



30th Anniversary

Red Nation Celebration Institute

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*Celebrating 30 Years of Amplifying Native and Indigenous Voices
in the Entertainment Industry, Indian Country and Beyond*

20
25

Natives In Charge of Their Narrative

The Vision

Thirty years ago, the Red Nation Celebration Institute (RNCI) was founded in Santa Fe, New Mexico, during Indian Market, launching with a groundbreaking concert series and film festival. Fueled by a vision to amplify Native and Indigenous talent on a global scale, founder Joanelle Romero established RNCI with unwavering determination and purpose. With a 48-year career in the entertainment industry, Joanelle didn't wait for an invitation—she created her own platform. Today, RNCI stands as the longest-running, successful Native women-led Indigenous impact media arts and cultural nonprofit enterprise in the entertainment industry, dedicated to elevating and showcasing Native and Indigenous voices worldwide.

Now, 30 years later, the film industry is finally beginning to recognize that Native and Indigenous talent is not only present but bankable, with audiences eager to see our stories. It is time to invest in these voices like never before. While much in the film industry has changed—and continues to evolve—RNCI's role as a steadfast pillar of support for the Native and Indigenous community remains unwavering.

In 2024, RNCI remained steadfast in its commitment to preserving and uplifting Native and Indigenous independent storytelling. Through a cohesive ecosystem of initiatives, programs, and events, RNCI worked tirelessly toward a singular goal: amplifying authentic Native voices and ensuring their stories reach a global audience, while strategically focusing on RNCI's main initiatives 'Native Women and Girls', 'Why We Wear Red' and 'Only One Water'.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible members, filmmakers, and supporters who have empowered us to thrive and uphold our role as a beacon of community support. We invite you to join us in our ongoing efforts to nurture this vital, inclusive community of artists and audiences.

With Respect

**Red Nation Celebration Institute
Board of Directors**



NATIVE WOMEN
IN FILM &
TELEVISION
IN ALL MEDIA



WE ARE RED NATION

**THE AUTHENTIC VOICE OF
AMERICAN INDIAN &
INDIGENOUS CINEMA.**



P 818.665.5753

rednation.com

grants@rednation.com

Building on Our Legacy – Empowering Native & Indigenous Excellence.

Los Angeles is home to the largest Native and Indigenous population in the country!

As Los Angeles embarks on the journey of rebuilding, foundations, county and state funding will understandably shift to support those directly impacted by the fires. While this aid is essential, it will also redirect resources away from organizations like ours, limiting our ability to serve our communities and support artists. The long-term consequences—what we call the “long-range impact”—will be profound and far-reaching.

Throughout history, the arts and artists have been a source of healing, resilience, and unity in times of crisis. Now, more than ever, we need their voices—not only to process the devastation but to inspire hope and renewal in the face of ongoing challenges.

For generations, Native and Indigenous communities have carried the knowledge of how to care for this land, passed down from our ancestors. It is time to listen, to learn, and to recognize that Indigenous wisdom is not just a part of history but a vital force in shaping a sustainable and just future for all.

TOGETHER WE CAN

RNCI Board of Directors

“

The primary difference between the Western and Indigenous ways of life is that Indians experience and relate to a living universe, whereas western people reduce all things, living or not to objects.”

Vine Deloris, Jr.



A PATH FORWARD

COMMITMENT
TO OUR MISSION
WHO TELLS THE STORY MATTERS

We believe that Native and Indigenous stories told on screen have the power to unite us, offering reflections of the worlds we live in and the shared experiences that connect us all.

We support over 574 Native Nations and 1,200 Indigenous communities globally, fostering a vibrant network of artists, audiences, and allies who champion diversity, inclusion, and a collective vision for a more connected and compassionate humanity.

For three decades, we have proudly celebrated and uplifted independent Native and Indigenous artists, building audiences for their invaluable and indispensable work. Today, our mission-driven efforts have grown into the largest Native and Indigenous film festival in the U.S. and the world. Through our diverse programming, initiatives, and events—including Talent Development, Youth Education, Native Women Empowerment, Native Women in Film & Television in All Media, On the Road in Selected Theatres, Red Nation International Film Festival, Native Women in Film Festival, Native Indigenous Student Film Festival, and Red Nation Television Network (the world’s first Native streamer and distribution platform)—we continue to empower and spotlight the voices, stories, and leadership of visual storytellers.

Our work challenges dominant narratives, fosters mutual understanding, and transforms the way audiences perceive the world and one another. Together, we are creating a future where Native and Indigenous representation thrives at the heart of global storytelling.

RNCI’s unwavering commitment has proven to be of immense value—not only to the global community but also to the film industry and Indian Country America. Our staff and board of directors embody a diverse and equitable representation, reflecting our commitment to inclusion both internally and externally.

WHO TELLS THE STORY MATTERS

DEDICATION TO OUR MISSION
IS EVIDENT IN THE COMMUNITY
WE HAVE BUILT TOGETHER

WHO DO WE SERVE		
4,422 Native and Indigenous Content Creators	575+ Native Nations in the United States	1,200 Indigenous Peoples Internationally
	5,000 Members	
PARTICIPANTS		
2,855+ Native Filmmakers	215 Native Female Directors	
575 Participants in Student Youth Education programming		
BOARD OF DIRECTORS		
71% are Women	86% are BIPOC	14% are people with disabilities
UNIQUE VISITORS		
10M +	unique visitors who engaged on rednationtv.com	
5,529,537	unique visitors who engaged on Facebook	
2,814,929	unique reach on Facebook	
53,011	unique visitors who engaged on Instagram	
15,861	unique reach on Instagram	
11,496	unique visitors who engaged on nativewomeninfilm.com	
23,046	unique visitors who engaged on rednationff.com	
4,130	unique visitors who engaged on rednationcele.org	
4,130	Youtube views	
70,952	total followers on social media	

SUPPORT FOR FILMMAKERS

Since 1995, RNCI has been at the forefront of creating a more equitable film industry by championing Native and Indigenous content creators through our Artist Development programs, masterclasses, labs, initiatives, and campaigns.

We provide unwavering support to independent storytellers through our signature projects, including the Red Nation International Film Festival, Native Women in Film & Television in All Media, Native Indigenous Student Academy for Cinematic Arts, RNCI Concert Series and distribution opportunities via the Red Nation Television Network.

We take pride in building an inclusive community of over 2,855 RNCI Fellows, including 215 women directors, who are celebrated worldwide for their artistry and contributions to the industry.

Native and Indigenous talent are historically excluded from the film industry and in philanthropy, especially Native women. Note: While \$5.4 billion is awarded in grants across the United States, less than 1% of the philanthropic grants are awarded to American Indian concerns (many of them administered by nonNative institutions) and the scant funding that reaches Native nonprofits is almost entirely dedicated to dependency issues such as alcoholism, drug addiction and homelessness. Virtually no grants go toward positive interventions, such as cultural empowerment, arts and media.

