and reflexive move that resonates with the film's subject, reminding us that journeys of self-discovery are rarely linear.

Paul Malcolm

Directed by Zacharias Kunuk (Inuit).

Iglolik Isuma Productions. **Producer:** Paul Apak Angilurq, Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn, Germaine Wong. **Screenwriter:** Paul Apak Angilurq. **Cinematographer:** Norman Cohn. **Editor:** Norman Cohn, Zacharias Kunuk, Marie-Christina Sarda. **With:** Natar Ungalaaq, Sylvia Ivalu, Peter-Henry Arnatsiaq, Lucy Tulugarjuk, Madeline Ivalu. Blu-ray, color, 170 min.

ATANARJUAT: THE FAST RUNNER 2001

Enacting an Inuit legend said to be over 1,000 years old, a mysterious shaman invokes a curse that twenty years later affects the chief of the clan, Tulimaq, and his two sons, Amaqjuaq, the Strong One and Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner. Hot-headed Oki, son of the camp leader, becomes profoundly jealous when Atanarjuat wins Atuat, who had been previously promised to him. Thus begins a bloody conflict that ends in the death of the Chief and Amaqjuaq, while Atanarjuat must flee naked over the barren ice sea, facing certain death by exposure.

This is the first Native American narrative feature to be wholly shot in an indigenous language. Taking place in the same mythical past as Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), Kunuk's film is a far cry from the gentle innocence of *Nanook*, presenting instead a violent and brutal environment in stark and breathtakingly beautiful images. The landscape is again central to the drama and to an indigenous world view. Yet even as nature forces the Inuits to live by a harsh code, there are acts of kindness and peaceful resolutions, the latter a modern twist to the legend. Indeed, as Darrell Varga has argued, the film should not be seen as a simple revenge adventure narrative, but rather as a highly allegorical work suggesting a moral lesson about the importance of the community over the individual.

Kunuk began by recording tribal elders' different versions of the Inuit legend, then compiling a script which would speak to the past, as well as today's youth.

Budgeted at two million Canadian dollars, the film was financed and supported by the Inuit community. And indeed, Inuit audiences read the film as not only a true depiction of their traditional way of life, but also as directly addressing the ethnographic stereotypes of Eskimos that have been circulating in Western culture since *Nanook*. The biggest Canadian box office success of 2002, this first Inuktitut-language feature film, and the first Native American feature to be wholly shot in an indigenous language, won prizes at over twenty international film festivals, including the Camera D'Or at Cannes, and was supported by the Sundance Institute's Native American and Indigenous Program.

Jan-Christopher Horak

Preceded by:

FROM CHERRY ENGLISH 2005

Directed by Jeff Barnaby (Mi'g Maq). **Producer:** George Hargrave, Paul Rickard. **Screenwriter:** Jeff Barnaby. **Cinematographer:** Ian Lagarde. **Editor:** Paul Raphael. **With:** Nathaniel Arcand, George Wahiakeron Gilbert, Dana Klyszejko, Darlene Nolan. Betacam, color, 10 min.

Jeff Barnaby weaves a jarring allegory of cultural loss and dysphoria in this fantastical tale of a man's relationship to his language.



11.12.14 WEDNESDAY | 7:30 PM

WEST COAST PREMIERE!

Directed by Norbert Myles.

Texas Film Company. **Producer:** Richard Banks. **Screenwriter:** Norbert Myles. **With:** Esther LaBarre, White Parker, Jack Sankey-Doty, Hunting Horse, Wanada Parker.
35mm, b/w, silent, 80 min.

Print courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

THE DAUGHTER OF DAWN 1920

A recently rediscovered “lost” work, curiously never generally released following a 1920 preview screening in Los Angeles, Norbert Myles’ film is a fascinating time capsule of Native American representation, combining the dash and expediency of an enterprising independent filmmaking unit with the fortuitous participation of Reservation-era Indigenous communities enacting a drama that makes reference to pre-Reservation ways of life (probably known to the older members seen onscreen).

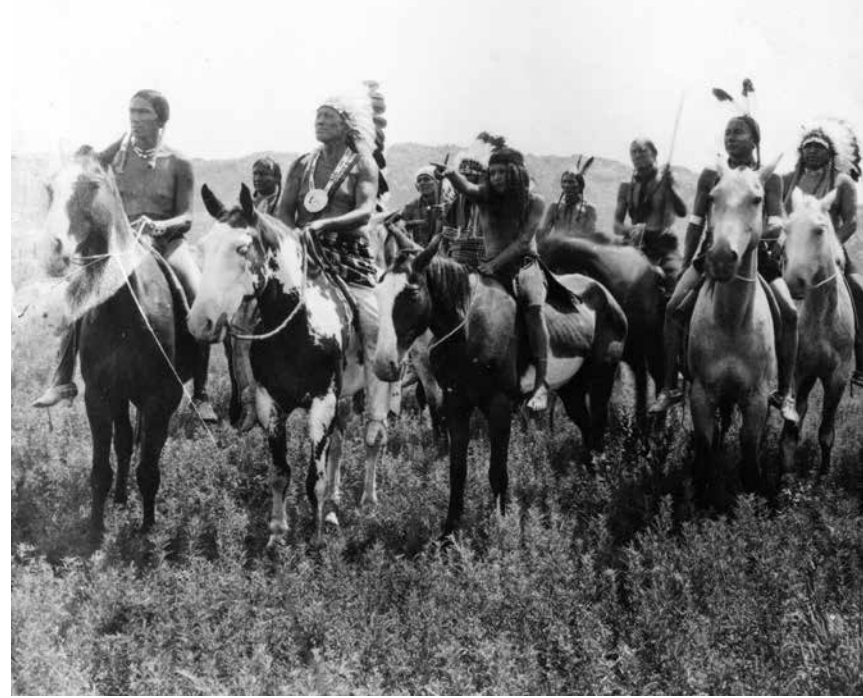
For erstwhile silent film actor (and non-Native director) Myles, this was the first of three directed features; seemingly the only one to focus on Native Americans. The impetus came from producer Richard E. Banks, head of the fledgling Texas Film Company, whose years of proximity to Native people had engendered his interest in a feature based on a Comanche legend. From the basic concept of a rivalry between two braves for the hand of one woman (the titular “Daughter of Dawn”) amidst inter-tribal tensions between Kiowa and Comanche factions, Myles coaxed a sturdy melodrama with action sequences, admirable in a first feature.

Still it may have been Banks whose connections led to the employment of 300 Native people to perform their communities’ represented story. They brought

to the production their own teepees, apparel and daily objects, presumably at a significant savings to the producers. These considerations, along with the actual interest of onscreen buffalo hunting by Native people on horseback (buffalo had been gradually reintroduced to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma since the species’ 19th-century decimation), and the presence of two children of Cherokee Chief Quanah Parker (White Parker and Wanada Parker) as actors, all add historic interest to the film, cutting against its romantic plot, and investing it with a newfound, documentary interest.

Admittedly, Banks’ vaunted expertise in Native matters is the film’s only stated claim invoking actual Native perspective. This largesse by non-Native storytellers, virtually the best that Native audiences and their posterity might expect from this period, is none too impressive on its face, but does evince a tacit respect for “authenticity” which would re-emerge occasionally in different, sometimes more progressive contexts. Ironically, 1966, the year of Norbert Myles’ passing, also saw Sol Worth and John Adair undertake the landmark ethnographic project that would become the film legacy commonly known as “Navajo Film Themselves,” seen elsewhere in this series.

