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N.M. Film Office Announces Recipients of the Senator John Pinto Memorial Fund Awards

*Native American Filmmakers receive grants to help open new doors
into the film industry*

SANTA FE, N.M. - Recipients of the newly created Senator John Pinto Memorial Fund (SJP) for Native filmmakers include members from several tribal affiliations, exploring topics including missing women, ancient healing, modern day culture clashes, and entrepreneurship, New Mexico Film Office (NMFO) Director Amber Dodson announced today.

The 2019 legislation provided \$100,000 for SJP in honor of the late Senator John Pinto and his relentless support for the Native American Film Industry. Twenty \$5,000 grants were awarded to Native film students and filmmakers living and working in New Mexico. Funds can be used toward pre-production, production, and post-production. Grantees must be registered members of one of the tribes or pueblos of New Mexico.

“All of these filmmakers expressed an enduring need to be the bearers of their own stories, and no longer accept the inconsistency of having stories told about their culture from an outsider’s viewpoint,” Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. “That’s the legacy of Senator John Pinto and why we are honored to highlight this work.”

“Supporting diversity in the film industry is vital to expanding diversity on a larger scale, as film is a cornerstone of our culture and history. Each of these filmmakers has an essential story to tell, and the Senator John Pinto Memorial Fund awards will help bring these stories to the screen,” NMFO Director Amber Dodson said. “We are immensely thankful to the late Senator John Pinto and his granddaughter Senator Shannon Pinto, and truly thrilled to support diverse storytelling and filmmaking in New Mexico.”

The following projects were approved for SJP funds:

Chindi, submitted by Robert Mesa (Navajo and Soboba)

“Chindi” tells a futuristic story about a woman in the year 2050 who sends her deceased husband’s mobile devices to a company that recreates an AI version of him using his data. However, after a few days she begins to feel like something is dangerously amiss.

Diyin ~ Holy Project, submitted by Carrie House (Diné)

“Diyin ~ Holy Project” is House’s creation of an indigenous Diné self-narrative. It is a personal and spiritual journey through the multimedia fine art of the filmmaker’s late brother, Conrad House. The film will be an experimental documentary of the deep

revelations of Carrie and Conrad's spiritual connection with the Holy People, within Navajo worldview.

Dream Touch Believe, submitted by Jenna Winters (Santa Clara Pueblo)

"Dream Touch Believe" is the story of Santa Clara Pueblo sculptor Michael Naranjo. As a young man, Naranjo lost his eyesight in the Vietnam War, but not his vision. The sculptor fought critics, social and racial stereotypes, and a disability to achieve his lifelong dream of becoming a world-renowned sculptor.

Naranjo is Winters father. "For me, this is not a passion project. Preserving this story is my duty," Winters said.



Fulfilling a lifelong dream, Michael Naranjo examines the monumental plaster sculpture, End of the Trail. A film crew captures the historical meeting as part of the documentary "Dream Touch Believe." 2019.

Feeding Po'Pay, submitted by Geoffrey Kie (Pueblo of Laguna)

"Feeding Po'Pay" is a journey to learn of Pueblo lifeways through an Indigenous Food Revolution. This project will be an expansion upon Kie's initial film, which was a peek into the food insecurity that exists in his community. As a Pueblo person, Kie seeks to encourage passion, fight, and resilience among his people, especially in the youth.

Heroes of the West, submitted by Lydell Mitchell (Diné)

"Heroes of the West" tells the story of two Navajo kids in 1987 Albuquerque. Jason and Donny are just two nerdy kids from the wrong side of the tracks that have been best friends since kindergarten. After discovering a precious resource in the boys' school bathroom during lunch, they fight to keep their claim and team up with a ragtag group of kids in order to make things right.

Mitchell says that his work shows modern indigenous peoples navigating an alien world.

Homeopathy for Native America (working title), submitted by Leahn Marie Cox (Navajo)

This film seeks to show Cox's view of the parallels between Homeopathy and Native American traditional healing wisdom. Understanding these parallels, Cox explains, can re-inspire interest in Native forms of healing and can help find solutions for highly traumatized and impoverished communities.

Just Kids, submitted by Forrest Goodluck (Diné)

"Just Kids" is a film based in Albuquerque. It follows the lives of three young men, best friends in high school, just coming back from their first year of college. It's a coming-of-age story about culture and a look at how we form our own identity. Goodluck draws on his experience growing up in Albuquerque and the people in his life to lovingly create this film that explores the characters' journeys.

Lloyd "Kiva" New: An American Entrepreneur, submitted by Nathaniel Fuentes (Santa Clara Pueblo)

A feature documentary about Lloyd “Kiva” New, focusing on the years that established him as the first Indigenous fashion designer with the “Kiva” Brand and as an indigenous entrepreneur.

Marlon, submitted by Kevin Brown (Navajo)

“Marlon” is the heartbreaking tale of an older, sensitive Native American artist trying to find his path. It’s based on a true story, a story often overlooked in today’s society, and it provides no easy answers.



Actor and Filmmaker, Forrest Goodluck, "Just Kids," was among the first selected for the Sundance Institutes Native American Full Circle Fellowship for film directing.