After such a groundbreaking year, in celebrating and amplifying Native and Indigenous creatives across all platforms in the film industry,

2024 RNCI shattered glass ceilings. **Our new home, AMC The Grove**, 76 Official Selections, 37 directed by women were showcased alongside the biggest blockbuster films of 2024—a monumental first for the Native narrative. This remarkable collection offered audiences a first look from a Native & Indigenous perspective in independent film.



Over the course of the last eight years, we have wholeheartedly championed the screenings of an impressive 215 films directed by women.

This laudable initiative serves as a resounding testament to our unwavering commitment to promoting inclusivity within the film industry. In a remarkable feat, we have even surpassed prominent film festivals like **Toronto, Cannes, Sundance, Tribeca, & the Oscars** in terms of the sheer numbers of women-directed films featured.

Through our Native Film Market, officially endorsed by Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez of District 13, we have achieved significant milestones since its launch a decade ago at the American Film Market. Now proudly hosted at AMC The Grove, the Native Film Market collaborates with esteemed industry partners such as the **Albuquerque Film Office**, the **Location Managers Guild International**, and the **Montana Film Office**. These partnerships continue to drive opportunities for Native and Indigenous storytellers while fostering meaningful connections within the global film industry.

RNCI research demonstrates that when Native stories are told by Native people, they go beyond mere entertainment—they educate, challenge stereotypes, and inspire meaningful policy changes.

For the past three decades, RNCI has not waited for the entertainment industry to recognize our storytelling and talent. Since 1995, RNCI has been actively creating that space for Native voices, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of the entertainment industry. By doing so, we have inspired Native talent to believe in themselves, embrace their creativity, and share their stories with the world.

Native in Charge of Their Narrative!



MAKING HISTORY

Sugarcane director Julian Brave NoiseCat is officially the FIRST Academy Award-nominated Native filmmaker in the Oscars' 97-year history.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY FILMS
SUGARCANE

Best Documentary Feature

SUGARCANE Nominated for Best Documentary Feature Film. Directed by Julian Brave NoiseCat and Emily Kassie, *Sugarcane* film unearths the buried legacy of Indian residential schools, confronting North America's dark past while giving voice to a community's ongoing fight for justice. Now streaming on @disneyplus and @hulu.

SUGARCANE Awarded Best Documentary Feature Film at the 29th Red Nation International Film Festival (RNIFF) this past November. Each year, awards season begins with a rightful spotlight on Native and Indigenous representation, led by RNIFF. For several years, #RNIFF has proudly selected films that go on to receive nominations or wins at prestigious awards ceremonies, including the **Academy Awards, Film Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards, and Golden Globes.**

“

In the 97-year history of the Academy Awards, *Sugarcane* marks a historic milestone as the first documentary film directed by a Native filmmaker, Julian Brave NoiseCat, to receive this nomination.”



Joanelle Romero

CEO of Red Nation International Film Festival, AMPAS member.

NATIVE FILMMAKERS SHORT-LISTED FOR AN ACADEMY AWARD

Within the film industry, and particularly at the Academy Awards, meaningful progress for Native filmmakers began in 2000 when the first Native filmmaker was short-listed for an Academy Award. This milestone marked a crucial step in the long-overdue recognition of Native voices telling their own stories on the world's biggest stage.



'American Holocaust: When It's All Over I'll Still Be Indian' (Doc Short – 2000)

– Director Joanelle Romero, Apache.

'Angakusajaujuq: The Shaman's Apprentice' (Animated Short Film – 2021)

– Director Zacharias Kunuk, Inuk.

'Sugarcane' (Documentary Feature – 2024)

– Directors Julian Brave NoiseCat, Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation and Emily Kassie.

“

In the 97-year history of the Academy Awards, there are now three Native filmmakers who have been shortlisted, a testament to the progress we've made in amplifying Native & Indigenous voices in cinema.

”

Joanelle Romero

Apache Ancestry

Actress/ Director/ Producer

AMPAS Member



ACADEMY
OF MOTION PICTURE
ARTS AND SCIENCES

Shining a Light on Resilience: A Poignant Review of RNCI Red Nation Film Festival

“

The Red Nation International Film Festival **is more than just a showcase of incredible Native cinema**; it's a celebration of our stories, our struggles, and our unwavering spirit. This year, I was particularly moved by the experience, thanks in part to our film, "Native Hope Champions: Riding for the Missing," winning Best in Category.

From the moment we stepped onto the red carpet, we felt embraced by the warmth and energy of the entire Indigenous community. The festival fostered a vibrant atmosphere where filmmakers, actors, and viewers could connect, share experiences, and learn from each other. **The diverse selection of films offered a powerful window** into the richness and complexity of Native life, tackling historical injustices, contemporary challenges, and the enduring strength of our cultures.

The **RNCI Red Nation Film Festival is a must-attend event for anyone who appreciates impactful storytelling and wants to celebrate the power of Indigenous voices**. It's not just a film festival; it's a movement, a platform for amplifying our stories and showcasing the talent within our community.

”

Here are just a few highlights that made this year's festival exceptional:

Culturally relevant programming: The festival expertly curated films that reflected the diversity of Native experiences, from historical dramas to contemporary comedies.

Empowering atmosphere: The festival fostered a strong sense of community and provided a platform for Indigenous voices to be heard.

Outstanding talent: The films showcased the incredible talent of Native actors, directors, and filmmakers from across the globe.

Meaningful awards: Winning Best in Category with "Native Hope Champions: Riding for the Missing" was a powerful validation of our film's message and impact.

Thank you, RNCI Red Nation Film Festival, for providing such a vital platform for Native cinema. We can't wait to see what stories you'll bring to the screen next year!

Frank Blanquet

Yucatec Mayan Ancestry
RNCI Fellow



EDUCATION FOR ARTISTS

RNCI continues to deliver a robust lineup of year-round, in-person, and virtual filmmaker education initiatives, including hands-on workshops, masterclasses, and mentorship opportunities. These programs directly connect filmmakers with talented below-the-line creatives, industry panels, and invaluable networking opportunities.

Native Women Film | TV | Media Labs

Screenwriter Labs

Filmmakers Series | Inclusion & Equality

**Native Indigenous Student Academy
'Student Labs'**

RNCI Masterclasses

RNCI On the Road 'Native Labs'

Theater Labs

Native Comedy Lab

Screenwriter Panels





NATIVE WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION IN ALL MEDIA

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The NWIFTV Festival - The Matriarch of Cinema is held annually during the week leading up to the Academy Awards.

Due to the devastating L.A. wildfires, NWIFTV Festival has been rescheduled to November 2025 at AMC The Grove.

Our hearts go out to all those affected, and we extend our deepest gratitude to the firefighters, first responders, and volunteers working tirelessly to protect our communities.