Shannon Kelley



Preceded by:

BUFFALO DANCE 1894

Directed by William K. L. Dickson. Edison Manufacturing Company. **Producer:** William K. L. Dickson. **Cinematographer:** William Heise. **With:** Hair Coat, Parts His Hair, Last Horse.
35mm, b/w, silent, 1 min.

Preserved by the Library of Congress.

A haunting artifact from the Edison Manufacturing Company, this performance, filmed on September 24, 1894, with others captured on the same occasion, may mark the first filmed appearance of Native American people. Filmed in the confines of Thomas Edison's "Black Maria" studio in West Orange, New Jersey, the film presents "the Indian" as subsequent American films most often will: an object of spectacle.

WHITE FAWN'S DEVOTION 1910

Directed by James Young Deer. Pathé Frères. **Screenwriter:** James Young Deer.
35mm, b/w, silent, 11 min.

Preserved by the Library of Congress.

A White settler journeys away from his Native American bride to receive an inheritance. Believing he will not return, the wife stabs herself, setting up a misunderstanding and a dire emergency requiring a last-minute rescue. The film, named to the National Film Registry in 2008, is a fascinating social document by James Young Deer, seemingly the first Native American filmmaking pioneer (long identified as Winnebago; more recently as Nanticoke), who headed the Pathé Frères West Coast Studio from 1911 to 1914. Among the film's remarkable aspects is the interracial marriage at its heart, which draws no onscreen judgment, despite the central couple's other troubles.

11.14.14 FRIDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Valerie Red-Horse (Cherokee), Jennifer Wynne Farmer.

Red-Horse Native Productions. **Producer:** Valerie Red-Horse, Dawn Jackson, Yvonne Russo. **Screenwriter:** Valerie Red-Horse. **Cinematographer:** Bruce Finn. **Editor:** Lorraine Salk. **With:** Valerie Red-Horse, Irene Bedard, Kimberly Norris Guerrero, Pato Hoffmann, Floyd Red Crow Westerman. 35mm, color, 107 min.

NATURALLY NATIVE 1999

This remarkable feature presents a moving tale of Native American self-betterment and triumph. The disarming drama concerns three adult sisters, raised separately in foster homes following the death of their alcoholic mother, who now seek a new destiny as a reunited family, and as entrepreneurs in a shared business venture drawing on their indigenous heritage.

Each of the sisters in this trio wishes for a new way forward. Karen, having recently earned her MBA, seeks a meaningful place to apply her skill set. Vickie, living the suburban dream with a great husband and two kids, professes deep Native pride but often expresses this as unmitigated anger at a racist society. Tanya, the youngest, carries a deep wound of shame in her own heritage, and sublimates her sorrow in a flight from Native identity and into the arms of (usually) non-Native men.

One auspicious day, the sisters realize that a received family legacy of herbal remedies, if developed into a marketable product line, might provide a way for them all to bond, heal and prosper. The way to success, however, is strewn with practical, cultural and personal obstacles: racist potential business partners, byzantine government grant programs, and a shared ambivalence about their Native identity, (owing to their having been raised outside of any Native community) all wreak havoc on the sisters' plans and their confidence. But answers are closer than they realize, both inside of them and all around.

Itself a noteworthy achievement by Native American women, the film, starring Irene Bedard, Kimberly Norris Guerrero and triple-threat Valerie Red-

Horse (who contributed the screenplay, and co-directed with Jennifer Wynne Farmer) presents a drama rich with emotion, and with cultural information heretofore rarely treated on cinema screens. Readily accessible to a general audience—after all, the sisters have all experienced assimilation, and move in a multicultural world—the drama offers Native ideals and experiences (sovereignty and alcoholism are significant plot elements) that are simply part of the weave of modern life. Financed by the Mashantucket tribe and premiering at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival, the film also enjoyed a limited theatrical release.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

DIVIDED BY ZERO 2006

Directed by Danis Goulet (Cree/Métis). **Producer:** Sonia Hosko, Danis Goulet. **Screenwriter:** Danis Goulet. **Cinematographer:** Colin Akoon. **Editor:** Ellen Fine. **With:** Tinsel Korey, Taysha Fuller, Pamela Matthews, Catherine Hayos, Kit Weyman. Betacam, color, 16 min.

The saga of Ashley, a young suburban woman exasperated by her family's blasé attitude toward her intense commitment to indigenous consciousness.



11.16.14 SUNDAY | 7:00 PM

Directed by Sterlin Harjo (Creek/Seminole).

Indian Film, Dirt Road Productions, Dolphin Bay Films. **Producer:** Chad Burris. **Screenwriter:** Sterlin Harjo. **Cinematographer:** Frederick Schroeder. **Editor:** David Michael Maurer. **With:** Richard Ray Whitman, Casey Camp-Horinek, Jon Proudstar, Aaron Riggs, Ryan Redcorn. 35mm, color; 85 min.



BARKING WATER 2009

Frankie, a Native American man, is in hospital and dying of cancer. He wants to go home to his estranged daughter and his never-before-seen grandson to die, so he enlists his former girlfriend, Irene. Together they trek across Oklahoma in an old Volvo to Wewoka (Barking Water), the capital of the Seminole Tribe. As they drive without money or gas from one set of friends/relatives to another, they discuss their past life, Irene being particularly angry about Frankie's many past sins and indiscretions, but also willing to confess some of her own. With his imminent death setting up a race against time, the couple are also keenly aware of the passing of traditional Indian ways of life and the family structure that supported them.

Harjo's film neatly avoids sentimentality and pathos, rather becoming a clear-eyed elegy characterized by melancholy acceptance. As Lee Schweningen notes, numerous Native American narrative films begin with the funerals or deaths of a loved one, leading younger members of the tribe to undertake road trips, which become journeys of self-discovery and identity formation. What becomes important is the connection between generations and an indigenous view that the boundaries between past and present, life and death are porous. Thus, Frankie's finding and seeing his grandchild becomes an act of creating family continuity, simultaneously counteracting the stereotype of

the "doomed race." Furthermore, like so many Native American films, Harjo has a particular feeling for the landscape. It is not merely a backdrop, but a homeland, the Oklahoma lands belonging to the Seminole, the Comanche, and the Creek, the space where ancestors roam. His film revels in images of landscape and movement, the journey, like life, a metaphor for endless transition. Independently produced, written, and directed by the filmmaker, who is proud of the total control he exerts over his work, *Barking Water* was a winner of numerous festival prizes.

Jan-Christopher Horak

Preceded by:

WALK-IN-THE-FOREST 2009

Directed by Diane Obomsawin (Abenaki). National Film Board of Canada.

Producer: Michael Fukushima.

HDCAM, color; 3 min.

A sublime work of animation illustrating a universal experience of healing by the simplest means imaginable. Diane Obomsawin's delightful narrative suggests a personal and global response to malaise, illness and injury.

Directed by Shirley Cheechoo (Cree).

Kitchen Sink Entertainment Inc., Brightlight Productions. **Producer:** Cynthia Chapman, Danielle Prohom Olson. **Screenwriter:** Shirley Cheechoo. **Editor:** Lenka Svab. **With:** Adam Beach, Nathaniel Arcand, Alex Rice, Sheila Marie Tousey, Ben Cotton. DigiBeta, color, 93 min.



JOHNNY TOOTALL 2005

Haunted by his wartime experiences, Johnny Tootall returns home after serving a tour of duty in Bosnia, but finds little peace from the nightmares and guilt that plague him or the problems he left behind. Johnny's fiery younger brother RT, now married to Johnny's former girlfriend, is in the midst of a struggle to save their people's sacred land, and childhood friend Lloyd, now a police officer, is on the other side of the blockade, trying desperately to keep a tenuous peace between Native protesters and furious loggers.