Meow Loses a Button (working title), submitted by Melissa Henry (Navajo)

“Meow Loses a Button” is a short animation about a moccasin-wearing cat from New Mexico who learns to let go of possessions. When Meow loses a shiny button from his shoe, he suffers from anxiety and emotional distress while surviving many adventures in his search. Meow eventually realizes that he can find peace by being in harmony with nature, letting go of things, and learning to share with others.

Henry plans to complete this project with Navajo and English voiceovers so that she can share it under a Creative Commons License. In this way, Henry explains, the general public and educators can watch and use it at home and in the classroom for free.

Mother’s Day, submitted by Natalie Benally (Navajo)

Based on her own experience as an abuse survivor, Benally has created the short film, "Mother's Day," about Natalie, who is going on her first date with hopes that she can begin to start her life again after a long-term, abusive relationship. Through the course of the date she discovers what she needs to truly walk away.

No Love 4 Lamb, submitted by Jonathan Sims (Pueblo of Acoma)

The feature film, “No Love 4 Lamb” is the story of a “below average” Native Navajo guy who is unlucky in love. He finds a girl, but will need to be saved from her and his deathly aversion to mutton. Akin to the typical 30-year-old virgin story, but with some major cultural differences.

A Public Service Announcement Video for Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIW), submitted by Cameron L. Martinez Jr. (Taos Pueblo and Laguna Pueblo)

The goal of the video is to bring awareness and information about the plight of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, with specific focus on New Mexico and the Southwest. Martinez hopes to imbue the audience with an understanding of the magnitude and severity of the situation and move them from awareness to action. Upon completion, the PSA will be given to the MMIW Taskforce of New Mexico and the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women.

Martinez says that his ultimate goal is to “create film and television that would make his Ancestors proud.”



Charine Gonzales, director & writer of "River Bank." Her goal is to help enrich Pueblo youth's interest in the Tewa language and promote forms of cultural preservation, keeping in mind the respect for her people.

Re-Indigenizing Minds, submitted by Colleen Gorman (Diné)

“Re-Indigenizing Minds” is a series, hosted by Roger Cultee and Colleen Gorman, which teaches a unique Indigenous perspective of the cosmos using sacred calendars, geometry, art, math, science, and knowledge shared across Native cultures. Gorman brings her experience as both artist and teacher to this project.

River Bank, submitted by Charine Gonzales (San Ildefonso Pueblo)

"River Bank" is a Pueblo Narrative Short Film about two fictional characters from the San Ildefonso Pueblo. Gonzales describes it as a “Robin Hood story where Tisha and Saya give to the River and the River gives back to the people.”

Rez Dogs, submitted by Steven Tallas (Navajo)

“Rez Dogs” is a coming-of-age feature film about young people dealing with the problems of living on the reservation, and later coming to the realization that the reservation would always be home. The film was made on a low budget with funds received through a Facebook fundraising campaign. The SJP grant will be used to complete post-production on the film.

Rude Girl, submitted by Joshua Zunie (Zuni Pueblo)

“Rude Girl” tells the story of Oaklynn, a half Native American and half white teenager, dealing with self-identity issues. She connects with her grandmother in an enchanted desert called Summerland to become a superhero and face a longtime bully.



Dawning Pollen Shorty, "Three Generations: A Family of Artists," celebrates her Taos-based multi-generational artistic roots.

Three Generations: A Family of Artists, submitted by Dawning Pollen Shorty (Taos Pueblo/Sioux and Diné)

Dawning Pollen Shorty was raised at Taos Pueblo in the shadow of the Taos Mountain. Her mother (Track family) is Taos Pueblo/Sioux and her father (Shorty family) is Diné.

“Three Generations” is a short documentary film that chronicles the lives and histories of the Track/Shorty family through almost one hundred years. The family still continues a tradition of inspiration and creation that has stretched through three generations working as models, potters, sculptors, painters, and musicians.

Together, submitted by Stanley Bain Jr. (Navajo)

“Together” follows Kelly and Mason, both alcoholics, one in recovery and the other still falling prey to his deadly addiction. When Mason reaches out for help, they reconnect one night after months apart.

Bain explains his approach as a filmmaker: “Being a filmmaker provides the opportunity to tell a good story with great characters to provide that escape, or even make an impact beyond that escape, on someone’s life, as it did for me.”

Yazhi Boy, submitted by Daniel Edward Hyde (Navajo and Belizean)

“Yazhi Boy” is a comedy about an unemployed Navajo millennial who sets off on a spiritual quest in the Chuska Mountains as civilization crumbles in the world down below.

Exploring the unique experience of the Navajo Millennial, “Yazhi Boy” considers how one might find their own path toward traditional culture, while still following the time-honored tradition of adaptation.

"Thank you to the New Mexico Film Office and all those who helped make this a reality. I appreciate all the applicants and encourage their continued participation," Sen. Shannon Pinto said. "Congratulations to the Native American filmmaker awardees, I hope your endeavors lead to extraordinary experiences and long-lasting relationships that change lives for you and the underrepresented communities."

"I am very grateful to [Senator] John Pinto for creating this grant for Native American filmmakers in New Mexico," filmmaker Leahn Marie Cox (*Homeopathy for Native America*) said. "It takes effort to appreciate traditional indigenous knowledge in the world today. I do not lament this, but see this serious challenge as unique and demanding."

The SJP applications were reviewed by judges Chris Eyre, Nanobah Becker, Ramona Emerson, and Beverly Morris.

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A division of the [New Mexico Economic Development Department](#)



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