As we continue rebuilding Los Angeles, the arts and artists are more essential than ever—unifying communities, inspiring resilience, and fostering meaningful connections. Native women have long led the way, standing strong since the arrival of the black robes on our shores. We are the Matriarchs, the life-givers, the storytellers—shaping narratives that honor our past and empower our future.

”

NWIFTV Members



16th NWIFTV Native Women in Film Festival | 2025

**The Matriarchs of Cinema | Women of Influence
Decolonizing The Entertainment Industry**

Presented by **Red Nation Celebration Institute (RNCI)**, NWIFTV Festival has wholeheartedly championed the screenings of an impressive **215 films directed by women**.

This laudable initiative serves as a resounding testament to our unwavering commitment to promoting inclusivity within the film industry. In a remarkable feat, NWIFTV has exceeded prominent film festivals like Toronto, Cannes, Sundance, Tribeca, & the Oscars in terms of the sheer numbers of women-directed films featured.



“

Having my film featured at the **Native Women in Film Festival at AMC The Grove** was a great experience. The Q&A session before our screening created a genuine connection with the audience, emphasizing the importance of our stories. The festival team did an outstanding job promoting our films on social media. Although I missed the brunch, it was a significant gathering of renowned Indigenous actors and filmmakers, a prime opportunity for networking and collaboration I wish I

hadn't missed. This festival serves as an important platform for sharing work of Indigenous women and engaging with a community dedicated to uplifting Indigenous filmmakers.”



Alike Mteuzi

Caddo, Cheyenne and
Arapaho Ancestry
RNCI Fellow



**NATIVE WOMEN
IN FILM &
TELEVISION
IN ALL MEDIA**

L.A. County Supervisor: Lindsay Horvath Leads with Support

RNCI mission is all about partnership. The first Native & Indigenous nonprofit to receive funding from the City of Los Angeles and County, serving over 575 Native Nations in the U.S. and a total of 1,200 globally. RNCI continues to drive meaningful representation and visibility for Native and Indigenous voices in media and the arts.

Founded and created by Joanelle Romero in 1995 and led by Native and Indigenous peoples. RNCI's mission breaks barriers of racism by creating systemic change through film television in all media in order to eliminate American Indian stereotypes.

Our vision for the future of cinema and the arts is one in which Native Indigenous perspectives are authentically pictured, recognized, and valued in a way that promotes strong authentic Native identities, economic outcomes, equity, and wellness for our Indigenous communities.



“

I am so thrilled to be celebrating today so incredible. **It's so meaningful to bring such powerful women together to talk about the importance of using media to uplift**, especially native and indigenous women to uplift the profile but also to tell their stories it's so so critically important and **as a hopeful ally**, and I say hopeful because I think all is a title that is earned not declared I'm so thrilled to be here and support in solidarity, and **to make sure that I use my position** as the chair of the Los Angeles county board of supervisors to uplift the voices of women to elevate the community and to make sure we're demonstrating support.

We are stronger when we work together, and I think that's what inspires me to help build a community of women that is inclusive of all women to make sure that we're understanding each other's stories and we are each other's best especially for young women. I would say that young people are often told that they're gonna be our bright stars in the future **but I often say that our young people are important now your voice does matter now** not 20 years from now or after you're married or you've had your kids you've retired from your career right now and by participating in community it's so critically important that we have your voices right now. **I am the youngest woman ever to serve on the LA county board of supervisors. I'm the youngest ever chair** and it's so important that we use this opportunity to bring more women into leadership to open doors of opportunity and to welcome young people, especially young women.

”

Lindsay Horvath
Los Angeles County Supervisor
and Chair



The Native Women in Media Impact Award is the premier awards event for the Native Indigenous independent film and television community.

Every year, the Native Women in Media Impact Award convenes exceptional talent from the realms of film and television. This prestigious accolade shines a spotlight on Native Indigenous female storytellers, influencers, humanitarians, and artists. The inaugural award was bestowed in 2019, marking the initiation of this noteworthy recognition.

Native Women in Media Impact Award



“

We women are the catalysts for progress, the agents of change. We will continue to fight tirelessly for our rights and to tell our own stories. The women in this room are warriors, like our mothers and grandmothers who shattered barriers, dismantled stereotypes, and paved the way for us and for future generations of storytellers and activists. **Their courage, determination and words of wisdom are clarion calls for us to continue to empower our sisters, daughters, and granddaughters to pursue their dreams and aspirations fiercely and without limitations.**”

Bonnie Abaunza

Impact Producer
NWIFTV Impact Award Recipient



NWIFTV Pre-Oscar Brunch

“

I am very excited to be here to help support the Red Nation Celebration Institute for Native Women and Film luncheon on International Women's day. It's a great day to be here in LA. I'm from Southern California California, **we're here to support a great organization** and Joanelle, a strong Indian woman. My grandmother who was a tribal leader at Sycuan, her name is Evelyn and she passed away about five years ago. She was always a strong woman, head of a very large family, so she was quite a matriarch. **I would say never give up,** always trust your gut and lean on friends and family for support and just really never give up.”

Cody Martinez

Chairman Sycuan
Band of the
Kumeyaay Nation



“

I attended last year's brunch and was blown away by the mother of one of the filmmaker's who closed the afternoon with a prayer. It was the first time I felt I was hearing the indigenous language of this land being spoken. The room became silent. There was a mutual feeling of profound gratitude and respect for all the women present...

A special shared moment in time.”



Erica Gimpel
Actress | Filmmaker

NWIFTV – Call to Action

The NWIFTV Initiative is dedicated to amplifying the voices of our women, life-givers, and matriarchs through the power of storytelling. Now more than ever, it is essential that we come together to elevate and support Native and Indigenous women writers across all media platforms.

Why We Wear Red

Media coalition initiative aimed at raising global awareness about the glaring lack of inclusion of Native Women in Film & Television in all media

Only One Water

Addressing Climate Action Through a Native and Indigenous Perspective

Native Women Write

An intensive script writing lab

Partners

National Endowment
for the Arts
Novo Foundation
AMC Network
Albuquerque Film Office