Called by his brother to lead their people, and by Lloyd to help mediate the conflict, Johnny flounders with the weight of the many expectations placed on him. As eldest son, Johnny is expected to take up his father's mantle as chief, but the intervening years away and his father's passing have done little to assuage Johnny's reluctance to do so. Visions of his father, nightmares from the war, and sightings of a wolf loping along with Johnny through the woods intertwine in a brooding, shifting interplay of past and present, corporeal and spirit. The conflict between the two brothers—RT resents Johnny's reluctance to assume a role that RT himself yearns to take on—probes the nature of leadership and importance of family duty. Just as Johnny's failure to lead has brought the community to an impasse, RT's zeal to lead that which is not his to lead will also have a hand in tragedy.

As Johnny weighs his war-weary desire for peace with his duty to help his people resist, the escalating conflict over his people's land propels him along a trajectory that will force him to finally confront his destiny and his obligations to the family and community he once abandoned. Winner of the Best Film award at the 2005 American Indian Film Festival, this evocative film from groundbreaking and award-winning director Shirley Cheechoo is a poetic, sensitive vision of individual destiny and community resilience.

Nina Rao

11.17.14 MONDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Gil Cardinal (Métis).

Tamarack Productions, National Film Board of Canada. **Producer:** James Cullingham, Peter Raymont, Dale Phillips. **Cinematographer:** James Jeffrey. **Editor:** Gerald H. Wilson. **With:** Gil Cardinal, Angus Chapman, Wally McKay.
Beta SP, color; 59 min.

TIKINAGAN 1991

In northwestern Ontario, Tikinagan, a child services agency run by First Nations people, works to support children and overcome the legacy of mistrust caused by provincial child welfare agencies. Taking its name from the cradleboard traditionally used to swaddle and carry babies, Tikinagan is a revolutionary program: a native-run child services agency that seeks to keep children within their own communities, by providing support to young families and promoting extended family or close community members as caregivers and alternate placements.

Gil Cardinal's candid documentary observes the efforts of Tikinagan workers to ensure safe, supportive homes for children in communities beset with challenges—gas sniffing and alcoholism are major problems—and to foster a strong partnership between communities and the Tikinagan agency. The legacy of years of disenfranchisement and conflict with provincial child welfare agencies and children's aid societies—which removed children from their communities and disconnected them from family, traditions, and stability—lingers in the communities Tikinagan serves. Though Tikinagan workers have roots in these communities, the memory and repercussions of harm inflicted by past policies has left a mistrust of child services that Tikinagan strives to overcome. Following along on home visits and program placements, this clear-eyed documentary explores the heart-rending struggles facing Native youth and their



communities, and the endeavors of community-based child services to rebuild relationships, alleviate the wrongs of the past, and attend to the needs of the present.

Nina Rao

Preceded by:

RICHARD CARDINAL: CRY FROM A DIARY OF A MÉTIS CHILD 1986

Directed by Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki). National Film Board of Canada. **Producers:** Alanis Obomsawin, Marrin Canell, Robert Verrall. **Screenwriter:** Alanis Obomsawin. **Cinematographer:** Roger Rochat. **Editor:** Rita Roy. **With:** Cory Swan, David Mitchell, Pauline Kerik, Betty Smith, Leslie Miller.
HDCAM, color; 29 min.

Alanis Obomsawin chronicles the true story of an aboriginal boy, removed from his family of origin, who disappeared slowly, and then suddenly, as the ward of a succession of foster families under a government program later challenged in his name.

Directed by Phil Lucas (Choctaw).

Producer: Phil Lucas. **Screenwriter:** Phil Lucas, Janet Tanaka.

Cinematographer: Peter Von Puttkamer. **Editor:** Peter Von Puttkamer, Phil Lucas. **With:** Tommy Harry, Roland Harry, Richard Dick, Joe Dick, Robert Chelsea.

Beta SP, color, 57 min.



THE HONOUR OF ALL: Part I 1986

When the seven year old daughter of Andy Chelsea, Chief of the Alkali Lake Indian Band, tells her father she wants to move away from home, because of her parents' alcoholism, the Chief realizes something has to change. First, he and his wife sober up. Then, slowly, they win more and more converts. When members of the community decide to go into treatment, the tribe remodels their home while they are gone to give them a more positive attitude for their post-treatment sobriety. Chelsea also works with the local police to stop the flow of illegal alcohol into the reservation and even kicks the Catholic priest, who is himself an alcoholic, off the reservation. After almost two decades of hard work, the Alkali tribe goes from a 100% alcoholism rate to 95% sober thanks to intense community support and strong leadership. And so concludes this amazing, true story.

Told mostly in the first person by Chief Andy Chelsea and his wife, Phyllis, the film recounts the long hard road to recovery for the tribe, by reenacting important events in the tribal community. In utilizing almost exclusively ama-

teur actors, who are actual participants in the drama, this remarkable documentary is a work of profound healing. Funded by the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program of the Canadian government's Health and Welfare Department, the film functions as a model for other Native American and First Nations communities, plagued by alcohol abuse.

It was produced and directed by Phil Lucas, who is one of the pioneers of Native American filmmaking. An Emmy Award winning director for the television mini-series, *The Native Americans* (1994), Lucas was born in Phoenix, Arizona in 1942 and died in Seattle in 2007. Beginning in the 1970s, he wrote, produced or directed over 100 films and television programs, including *Images of Indians* (1980), the groundbreaking television series on Hollywood's history of racial stereotyping.

Jan-Christopher Horak

11.21.14 FRIDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Andrew Okpeaha MacLean (Iñupiaq).

Silverwood Films, On the Ice Productions, Whitewater Films, Goldcrest International, Buffalo Bulldog Films. **Producer:** Cara Marcous, Lynette Howell, Marco Londoner, Zhana Londoner. **Screenwriter:** Andrew Okpeaha MacLean. **Cinematographer:** Lol Crawley. **Editor:** Nat Sanders. **With:** Josiah Patkotak, Frank Qutuq Irelan, Teddy Kyle Smith, Adamina Kerr, Sierra Jade Sampson.
35mm, color, 96 min.



ON THE ICE 2011

Andrew Okpeaha MacLean's first feature offers an elemental morality tale set amongst modern Inupiaq residents of stark Northern Alaska. Lifelong friends Qalli and Aivaaq are residents of a small Alaskan town of mostly whale and seal hunters. Having grown up there practically as brothers, the young men stand at a crossroads, as stolid Qalli prepares for a departure to college, while Aivaaq will remain behind, already saddled with a pregnant girlfriend and the prospect of a life of struggle going forward. One day, the two friends embark on snowmobiles for an early-morning seal hunt with a friend. An unexpected argument leads to a struggle on the ice—and then a tragic accident, leaving Qalli and Aivaaq weaving a web of deceit that isolates them within their community, threatening also to tear them apart, and dash their future hopes in the bargain.

From this bleak beginning, MacLean unfolds a fascinating drama combining observations about the limits of true friendship, and the tension between split loyalties: to a community, a friend, and the truth. As they maneuver between these priorities, Qalli and Aivaaq confront related situations, large and small, that call into question how they will do the right thing, and what in fact is the right thing to do. The introduction and arrangement of these moral choices make up the fascinating center of this well-crafted feature.

MacLean makes superb use of his setting in unfolding this relatively quiet tale where the mechanics of morality and choice are constantly whirring. The

gleam and glow of the ice-covered landscape add to the film's sense of ethical extremity, as so many scenes are acted without the distraction of a busy mise-en-scene, and Lol Crawley's cinematography points up this abstract quality that poses human figures on a vast, silent backdrop. At the same time, MacLean depicts a community in transition, where the influence of popular culture in the boys' hip-hop infused speech, in their households and among their social set, sketch the outlines of an encroaching modern world that already beckons Qalli away. A first feature for MacLean, the film was honored as Best Debut Feature at the Berlin International Film Festival, among other awards.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

NATCHILIAGNIAQTUGUK AAPAGALU (SEAL HUNTING WITH DAD) 2005

Directed by Andrew Okpeaha MacLean (Iñupiaq).
Digital video, color, 11 min.

This lyrical, short documentary chronicles a day of bonding and learning, between a father and son straddling different sides of a vanishing tradition.

Directed by Zacharias Kunuk (Inuit).

Producer: Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn. **Screenwriter:** Zacharias Kunuk. **Cinematographer:** Norman Cohn. **Editor:** Paul Aapak Anglio, Rene Roberge. **With:** Peter Arnatsiaq Tatigat, Catherine Aaluluuq, Deborah Panikpakuttuk, Michelline Ataguttaaluk, Eugene Ikkarnak. Digital video, color, 58 min.



QAGGIQ (GATHERING PLACE) 1989

Before the astonishment and critical praise that greeted Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, the celebrated filmmaker had completed numerous fascinating works depicting Inuit life, both among his own family and intimates, and in extended communities. His formal and thematic explorations in these earlier works display the same energy and imagination that has characterized his better-known feature work, and reward the viewer with their freshness, freedom from classical dramaturgical models, and juxtapositions of fiction and documentary gestures.

Qaggic (Gathering Place) presents an Inuit camp in the 1930s, as a group of families gather in a communal igloo to celebrate the coming of spring. Songs, danc-

es and contests of skill are interrupted by interfamilial drama, when a man asks for the hand of an elder's young daughter, setting up a disagreement between the stoic father and his vocal and strong-headed spouse. Shifts between the unfolding dramatic scenario and fascinating processes of ethnographic interest (building the large igloo, drumming and singing, etc.) are seamlessly achieved, and the narrative is revealed with a fresh and unfettered sense of momentum. Whimsical and captivating, the film offers a refreshing outlook on culture and on storytelling itself, underlining the importance and rewards of stories told by Aboriginal filmmakers reflecting on their own communities.

Shannon Kelley

11.22.14 SATURDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Blackhorse Lowe (Navajo).

Blackhorse Films. **Producer:** Ernest Quiroz. **Screenwriter:** Blackhorse Lowe. **Cinematographer:** Miguel Cordova. **Editor:** Blackhorse Lowe. **With:** James June, Livandrea Knoki, Carmelita B. Lowe, Larry A. Lowe, Sheldon Silentwalker. Digital video, color, 75 min.



5TH WORLD 2005

Blackhorse Lowe fashions a fresh and powerfully original take on both the road picture and the love story in this, his first feature.

Students Andrei and Aria set out together from college for their respective homes on the Navajo reservation, planning to hitchhike, and estimating the time it will take. As in the best such journeys, time becomes more and more relative along the way, and the journey more meaningful. Crossing breathtaking landscapes in the reservation lands of Arizona and New Mexico, the pair also fill their time with chatting, teasing, flirting, and the kinds of revelation and discovery that happen when the rest of the world blessedly goes away. Love seems to hang in the air like a pendant summer shower, encouraged by a visit midway on the trip with Andrei's uncle and aunt, who recall their own cherished memories of meeting and dating. But the bond and the excitement that quickly develop between the young pair are also not to be taken for granted, as their shared culture places unexpected pitfalls in the road to bliss.

All of this information is rendered by the filmmaker through a suite of dazzling techniques that both advance the narrative and deconstruct it, seeming to place the film in relation more to international cinema trends than the American independent scene. Montage, music, elliptical narrative gestures and disjunctions of image and sound, foreground the headiness of love's excitement, along with a hint that unseen forces are at work behind the casual,

anecdotal situation. Lowe meanwhile constructs his characters not only as narrative agents, but as richly constituted individuals, radiating psychological and emotional accuracy, as well as cultural specificity, without ever being overly explained. The spontaneous performances of his leads, and their off-the-cuff banter, offer an implicit portrait of reservation youth that feels refreshingly contemporary, and engrossing, providing the perfect grace note to Lowe's bravura cinematic statement.

Shannon Kelley

Preceded by:

I LOST MY SHADOW 2011

Directed by Nanobah Becker (Navajo). **Cinematographer:** Smokey Nelson. **Editor:** Daniel Edevijes Carrera. **With:** Jock Soto, Laura Ortman. Digital video, color, 4 min.

Set to music by Laura Ortman and featuring the performance of noted dancer Jock Soto, Nanobah Becker's engrossing video is a meditation on the Native American in the contemporary imagination, often appearing as an abstract, faraway figure.

Directed by Victor Masayesva, Jr. (Hopi).

ZDF Television, IS Productions. **Cinematographer:** Victor Masayesva, Jr.

Editor: Terry Skinner, Robert Frisk. **With:** Ross Macaya (storyteller).

Beta SP, color, 85 min.



ITAM HAKIM, HOPIIT 1984

A man in sneakers and denim carries a pair of steel buckets over rocky ground to a watering hole. Shot in a low angle, tight composition, we see him only from the knees down but on the soundtrack, we hear his voice, speaking in Hopi. As he speaks, he dips a second bucket into the water and bursts out laughing. The joke goes untranslated, intended only for those who also speak the native language of Ross Macaya, the elder storyteller at the center of Hopi filmmaker and photographer Victor Masayesva Jr.'s first long-form film, *Itam Hakim, Hopiit*.

Although soon after this, an English translation of Macaya's stories is offered in voiceover (a concession Masayesva added later) the early moments of *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* are marked by these layers of cinematic refusal: of an establishing shot, of a close-up of Macaya, of the reason for his laughter: In many ways, these refusals resonate with the film's opening recognition of the tricentennial of the Pueblo revolt of 1680, when Hopi and Pueblo peoples drove the Spanish of their lands in a violent uprising.

For Masayesva, who has gained international recognition for his films and photography while working exclusively in the village of Hoatvela on the Hopi Reservation, *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* stands as an act of visual sovereignty that makes few if any concessions for non-Hopi audiences in its evocation of Hopi history and myth and its upending of traditional documentary form.

At the same time, Masayesva has acknowledged how deeply implicated photographic and moving image technology has been in exploiting and appropriating indigenous cultures, including the Hopi. In this context, *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* is equally informed by Masayesva's ambivalence about the cinema and his own respectful reticence, perhaps, in exposing Macaya to his own camera.

From these tensions, Masayesva draws a powerful, poetic interaction between the cinematic and the oral storytelling tradition as Macaya shares memories of his boyhood, his father's struggle with mental illness, the origin myth of the Hopi people, the history of the Pueblo revolt and Hopi prophecy. A flowing, kaleidoscopic montage of the natural beauty of the Hopi reservation, scenes of contemporary reservation life, as well as historical photographs and highly aestheticized reenactments of historical events, do not illustrate Macaya's stories so much resonate with them. Past and future collapse into a layered present as Masayesva works to construct a visual language to document and expresses Hopi experience.

Paul Malcolm

11.23.14 SUNDAY | 7:00 PM

Directed by Valerie Red-Horse (Cherokee).