Screenwriters



Loretta Todd



Heather Dawn



Julianna Maggrah

AMC Networks



Angela Molloy
WEtv



Adam Koehler
IFC



Mark Ward
RLJE Films

Red Nation Television Network



Joanelle Romero
CEO Founder Red Nation
Television Network



Shelly Goldstein
Writer, Script Doctor



Cyndy McCrossen
Albuquerque Film Office

“

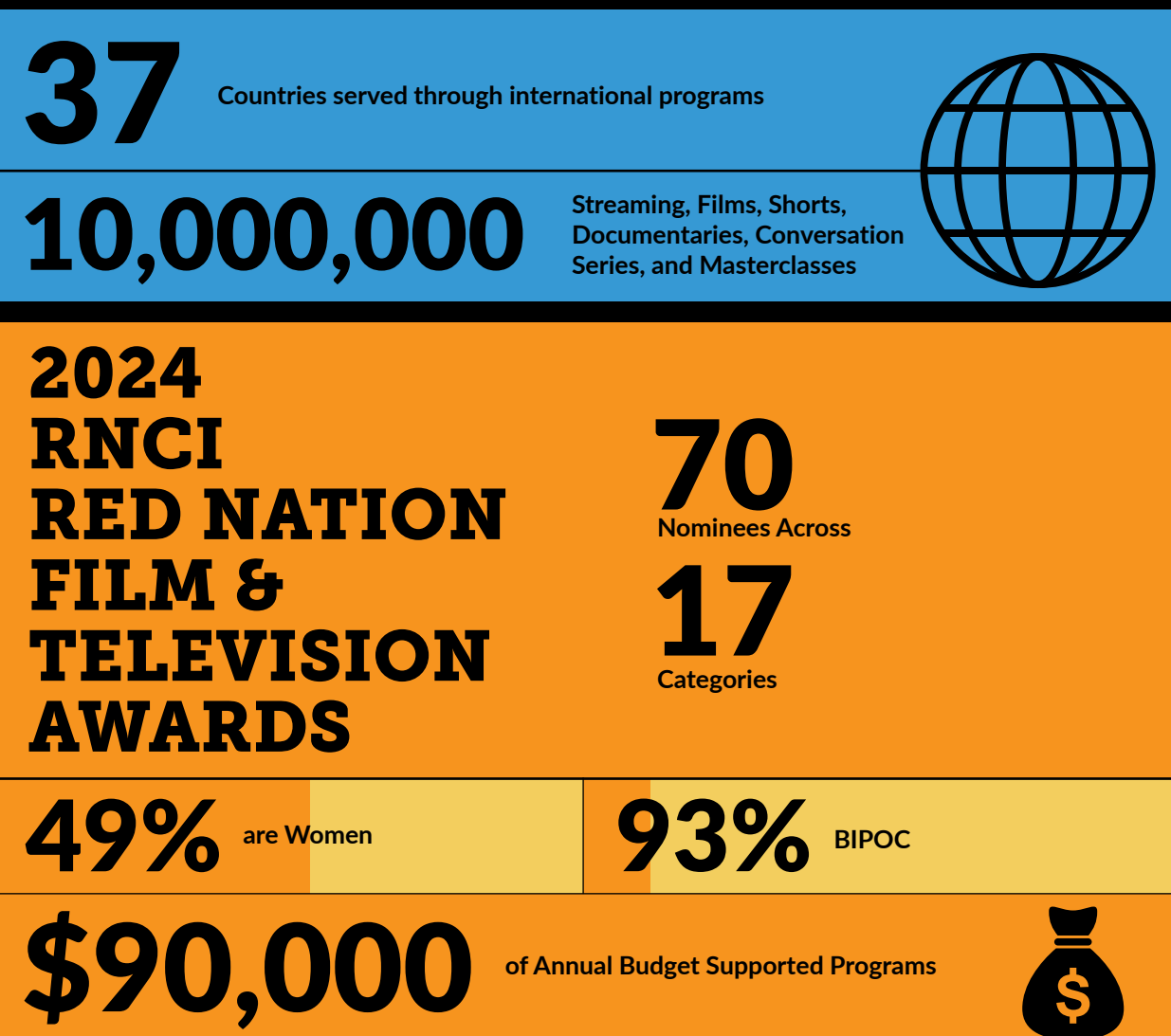
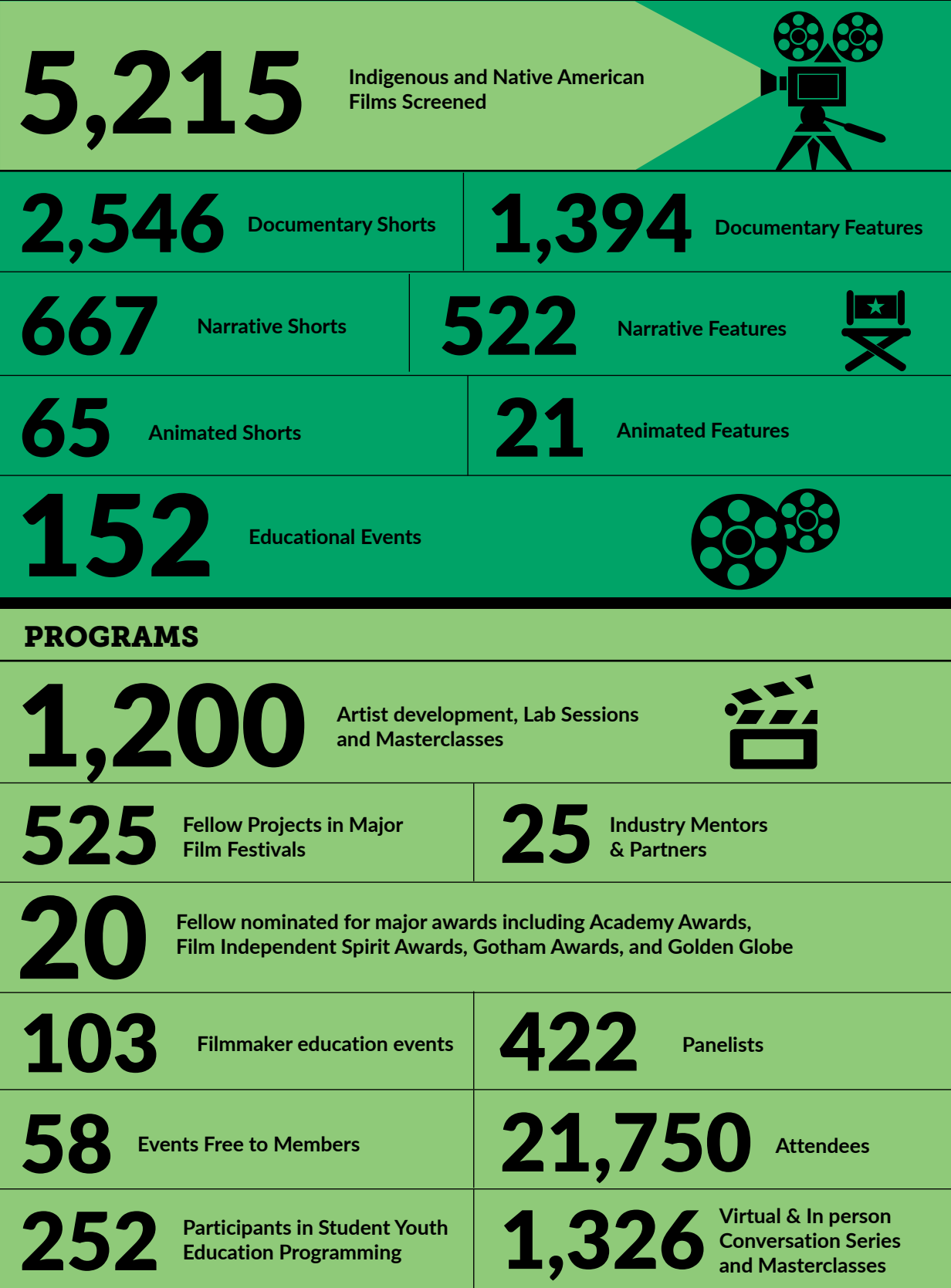
It is a revolutionary act that I exist at all because we were meant to be eradicated and we have been meant to be invisible.”