Red Horse Production, Valhalla Motion Pictures. **Producer:** Gale Anne Hurd, Valerie Red-Horse. **Screenwriter:** Valerie Red-Horse. **Cinematographer:** Bill Sheehy. **Editor:** Bryce Button, Jamie Wallace. Betacam, color, 60 min.



TRUE WHISPERS: THE STORY OF THE NAVAJO CODE TALKERS 2002

Produced for PBS, *True Whispers: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers* recounts in compelling, dramatic detail one of the most extraordinary and inspiring chapters in the long, troubled history between the US government and a Native people. Native American-owned production company Red-Horse Native Productions partnered with Hollywood powerhouse Gale Anne Hurd's Valhalla Entertainment on this production for a groundbreaking, collaborative effort.

For generations, beginning in the 1800s, Native Americans, already forced onto reservation lands, more often than not far from their ancestral homes, were required by law to send their children to government run boarding schools. The primary purpose of these schools founded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs was to carry out the assimilationist policies of the US government which included the eradication of indigenous languages. Compulsory attendance—sometimes outright kidnapping—and corporal punishment for speaking one's native tongue were the typical methods of enforcement.

This brutal system was very much still in place in the 1940s when this same US government turned to the Navajo people for help during World War II. As the war in the Pacific ramped up, the Japanese proved exceedingly adept at cracking the US military's secret codes. In response, Marine Corp commanders, at the suggestion of the non-Native son of a missionary who grew up on the Navajo reservation, sought to build a new code based on the Navajo language. Fully aware of the irony of the request and still facing regular ill-treatment at

the hands of the government, a group of Navajo men volunteered to create such a code and almost 500 of them served on the frontlines to oversee its use. Their efforts are credited by many with helping to turn the tide of the war.

Drawing on first person accounts from still living "code talkers," newsreel footage, personal photographs and home movies, *True Whispers* does more than layout the historical facts of this remarkable story. It also illuminates the richness and beauty of the Navajo language and culture and the way both sustained these men through the trials and tribulations of war.

Paul Malcolm

Preceded by:

GESTURE DOWN (I DON'T SING) 2006

Directed by Cedar Sherbert (Kumeyaay). **Producer:** Cedar Sherbert. **Screenwriter:** Cedar Sherbert. **Cinematographer:** RJ. Lozada. **Editor:** Cedar Sherbert, Howard Duy Vu. **With:** Zenaida, Poli, Chata, Astrid, Pulido. HDCAM, color, 8 min.

Cedar Sherbert's engaging short strikes an ironically plaintive note, as it assesses the experience of its Kumeyaay subject, endeavoring to maintain family ties across spatial, cultural and economic divides.

Directed by Sandy Osawa (Makah).

Upstream Productions. **Producer:** Sandy Osawa, Yasu Osawa.
DVCAM, color, 41 min.



Myaamiaki Eemamwiciki: MIAMI AWAKENING 2009

Directed by UCLA alumni Sandra and Yasu Osawa, *Myaamiaki Eemamwiciki: Miami Awakening* is a compelling, heartfelt example of Native American film production intended to speak to a specific Native people that nevertheless carries with it lessons that broader audiences can draw from.

Through their company, Upstream Productions, the Osawas focus on making films that address issues and subjects related to contemporary Native Americans. For *Myaamiaki Eemamwiciki: Miami Awakening* they worked closely with the Miami people (Myaamiaki) of Oklahoma who wanted to document their ongoing community-based effort to “awaken” their native language, unspoken for generations but still extant in written records dating back to the earliest encounters between the Miami and Western colonizers. The success of the the Myaamia Project, as it is called, not only helped the Miami people reclaim a significant part of their traditional culture but also challenged linguists in important ways to rethink their own approach to indigenous languages.

As the Osawas document, the project began with the work Daryl Baldwin, a member of the Miami Nation who started out by using historic documents to teach himself and his children the Miami language. Early on, Baldwin recog-

nized that the metaphors of “death” and “extinction” that academic linguists used describe languages with no living speakers could, in themselves, become barriers to Indigenous efforts to revive their traditional cultures. Choosing to see Miami as only “sleeping,” Baldwin and others worked with linguistics to reconstruct a phonology and morphology for the language by consulting other related North American indigenous tongues which are still spoken. The project quickly became a community effort with the Miami Nation organizing summer language camps and conferences as well as developing teaching tools to help Miami members of all ages learn their native language.

The filmmakers document the fascinating process of this “awakening” as well as the profound effects, emotionally and spiritually, it has had on the Miami people who have deepened their connections to the past as well as taken further charge of their future. In turn, the Osawas have created a document that itself can be used as a resource for the Miami and other tribes to ensure the longevity of their traditional ways of living and being in the world.

Paul Malcolm

11.24.14 MONDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Shane Anthony Belcourt (Métis).

The Breath Films. **Producer:** Duane Murray, Jordan O'Connor. **Screenwriter:** Shane Anthony Belcourt. **Cinematographer:** Shane Anthony Belcourt. **Editor:** Jordan O'Connor. **With:** Jonah Allison, Rae Ellen Bodie, Lorne Cardinal, Jeff Geddis, Sandy Jobin-Bevans. HDCAM, color; 105 min.



TKARONTO 2007

Absence and longing circumscribe the city of Tkaronto—the Mohawk word for Toronto—where Anishnabe painter Jolene (Melanie McLaren) meets Métis writer Ray (Duane Murray). Passing through the city as part of a project to document Aboriginal leaders, Jolene finds herself at a loss when elder Max Cardinal (Lorne Cardinal) presents her with an eagle feather. The gift conjures a host of uncertainty, as Jolene is reminded of shortfalls in her knowledge of her culture, and she doubts her worthiness to receive it.

Jolene finds a kindred spirit in Ray, who's come to the city to pitch an adaptation of his graphic novel, *Indian Jones*, to a clutch of television executives hot to cash in on the exoticism of an Aboriginal story—as long as it's not *too* Aboriginal. Like Jolene, Ray struggles with his identity; the son of a white mother and a Métis father, Ray questions whether he is Native enough, and wrestles with challenges to his cultural identity from without and within. As Ray and Jolene reflect on their childhoods and their Aboriginal heritage in earnest park-bench discussions and meandering walks through the summer cityscape, a deep sense of loss pervades the narrative. The eagle feather lingers in Jolene's hands, a tangible marker of a trove of cultural knowledge and tradition which seem lost to Ray and Jolene.

As Ray and Jolene grapple with regrets for what has been lost, they also share a sadness about what may continue to be lost. Both married to non-Aboriginal partners, Jolene ponders how to walk a spiritual path and hold on to her heritage, while Ray worries that his unborn child will be even further removed from his heritage. Finding solace in their mutual worries, Ray and Jolene negotiate a growing attraction as their search for answers spools out. Seeking wisdom from elders, fortune tellers, and their own hearts, a reflective exploration of urban Aboriginal identity unfolds which suggests the deeply individual, and yet persistently universal, nature of Ray and Jolene's struggle to define their identities and be authentic to themselves.

Nina Rao

Preceded by:

NIKAMOWIN (SONG) 2007

Directed by Kevin Lee Burton (Swampy Cree).

Digital video, color; 11 min.

A thrilling and complex deconstruction of the sounds and rhythms of Native language.

Directed by Rodrick Pocowatchit (Comanche/Pawnee/Shawnee).

Harmy Films. **Producer:** Prodrick Pocowatchit. Rodrick Pocowatchit.

Cinematographer: Shawn Cunningham. **Editor:** Rodrick Pocowatchit.