Irene Bedard

Alaska Native
Village of Koyuk
RNCI Fellow

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OUR IMPACT



RNCI Fellows are distinguished filmmakers chosen to participate in exclusive year-round programs and events, fostering growth, collaboration, and industry connections.



The Creative Enterprise by Natives Delivering to All People
the Stories that Shape Our World.

Empowering Native & Indigenous Storytellers

Red Nation Television Network holds the distinction of being the world's first streaming company, predating not only Netflix but all others, and stands as the longest-running Native Indigenous television network. The station delivers distinctive content encompassing Native Indigenous culture, heritage, education, entertainment, and lifestyle.

[Subscribe Today](#)

The RNCI Red Nation Awards—the first and only Native awards show broadcast live globally—continues to gain recognition with the support of A-list talent across the industry.

In 2020, RNIFF achieved a groundbreaking milestone with two major announcements in *Variety*, cementing the Red Nation International Film Festival and RNCI Red Nation Awards alongside prestigious festivals such as **Tribeca, TIFF, Sundance, the Academy Awards, and Cannes** in industry trade publications.

Yet, despite this historic achievement, *Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *IndieWire* have yet to fully support and amplify RNCI's impact. It's time for mainstream media to acknowledge, celebrate, and uplift Native and Indigenous voices in entertainment.

Read [RNCI GUIDE TO THE NATIVE INDIGENOUS NARRATIVE](#)



ACADEMY
OF MOTION PICTURE
ARTS AND SCIENCES



ACADEMY OF TELEVISION
ARTS & SCIENCES



the
gotham
AWARDS

FILM
INDEPENDENT
SPIRIT
AWARDS



FESTIVAL DE CANNES



Expanding The Native Indigenous Narrative

RNCI Announces Major Expansion of the Native
Indigenous Film Market on Its 10th Anniversary

Presented by

Home to the Largest Selection
of Native Indigenous Films
and Projects.

The Native Indigenous Film Market is a pivotal space where films find their way into the global market, and partnerships are forged with a strong foundation of Native voices telling their own stories. It's where distribution meets an emerging market new to the industry, paving the way for Native and Indigenous cinematic storytelling to become the norm on the silver screen.

[Learn More](#)



RNCI | Indigenous
Film
Commissions
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON NATIVE LAND





Native Film Market 'The Pitch is Back'

Four filmmakers with 'works in progress' will pitch their films to industry insiders, producers, and investors, aiming to secure investment. Each filmmaker will have 15 minutes to present their project to film distribution companies and funders.

The Pitch Is Back © is copyright of the Red Nation Celebration Institute



Success Stories



RUNNING EAGLE

Director Konrad Tho Fiedler

A young American Indian girl, on the run from the North Dakota oil patch, is determined to get back to her home in Blackfeet country, Montana.



BLOOD MEMORY

Director Drew Nicholas

A Story of Removal and Return



END OF THE LINE: THE WOMEN OF STANDING

Director Shannon Kring

A group of Indigenous women risks their lives to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which jeopardizes their land, water and entire way of life.



11 DAYS THE SEARCH MISTY UPHAM

Director Charles Upham

A documentary film trailer about the search for Misty Upham. She went missing on October 5, 2014 and was found dead 11 days later by friends and family. The police did not help with the search and rescue and they refused to investigate her unsolved murder. She was one of a 1000+ missing Native American women that they never search for.



LAST RIDE

Director / Producer Neta Rhyne

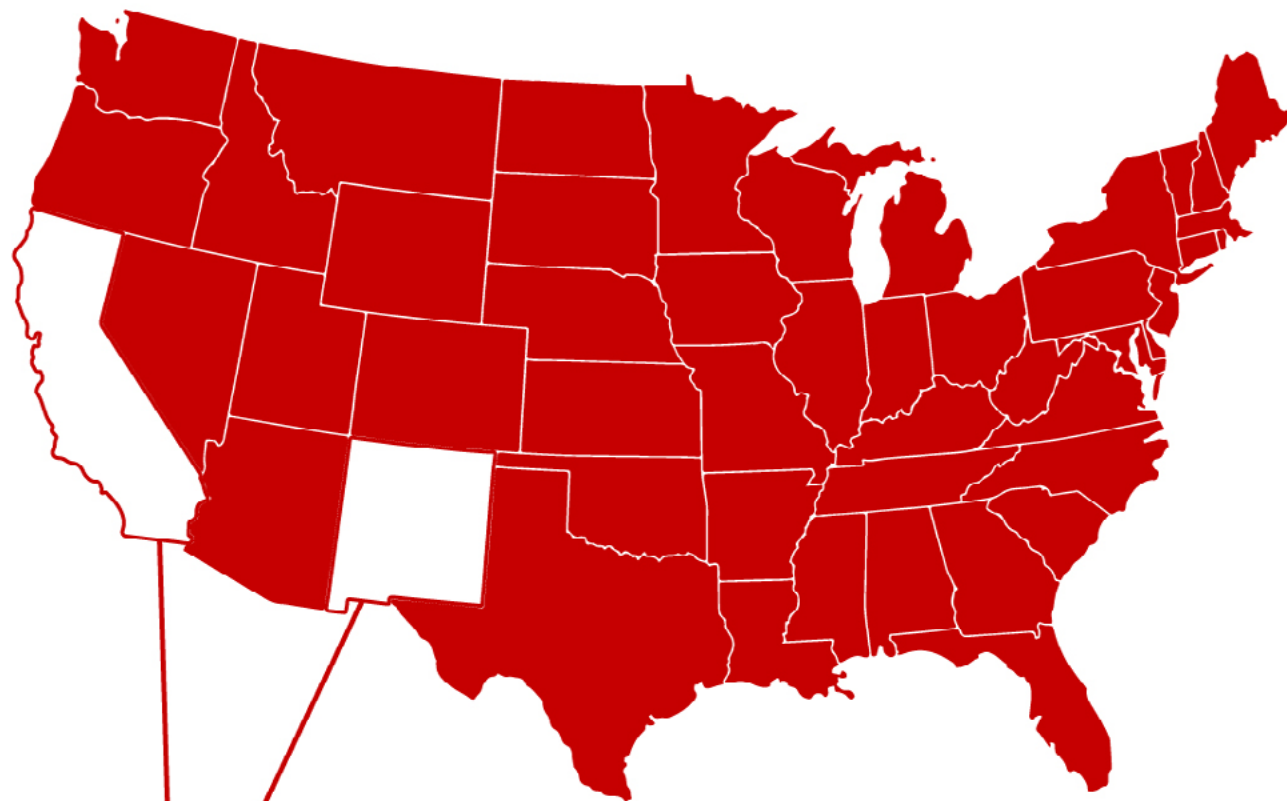
A Direct Descendant of The "Trail Of Tears", Cherokee woman's personal journey that informs and reflects into the world of horse slaughter and her goal of creating awareness to the spirit of the Horse through multi-cultural participation and co-creation through all the ARTS.

RNCI Indigenous Film Commissions

Red Nation Film Commission's provide directories for filmmaker use. The first-of-its-kind the world's first Native Indigenous crew directory, consultants directory, non-native services across Indian Country.

Founded by Joanelle Romero in 2015 under the parent organization Red Nation Celebration Institute.

[Learn More](#)



RNCI | Indigenous
Film
Commissions
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON NATIVE LAND



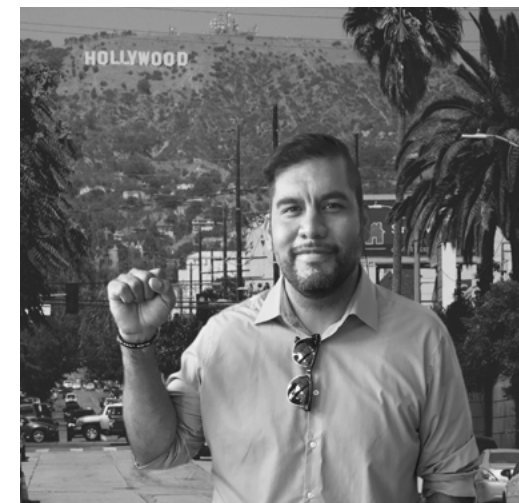
RNCI CREW DIRECTORY

Provides film and television productions access to thousands of below-the-line crew members from native and Indigenous backgrounds.

A RNCI Crew community founded by Joanelle Romero in 2015. The World's First Crew Directory.

Where Community Meets Culture Think Globally

[Join Now](#)



Officially ENDORSED by Councilmember **Hugo Soto Martinez, District 13** Los Angeles is home to the largest urban American Indian and Alaska Native population in the country, with over 200 tribes, including the original peoples of this land: the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash.

California Native Indigenous Film Commission

Next Generation of Filmmakers

The Native Indigenous Student Academy for Cinematic Arts is a program of Red Nation Celebration Institute amplifying emerging Native Indigenous student filmmakers. Each year, college, university and high school film students from all over the world compete for awards and cash grants, with films being judged in the following categories: Animation, Documentary, Live Action Narrative and Alternative/Experimental.

Other programs include RNCI Film Labs 'Mentorship' and Screenwriters'.

RNCI reimagined the contributions that Native and Indigenous Students have brought to the table through their lens hence Native Indigenous Student Academy for Cinematic Arts was born.

[Learn More](#)



“

I am an Indigenous filmmaker and I'm coming on here to share my experience with the Native Indigenous Student Academy for Cinematic Arts and I'm also gonna come here and speak on behalf of our Native youth, last year as you know, I created two films *Deprived* and *The Sound of Drums* which were both entered into this film festival and they both won which I am very happy about that - **thank you because of the celebrations and this exposure my school district in Gallup, New Mexico** have taken filmmaking so seriously with youth in particular and they've brought so many tools to Indigenous youth on the Rez, **being here alone has given me more confidence as an Indigenous Filmmaker, the fact that all of us are in this room right now celebrating our accomplishments as Indigenous people is so amazing** and as an Indigenous individual, my absolute dream is to make sure my language and culture is being shown in an accurate and positive light. **I really think it's so important that we give the next generation** those tools to keep going because this right here is so amazing and we have to make sure it never stops. I want to see more of us out there, thank you. ”

Megan James

Diné Ancestry
RNCI Student Academy Fellow



CELEBRATING NATIVE INDIGENOUS EXCELLENCE

AWARDS SEASON - RNIFF | RNCI Red Nation Awards kicks off the awards season every November, celebrating excellence in Native Indigenous cinema.

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Hollywood Has Oscar, Broadway has Tony, Television has the Emmy, and Indian Country has the RNCI Red Nation Film Award of Excellence™

Hollywood & Indian Country's Biggest Night for American Indian & Indigenous Voices™ Cementing Native Indigenous at the forefront of the Entertainment Industry™

“

The Red Nation Film Festival was nothing short of incredible. I've met so many amazing people, forged lifelong friendships, and sparked future collaborations that I can't wait to see unfold. This festival truly showcased the best of Indigenous talent. Here's to celebrating our stories and the community we have built together!”

Each November, in celebration of American Indian Heritage Month, the entertainment community and film fans around the world turn their attention to RNCI Red Nation Awards. Interest and anticipation builds as we lead up to the RNCI Red Nation Awards LIVE telecast on Red Nation Television Network, when hundreds of movie lovers tune in to watch the glamorous ceremony and learn who will receive the highest honors in native filmmaking.



Cody Lefthand

Member of the
Eden Valley Stoney
Nakoda First Nation
RNCI Fellow



The Red Nation Statuette

Red Nation Statuette has positioned itself as the most recognized American Indian trophy in the world, cementing Native Indigenous Image in the forefront of the Entertainment Industry.

It became apparent to create a statuette to honor outstanding moviemaking achievements by Native Indigenous filmmakers and thereby encourage excellence in all facets of motion picture production in 2009.

Red Nation Celebration Institute (RNCI) created the *Red Nation Film Award* and tapped New Mexico sculptor artist Phillip Mangas Haozous, of the Fort Sill Chiricahua Apache people (N'de) son of the late Apache sculptor artist Allan Houser to design "The Red Nation Statuette".