With: Mark Wells, Guy Ray Pocowatchit, Rodrick Pocowatchit, T.J. Williams, Deanie Eaton.

Beta SP, color, 92 min.



SLEEPDANCER 2005

Derek Smith, a Native American investigator (but adopted by Whites) for the local coroner's office, is called to the home of a Native American man who has passed away. In another room he finds the virtually catatonic Tommy Jordan (Rodrick Pocowatchit), the dead man's son, staring mutely out the window. As he later discovers, Tommy is a sleepwalker who dances in a nearby field at night. Trying to solve the mystery of Tommy's silence, the investigator soon runs aground of the man's belligerent brother, Ben, who claims not to know what is ailing Tommy. However, through a series of letters, Derek unravels Tommy's story, and becomes infatuated with helping him, while his own relationship to his girlfriend crumbles. The plot leads to a reckoning for both men.

Based on writer/director Pocowatchit's first short film, *Sleepdancer* consists of black & white and color footage, the former appearing as flashbacks. His initial script for the short was based on a dream the director had, during which he couldn't talk, unless he was dancing a tribal dance in a traditional dress. According to his website, the director wrote a short script the next day and

then filmed it a few weeks later over a weekend. The feature length version was scripted in late 2004, with production beginning Wichita, Kansas, in March 2005 and wrapping in September, utilizing a local cast and crew. The film features music by popular recording artist Gooding, as well as traditional songs by the Native American drum group Tha Tribe, based in Lawrence, Kansas.

Pocowatchit, who received intensive training from the Sundance Institute's screenwriting labs and Native American and Indigenous program, has independently directed and produced a number of other features and shorts, including *The Dead Can't Dance* (2010) and *The Most Beautiful* (2013). He is also a film critic for the *Wichita Eagle*. *Sleepdancer* earned several awards from the American Indian Film Festival of San Francisco and the American Indian Los Angeles Film & TV Awards.

Jan-Christopher Horak

12.07.14 SUNDAY | 7:00 PM

Directed by Julianna Brannum (Comanche).

Naru Mui Films. **Producer:** Julianna Brannum. **Cinematographer:** Dustinn Craig, Nate Foll. **Editor:** Sam Wainwright Douglas, Karen Skloss. **With:** LaDonna Harris, Sen. Fred Harris, Jerry Straus, Michael Mahsetky, David Harrison. Digital video, color, 63 min.



LADONNA HARRIS: INDIAN 101 2014

Raised on a rural farm in Cotton County, Oklahoma during the Great Depression, Comanche activist LaDonna Harris went on to an incredible career in public service, fighting racial and gender discrimination and government apathy toward Native American issues. The wife of U.S. Senator Fred Harris, LaDonna Harris became the first Congressional wife to testify before Congress, as part of her advocacy for continued funding for Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. Growing out of this involvement with the War on Poverty, Harris' fundamental role in the movement for Native American advocacy is traced thoughtfully in Julianna Brannum's documentary.

Archival footage, interviews, and photographs construct the context of Harris' early work during the era of the Civil Rights movement. Selected to a cabinet-wide council on Indian affairs, Harris represented urban Indians, who faced many plights including unemployment, disease, suicide, and infant mortality. Largely forgotten by the government, urban Indian communities were central to the activist movement of the 1960s. As consciousness raising and conflict took place, Harris' mix of social diplomacy, grassroots activism, and warm-

hearted persuasion educated and charmed adversaries, opening minds to her message, while never betraying her convictions; in reflecting on the time, Harris observes "I was as radical as they were, but I had a different style."

Among the many achievements noted in the film is Harris' role in the return of the sacred land of Taos Blue Lake to the people of Taos Pueblo. The narrative of Harris' skillful deployment of contacts and connections to mobilize support in Congress, even finding an ally in Richard Nixon, belies the notion that one person can't make a difference in government. Indeed, as the documentary demonstrates, Harris has effected meaningful change on a range of issues from increasing the role of Indians in managing programs for Indians and helping tribes control their natural resources, to reaching out to indigenous communities worldwide and promoting the next generation of leaders. As Harris continues to nurture young Native leaders to thrive in a global society, Brannum's film is a warm and thoughtful tribute to this one-of-a-kind "diplomatic rebel."

Nina Rao

Directed by David Mueller; Lynn Salt (Choctaw).

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. **Producer:** David Mueller; Lynn Salt. **Cinematographer:** David Mueller. **Editor:** Robert McFalls. **With:** Larry Anderson, Dennis Banks, Tashina Banks, Zinzii Banks, Clude Bellecourt.
Digital video, color, 90 min.



A GOOD DAY TO DIE 2011

This new documentary looks at the history of the American Indian Movement (AIM) through the biography of its founder, Dennis Banks (Ojibwa), who started the organization in 1968 in Minneapolis. Tracing Banks' childhood experience in reservation boarding schools, his military service in Japan and subsequent return to civilian life, when he succumbed to alcohol and was imprisoned at Stillwater State Prison, the film chronicles his transformation to political activism. As one of AIM's most visible leaders, he then led the organization in the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, and at Custer, South Dakota and Wounded Knee. The film concludes with Banks' activities as a lecturer and Native American leader during the last thirty years.

As *A Good Day to Die* makes clear, AIM and its actions in the 1970s was primarily responsible for creating a positive Native American consciousness after hundreds of years of genocide, land appropriation, and the destruction of Native American sovereignty. Collectively resisting the autocratic and racist policies of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, AIM allowed many young Native Americans the opportunity to feel pride in their heritage for the first time in decades.

Even if the stand-off against the FBI on the Pine Ridge Reservation ultimately failed, leading to a terrible loss of life after the siege, the event was a catalyst for a rebirth of Native American culture.

Financed by Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, David Mueller's and Lynn Salt's documentary consists of historical newsreel and television footage, as well as numerous filmed interviews with Banks, himself, along with Native American leaders such as Larry Anderson, Clyde Bellecourt, Sydney Bird, LaDonna Harris, Charlie Hill, Marshall McKay, and Herb Powless. "A Good Day to Die," is an English translation of the Sioux phrase, "Nake nula waun welo!" which literally means "I am ready for whatever comes." It was misunderstood by the white media when famously quoted by Banks, who was not expressing a death wish, but rather the willingness to negotiate. Lynn Salt, who has been active in the film industry for twenty years, previously co-wrote and co-produced *Beautiful Wave* (2010).

Jan-Christopher Horak



12.13.14 SATURDAY | 7:30 PM

Directed by Sterlin Harjo (Creek/Seminole).

Producer: Sterlin Harjo, Matt Leach, Christina D. King. **Cinematographer:** Sterlin Harjo, Matt Leach, Shane Brown. **Editor:** Matt Leach. **With:** Jimmy Anderson, Nelson Harjo, Hoy Harjo, Wotko Long, Eugene Harjo.
HDCAM, color, 90 min.

THIS MAY BE THE LAST TIME 2014

Pete Harjo, Sterlin Harjo's grandfather, disappeared in 1962 after his car crashed on a rural bridge in Sasakwa, Oklahoma. The Seminole Indian community searched for his body for days, but nothing was found. The community sang their own religious songs, as they searched, finding solace in the hymns of faith that had sustained the community for more than 150 years. Harjo's latest film explores the mystery of his grandfather's death and the role Native song played in his family's grief.

The Creeks and Seminoles had been Christianized at the end of the 18th century. Their ceremonial music dates back to the early 19th century, combining Creek, Scottish, and African influences, when they still occupied their land in the Southeastern United States. However, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act (1830), and conspired with Southern States to steal Indian land for cotton cultivation, despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled twice in favor of Native complaints against the illegal land appropriation. The result was the "Great Trail of Tears" in 1836, during which Federal troops drove 15,000 Creek people from their lands in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi to Oklahoma; nearly 25% perished on the journey. In their grief, the Creek sang their songs. As director Harjo himself notes of these hymns, "they are intrinsic to our culture. In times of tragedy and hardship, we often turn to hymns as a way of seeking emotional and spiritual support." Who knew that the Muscogee Creek and Seminole nations developed their own hymn books

and music tradition, akin to the culture of Negro spirituals? Indeed, as historian Hugh Foley posits in the film, the Creek hymns may be "the first true American music, due to its multicultural composition."

Narrated in first by the director, Harjo's personal documentary weaves together personal and community history. Harjo's career as a filmmaker took off when he was named one of five inaugural Annenberg Film Fellows in 2004, receiving funding and attending professional workshops that contributed to his first feature, *Four Sheets to the Wind* (2007). His new film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2014.

Jan-Christopher Horrak

Preceded by:

A BENTWOOD BOX 1985

Directed by Sandy Osawa (Makah), Yasu Osawa. Upstream Productions.
Producer: Sandy Osawa (Makah), Yasu Osawa. **With:** Duane Pasco.
DVCAM, color, 5 min.

This enthralling short film illustrates the creation of a carved wooden box, using perfect modulations of duration and focal distance to inscribe both the act of creation, and the film's act of observation, as reverential.

NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN'S SHORTS

Bringing myths, legends, and modern-day tales to the screen, these live-action and animated short films by Native filmmakers represent a diversity of cultures, genres, and visual styles, while sharing common themes. A strong sense of place and community runs throughout, as does the importance of journeys, change, and the passing on of knowledge and traditions.

Whether they journey along the snowy ponds of Saskatchewan or the sun-drenched vistas of the American southwest, the tricksters, storytellers, children, and animals that populate these imaginative short films offer enduring tales and compelling modern-day voices. UCLA is very pleased to present these short films and their engaging, illuminating multiplicity of genres, traditions, and experiences.

Nina Rao

Recommended for ages 4+

LITTLE THUNDER 2008

Directed by Nance Ackerman, Alan Syliboy (Mi'kmaq). **Producer:** Annette Clarke. **Screenwriter:** Nance Ackerman, Alan Syliboy. DigiBeta, color, 3 min.

Vibrantly colorful animation brings to life a cross-country canoe trip, inspired by the Mi'kmaq legend The Stone Canoe.

RUN RED WALK: A NAVAJO SHEEPDOG 2011

Directed by Melissa Henry (Navajo). **Screenwriter:** Melissa Henry. **Cinematographer:** Melissa Henry. Editor: Melissa Henry. Blu-ray, color, in Navajo with English subtitles, 16 min.

A live action tale of a Navajo sheepdog who has lost his flock, and is guided back to them by a chorus of charmingly fanciful puppets.

STORIES FROM THE SEVENTH FIRE: WHY THE RABBIT TURNS WHITE 2002

Directed by Gregory Coyes, George Johnson, Tantoo Cardinal (Cree). **Producer:** Gregory Coyes, Ava, Karvonen, Gerri Cook. **With:** Tantoo Cardinal, Johnny Waniandy. Beta SP, color, 13 min.

Designs by renowned Ojibway artist Norval Morrisseau form the visual basis for recounting the tale of Cree trickster Wesakechak and the brave rabbit who helps him, in this selection from the series.

NETSHISHKATUTAU (THE ENCOUNTER) 2008

Directed by Marie-Ève Aster (Innu) and the Wapikoni Mobile Team. DigiBeta, color, 4 min.

Innu filmmaker Marie-Ève Aster animates an Elder's story of a meeting in the wildness during a time of hardship,

TSHITASHUN (NUMBER) 2008

Directed by James Picard (Innu). **Cinematographer:** James Picard, Paul Rivet.

DigiBeta, color, in Innu with English subtitles, 4 min.

Residents of Betsiamites, an Innu community in Quebec, demonstrate with humor why they count in French instead of Innu.

IF YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED... YOU HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO BUILD AN IGLOO! 2011

Directed by Allen Auksaq (Inuk). **Screenwriter:** Allen Auksaq. **Cinematographer:** Allen Auksaq. Editor: Allen Auksaq. With: Dean Ittuksarjuat. HDCAM, color, 5 min.

A physical demonstration of the knowledge passed down through community traditions is manifest in this snowy, sunny, inside-and-out observation of the construction of the traditional Inuit home.

CHRISTMAS AT MOOSE FACTORY 1971

Directed by Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki). **Screenwriter:** Alanis Obomsawin.

DigiBeta, color, 13 min.

Community, place, and traditions are celebrated in Alanis Obomsawin's enchanting first film, which crafts an indelible portrait of the winter holiday in the Ontario community of Moose Factory through the voices and crayon drawings of children.

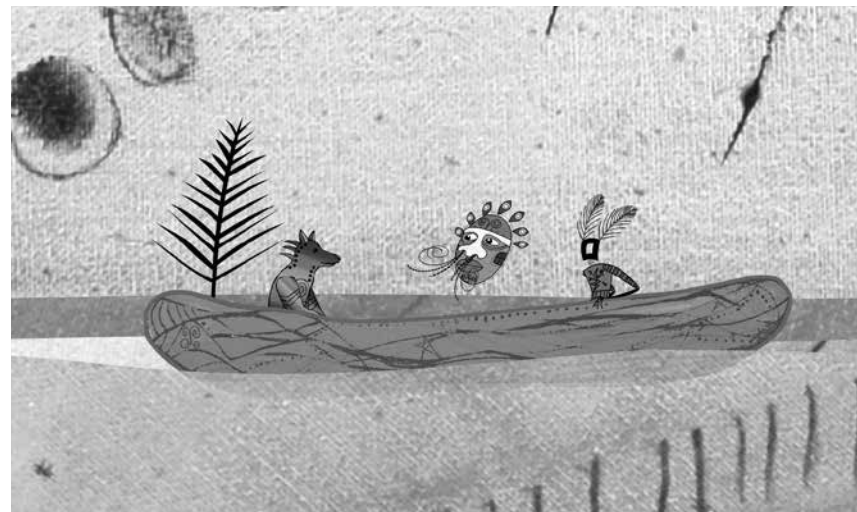
WAPOS BAY: THERE'S NO "I" IN HOCKEY 2005

Directed by Dennis Jackson (Cree). **Producer:** Dennis Jackson, Melanie Jackson, Anand Ramayya, Michael Scott. **Screenwriter:** Dennis Jackson.

Cinematographer: Paul Suderman. Editor: Jennifer Prokop.

DigiBeta, color, 24 min.

In this award-winning stop-motion animated program, three Cree children learn important lessons about sharing, cooperation, and hockey during the Wapos Bay winter festival.



12.14.14 SUNDAY | 7:00 PM

Directed by Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho).

Showtime Networks, Red House Entertainment. **Producer:** Willy Holtzman. **Screenwriter:** Willy Holtzman. **Cinematographer:** Clark Mathis. **Editor:** Paul Trejo. **With:** James McDaniel, Wes Studi, Irene Bedard, Eddie Spears, Geri Keams.
Digital video, color; 105 min.