RNCI Red Nation Film Award was designed in three dimensions – and the world-renowned statuette was born.

and the Winners are... 2024

Best Picture

The Birds Who Fear Death, Sanjay Patel, Producer

Achievement in Directing

Sanjay Patel for *The Birds Who Fear Death*

Outstanding Lead Performance by an Actress

Carmen Moore for *The Birds Who Fear Death*

Outstanding Lead Performance by an Actor

Adam Beach for *The Birds Who Fear Death*

Outstanding Supporting Performance by an Actress

Tanaya Beatty for *The Birds Who Fear Death*

Outstanding Supporting Performance by an Actor

Nathaniel Arcand for *The Birds Who Fear Death*

Best Original Screenplay

Sanjay Patel for *The Birds Who Fear Death*

Best Documentary Feature

Sugarcane

Best International Documentary Feature

YINTAH

Best Doc Short

Kumeyaay Land

Best Live Action

Lumbeeland

Best Animated Short

Dangerously Ever After

Best Episodic & Television Series

True Detective Night Country

Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama, Comedy, Limited Series

Kali Reis for *True Detective Night Country*

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama, Comedy, Limited Series

John Leguizamo for *The Green Veil*

Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama, Comedy, Limited Series

Ellyn Jade for *Little Bird*

Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama, Comedy, Limited Series

Eric Schweig for *Little Bird*

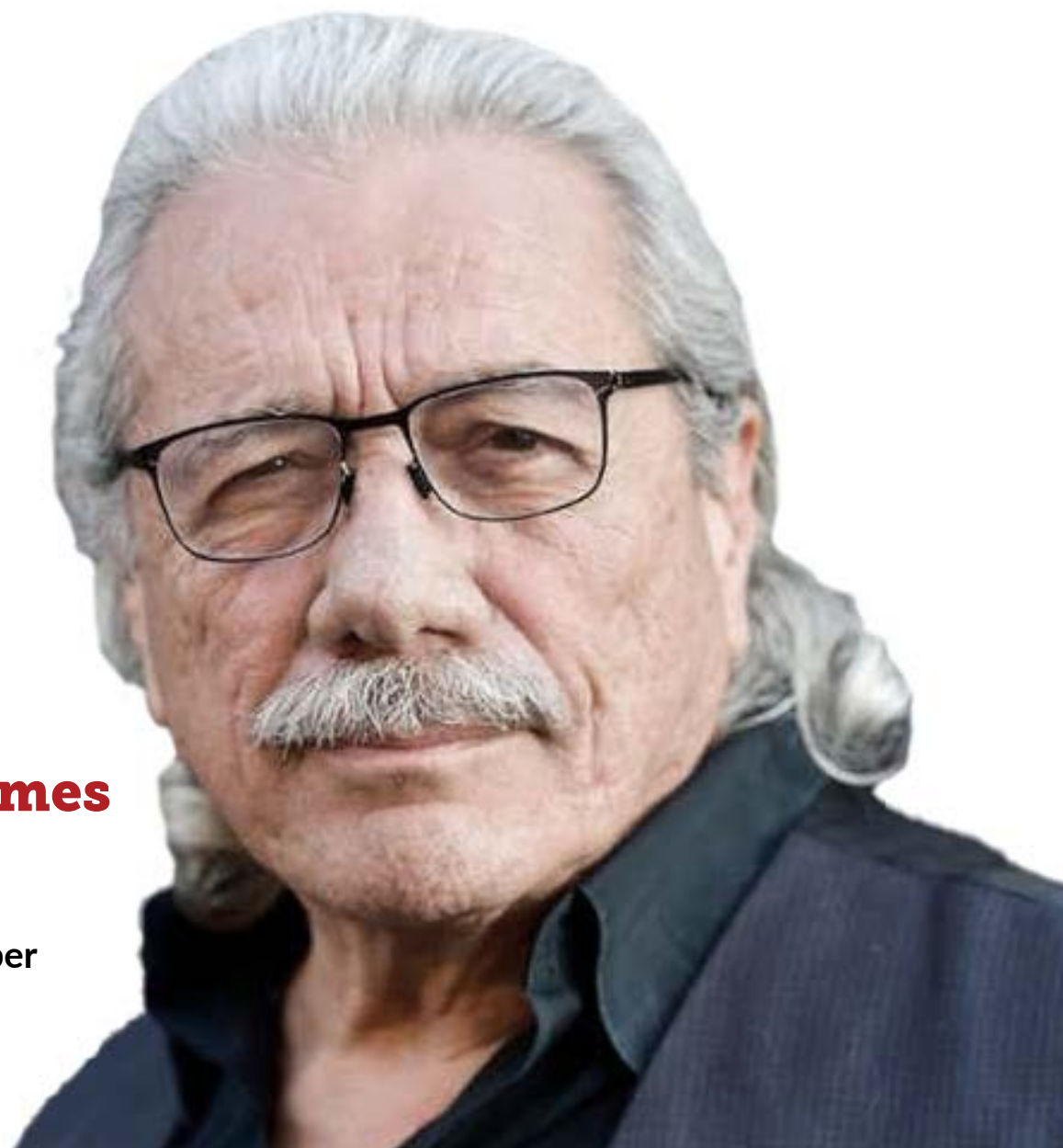
“

It's an honor and privilege to stand here at this film festival. It's inarguably one of the most important film festivals in this country because it allowed us to see ourselves in a manner that usually we never do and to Joanelle Romero and everyone who has made it possible for us to be here. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.”

Edward James Olmos

Actor

RNCI Board Member

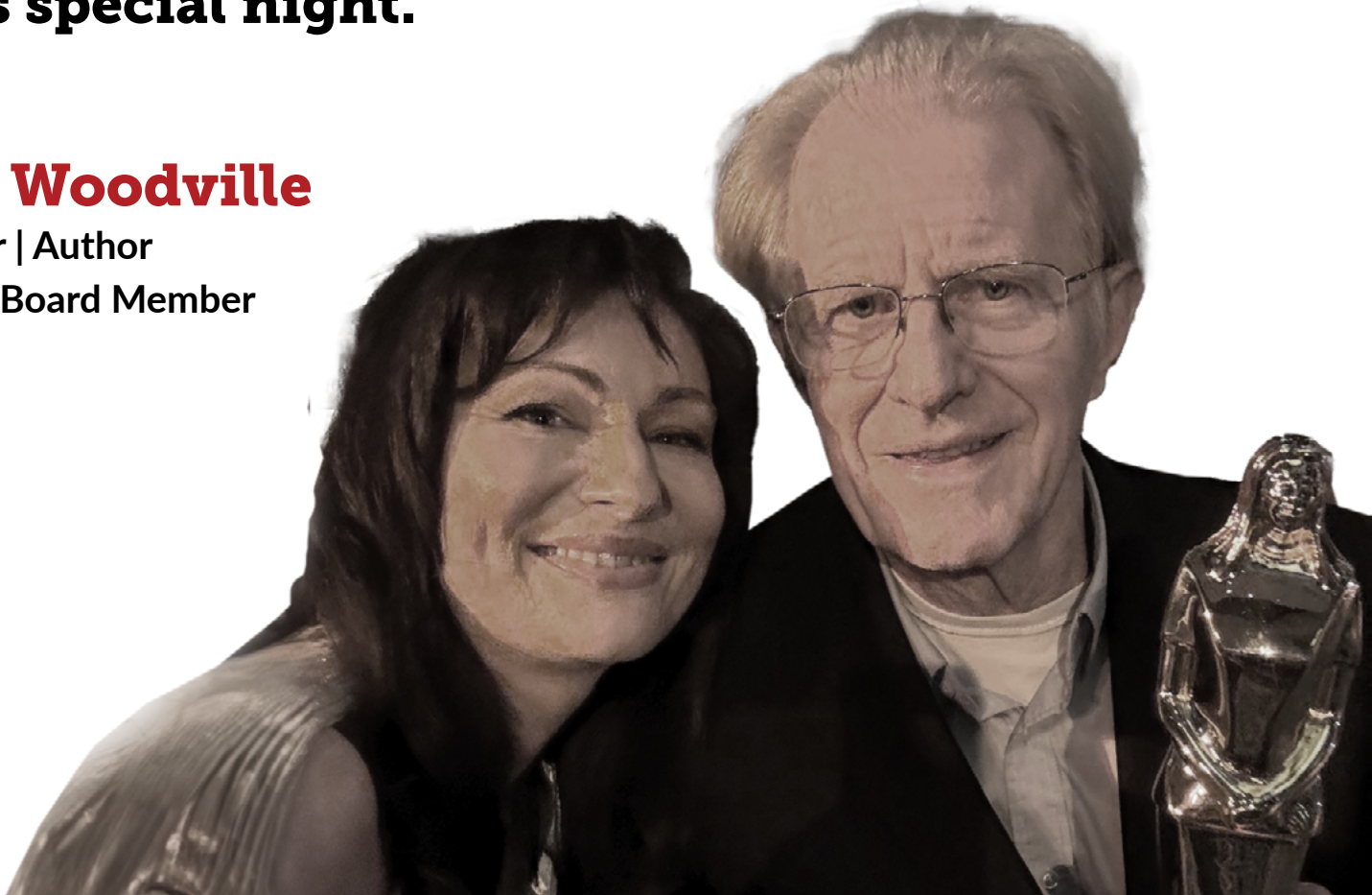


“

It was such a thrill to present the Edward Albert Jr. award—along w Marlon Brando’s daughter, Rebecca Brando—to Ed Begley Jr to thank him for his 50 years of planetary stewardship & environmental activism at the **29th Annual Red Nation International Film Festival awards ceremony**. My father worked for years on the city council to save sacred land and protect indigenous rights. And Ed has been a tireless champion of sustainability for 50 years. To have been able to share some of my songs & perform as well—incredible. A true honor to be part of this special night.

Tai Woodville

Singer | Author
RNCI Board Member



**Red Nation
Awards Honors**

RNCI Red Nation International Film Festival created is special recognition, dedicated in honoring and named after Marlon Brando, Chief Dan George, Edward Albert Jr., Edward R Roybal and RNCI Lifetime Achievement Award. These prestigious awards are exclusive to Red Nation Celebration Institute.

The Marlon Brando Award, Chief Dan George Award, Edward Albert Jr. Award, Edward R Roybal Award have all been endorsed by family members.



American Indian Heritage Month: In the City of Los Angeles



Collective Sovereignty

Red Nation Celebration Institute created and founded the **American Indian Heritage Month in the City/County of Los Angeles in 2005** and **officially recognized in 2006 by the State of California** and the City of Los Angeles and in the State of New Mexico 2008.

Red Nation Celebration Institute (RNCI) is the first American Indian & Indigenous nonprofit enterprise organization to be **funded by The City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department in 2000**.

That same year, Joanelle Romero initiated discussions with Maggie Reese, former manager of the **Department of Cultural Affairs in Los Angeles**, to establish **American Indian Heritage Month in the City of Los Angeles**, which officially launched in 2005. Additionally, in 2000, Joanelle's nonprofit, Red Nation Celebration Institute, became the **first Native Indigenous organization to receive funding from the City of Los Angeles**, further solidifying its impact and leadership in advocating for Native representation in arts and culture.

In 2007, Red Nation Celebration Institute made history by launching the first-ever Powwow and American Indian Parade in downtown Los Angeles, marking the grand opening of Los Angeles State Historic Park. This groundbreaking event brought Native culture, tradition, and community to the heart of the city, setting a precedent for Indigenous representation in Los Angeles.

Learn more about RNCI's contributions to American Indian Heritage Month and its impact on elevating Native and Indigenous voices.



[Learn More](#)

RNIFF 'On the Road'

New Mexico's Premier Native & Indigenous Film Festival
The Red Nation International Film Festival (RNIFF) is the world's largest Native Indigenous film festival and the longest-running of its kind in New Mexico. Presented annually by RNCI each November, RNIFF has been empowering Native Indigenous storytellers since 1995.

The Red Nation International Film Festival is the connection to cultural bridging of independent Native Indigenous artists and audiences, amplifying emerging voices and perspectives for the Native Indigenous storyteller.

RNIFF 2025

'In Selected Theatres Across the Country'

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Spokane, Washington



RNCI

With a membership of over 5,000 global film industry artists and leaders, an acclaimed film festival and curated film collection, and world-renowned awards recognizing cinematic excellence, the RNCI Red Nation Awards stands as a beacon of expertise and influence, unmatched in its reach and impact.

Become A Member

Are you a part of the film industry? Whether you're an actor, director, producer, screenwriter, film/TV crew member, dancer, musician, or recording artist, we extend an invitation for you to become a valued member of our organization. If you're committed to acknowledging and promoting the Native and Indigenous narrative in the entertainment industry, join us today and become a partner in amplifying these stories to the world. TOGETHER WE CAN make a substantial impact and elevate diverse voices to the forefront of storytelling.

Inclusivity and equality are our top priorities!

Join Now



**To join us in supporting our mission,
please visit**

Sponsorship Opportunities Contact

Linda Tenequer
partnerships@rednation.com

RNCI is the only nonprofit organization in the world that preserves and showcases 30 years of archival footage, celebrating the work and legacy of Native and Indigenous creatives.

Our research shows that when Native stories are told by Native voices, they not only entertain but also educate, challenge stereotypes, and influence real-world attitudes and policies.

Red Nation Celebration Institute is a Federally Recognized 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. EIN 95-4015181.

All contributions are tax deductible. No goods or services will be provided in exchange for the contribution.

“Thank you for supporting RNCI, I hope that you will continue to support this wonderful organization so that it can continue to inspire folks and that all of you will continue to share your creativity with the world and that more youth folks can learn from you, be inspired by you and have success into the future.”



**54th United States
Secretary of
the Interior
Deb Haaland**

CELEBRATING OUR RNCI FELLOWS



The Future is Indigenous

OUR mission to break barriers of racism

by creating systemic change through film

television in all media in order to eliminate

American Indian stereotypes. Our vision

for the future of cinema and the arts is one

in which Native Indigenous perspectives

are authentically pictured, recognized,

and valued in a way that promotes strong

authentic Native identities, economic

outcomes, equity, and wellness for our

Indigenous communities.