EDGE OF AMERICA 2005

As the landscape of Three Nations Reservation rolls into view over a dusty horizon, tires on the roofs of mobile homes and a makeshift plywood basketball hoop announce that this is indeed the “edge of America;” a place at the very margins of the consciousness and concerns of most Americans. Into this landscape comes new high school English teacher Kenny Williams (James McDaniel). A black man from Texas, Williams is an outsider to the reservation, but he’s no stranger to marginalization, and the tenuous basketball hoop he spies on his first drive through town portends a point of poignant and powerful connection between Williams and the community which dubiously receives him.

Three Nations High School’s Lady Warriors are on a legendary winless streak, and Williams, a former basketball star, has the knowledge and skill to turn the team around, but there’s a lot to learn for both teacher and students on their hard-fought march to the state tournament. William’s unremitting discipline and aggressive ethos of self-reliance, forged from the wounds of racial injustice in his own life, clashes bluntly with the importance placed on elders, community, and cultural traditions by his students. In turn, his motley crew of students cloak their talents and potential in sarcasm and disinterest, discouraged by low expectations and lack of opportunities.

The basketball season unfolds against this backdrop of hardship and racial tensions—tempers flare over biased refereeing and loaded exchanges in a rival-

ry with all-white Zion High School—and Williams and his team encounter obstacles that compel them to new understandings about each other, in a journey toward mutual respect for cultural differences and rejection of hurtful stereotypes. Supported by a standout cast including Irene Bedard as Williams’ assiduously outspoken fellow teacher and assistant coach, and Wes Studi as sly-humored car mechanic and bus driver, *Edge of America* garnered several awards, including a Peabody Award, and continues to inspire.

Nina Rao

Preceded by:

CARRYING FIRE 2009

Directed by Marie Burke (Cree/Dene). **Producer:** Bonnie Thompson. **Screenwriter:** Marie Burke. **Cinematographer:** Wes Doyle. **Editor:** Doug Forbes. **With:** Travis Dugas, Melody Goodstriker, Jordanna Kreider, Ryan Burke.
DigiBeta, color; 4 min.

The fire of spiritual wellness and self-knowledge is powerfully shared among individuals and generations in this striking short film.



12.15.14 MONDAY | 7:30 PM **CLOSING NIGHT**

Directed by Timothy Andrew Ramos (Pomo).

Against The Wind Productions. **Producer:** Chris Eyre, Timothy Andrew Ramos. **Screenwriter:** Timothy Andrew Ramos. **Cinematographer:** Duane Humeyestewa. **Editor:** Peter Fuller. **With:** Gary Farmer, Mark Boone Junior, Timothy Andrew Ramos, Gil Birmingham, Julia Jones.
Digital video, color, 90 min.



CALIFORNIA INDIAN 2011

A shady Caucasian casino investor attempts to railroad a California tribe into selling their gaming rights to him, but there are individuals who see through the scheme, including Nick Thomas, a Native American talk show host who returns to the reservation to visit his ailing mother. While the tribe's chief seemingly works with the white outsider to get the tribal council to vote away their gaming rights by promising \$500 to every member of the tribe, Thomas and his brother Charles expose the investor's criminal past.

Based on a true story and actual events at the Pomo Indian Tribe reservation in Northern California, this independent feature was shot on the Big Valley Rancheria with many members acting in the film. The film asks the question, whether Native American Tribal members should accept a one-time payment for instant gratification, or retain rights over sovereign interests for a long-term benefit for all, in keeping with traditions. The political and social struggles on reservations today, depicted in the film, demonstrate that Native American films "talk back" to Hollywood, transcending stereotypes of modern Native

American culture as slaves to alcohol and destined to suffer. Rather, traditions and family heritage are shown to give strength to Native American communities in the present.

Timothy Andrew Ramos, whose father is Filipino and mother a Pomo, grew up in Los Angeles, where he developed an interest in depicting urban Indians, like himself and his hero Nick Thomas, who have made the transition from the reservation to the city, but still maintain contacts and traditions. While poverty, alcoholism and loss of identity have for too long plagued American Native Indians (and dominated media stereotypes), Ramos' film explores previously unknown issues that have arisen from the newly created wealth coming from legal gambling operations, including the role of tribal government, this influence of money, and the ability of Native Americans to take control of their lives.

Jan-Christopher Horak

Directed by Georgina Lightning (Cree).

Older Than America. **Producer:** Christine K. Walker. **Screenwriter:** Georgina Lightning, Christine K. Walker. **Cinematographer:** Shane F. Kelly. **Editor:** Clayton Condit, Michael R. Miller. **With:** Adam Beach, Tantoo Cardinal, Bradley Cooper, Glen Gould, Dan Harrison.
HDCAM, color, 102 min.



OLDER THAN AMERICA 2008

Rain, a young Native American woman (played by director Georgina Lightning), begins to have dreams and visions she can't explain, making her fearful that she may be losing her mind, just like her mother, Irene Many Lightnings, who had been institutionalized twenty years earlier. Meanwhile, a priest who conspired with Rain's "Auntie Apple" to silence her sister Irene, is now attempting to keep the history of the local reservation school under wraps, even as inexplicable events point to a connection between Rain's dreams, her mother, and evil events at the school.

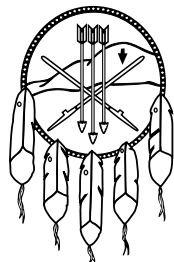
The film visualizes one of many incidences of mistreatment, abuse, and actual murder of Native American children at the hands of European educators in reservation schools, who were hell-bent on "driving the Indian" out of them. Such schools, which were part of the U.S. and Canadian government policy of totally assimilating Native Americans into white culture, removing them from their language, traditions, and ethnic identity, were still operating until the late 20th century.

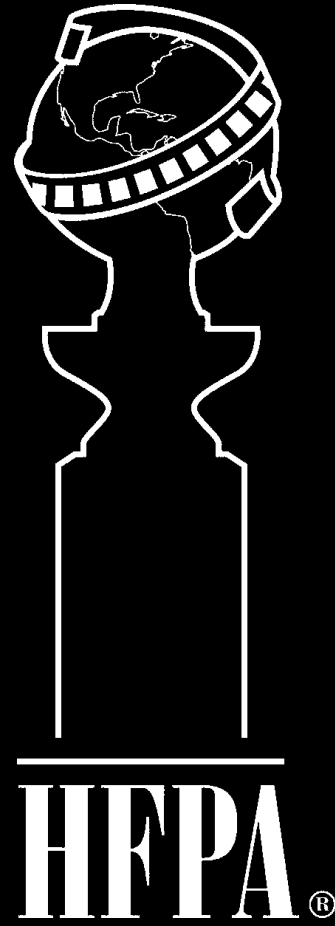
Thanks to Bradley Cooper's recent popularity (he plays a minor role), the film is now being sold as a horror film in Europe under the title *American Evil*. However, the only horrors in this film are the very real crimes committed by a culture convinced of its own superiority, not the Indian spirits who inhabit the film. Indeed, in the Native view, the world of the dead and those of the living exist side by side, each impacting the other, so that the truth has to come out.

Given the attempts to silence Rain and her mother, the film is also an analysis of the way shock treatment and psycho-therapy has been used as a method of social control for both Indians and non-Natives. The film also has autobiographical aspects. Lightning, whose father committed suicide when she was 18, visited her father's boarding school years later, trying to come to grips with his silence, and noticed the many gravestones of students behind the institution. The film was shot at the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation in Minnesota. It has won numerous prizes and has enjoyed distribution by IFC Films.

Jan-Christopher Horak

SAN MANUEL
BAND OF MISSION INDIANS







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Photograph from *Second Weaver* (1966) by Alta Kahn. (See page 25).

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