



THE TIME IS NOW

THE POWER OF NATIVE REPRESENTATION IN ENTERTAINMENT

A Guide for Industry Professionals

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductionp. 3

How and Why to Use This Guide

Be a Champion of Native Representation and Stories.....p. 5

The Impact of Representation

Audiences Want More

The Data Shows Room to Improve

Understanding the Basics.....p. 9

Terminology and Definitions

We Are Still Here

Be a Myth Buster

Avoid Offensive Language

Best Practices in Storytelling..... p. 19

Creating Authentic Content p. 23

Combating Negative Stereotypes

Improving the Representation of Native Women

What's In And What's Out in Native Representation

Avoiding Cultural Appropriation

Understanding and Respecting Cultural Protocols

Common Questions

Intellectual Property and Permissions

Case Study: Sámi Culture and Frozen II

Best Practices When Working with Native Communities.....p. 37

Protocols for Shooting on Native Lands

Tapping into Native Talent p. 31

How Studios and Production Companies Can Promote Native Stories

Supporting Native Storytellers

Breaking Out of the Consultant Model

Compensation Matters

Conclusion..... p. 46

Additional Resources p. 47

Citationsp. 48

Photo Credits p. 49



Michael Greyeyes, *True Detective* (HBO)



Julian Dénison, *Hunt For the Wilderpeople* (2016)



Jana Schmieding, *Rutherford Falls* (Peacock)

INTRODUCTION

Native and Indigenous peoples live, thrive, and lead across the United States. We are a living and true history of resistance, resilience, economic strength, and cultural revitalization. Unfortunately, we are still fighting for our visibility. For too long, our communities have been erased and misrepresented.

“NATIVE AMERICANS ARE ONLY GIVEN CHOICES OF STEREOTYPES AND MISREPRESENTATION, OR UTTER INVISIBILITY.”

Dr. Adrian Keene, Cherokee Nation

The stories we see being told onscreen in movie theaters and homes across the country are powerful and have shaped perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward Native peoples. Native creatives have been working for decades to overcome and change stereotypes and open more doors for Native creatives to be storytellers.

With a growing influx of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) content creators, and authentic and engaging Native stories being told through shows like *Rutherford Falls* and *Reservation Dogs*, the time is now to break even more ground in the entertainment industry.

We must find opportunities to support authentic storytellers sharing Indigenous stories and increase opportunities to include Indigenous and Native creatives in all aspects of the industry. As we've seen, when we tell our stories, people tune in and listen. They laugh, cry, and understand that our lives as Indigenous peoples are contemporary, complex, and so much more than the stereotypes of old Hollywood. We are here, we are now. Our stories are powerful, and there has never been a better time than now to tell them to the world.

Photo by Tailyr Irvine

How and Why to Use this Guide

While not exhaustive, this guide can serve as a resource for writers, producers, directors, creators, and others in the entertainment industry who seek to develop accurate stories and characters by and about Native peoples in television, film, and other forms of media. This guide incorporates the learnings and insights of nearly two dozen Native creatives who participated in in-depth interviews to discuss the opportunities, barriers, and experiences of working within the entertainment industry as actors, writers, directors, producers, and as content developers. We cover everything from the basics like terminology and demographics of Indian Country, to stereotypes that should be avoided and common myths. We also include guidance on working with Native communities, answer some frequently asked questions, and share best practices in areas like cultivating Native content and depicting Native cultures.



Paulina Alexis (New York Times)

But why publish a guide like this now? The need for greater representation and exposure for Native creators is urgent, but just as importantly, the public wants to see more. According to *Reclaiming Native Truth*, 78% of audiences are interested in and understand the importance of increasing Native representation in Hollywood. And we know that when the diversity of content increases, Native representation increases both in front of and behind the camera.

Your support for the inclusion of Native peoples, Native content, and Native creatives in all parts of the industry is so crucial to telling authentic stories. And now more than ever, audiences are eager for more genuine Native content.



Rutherford Falls (NPR)



BE A CHAMPION OF NATIVE REPRESENTATION AND STORIES

The Impact of Representation

IllumiNative’s founding research, the [Reclaiming Native Truth \(RNT\)](#) study, shows accurate representation of contemporary Native peoples is critical in the fight against systemic racism and bias against Native peoples. Increasing our visibility helps build understanding and support for issues that impact our communities. Authentic Native representation on the screen leads to benefits well beyond entertainment.

As we enter a new era of Native representation, IllumiNative advocates for two overarching practices within the industry: First, Native talent and communities should be included when telling stories that center or showcase Native cultures or characters. Secondly, Native creatives and Native peoples should have more opportunities and support to tell their own stories.

The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open (2019)

Audiences Want More

For decades, many have suggested that mainstream audiences weren’t interested in watching content that featured Native driven storylines and stories. This is false.

Over the course of the last year, audiences around the world have started to see a glimpse of the talent and power of Native creatives. With the release of critically acclaimed Native-authored and centered shows, like [Rutherford Falls](#) and [Reservation Dogs](#), and complex and powerful films like [Wild Indian](#) and [Night Raiders](#), we’re witnessing a revolutionary shift in representation that moves us beyond the outdated, inaccurate, and often offensive depictions of Native peoples in pop culture—to more compelling, contemporary, and accurate portrayals of our lives today.

Audiences are interested in watching content that features Native-driven storylines and stories, capturing Native peoples in a genuine, authentic, and positive way. [Nielsen’s 2020 Inclusion Analytics Report](#) shows us audiences are seeking out content that reflects the diversity in our communities. It’s important to increase representation on screen to meet viewers needs. As Nielsen also found, audiences across identities are concerned with the quality of representation programs offer—which means audiences are seeking better, more positive, and more inclusive storylines and characters.

According to RNT, 78% of Americans reported wanting to learn more about Native peoples, their histories, cultures, and contemporary stories.

In the same report, 78% of Americans reported believing it is important to feature more stories about Native peoples on television and in movies and other forms of entertainment.

The stories and voices of more than 9.7 million Native peoples, who live on reservations and cities in every state across the country today, connect with values that are core to American audiences. Relegating Native representation to only period pieces misses the opportunity to show the truth, that Native peoples are teachers, doctors, lawyers, artists, writers, scientists, and politicians. Native peoples are leaders in the fight against climate change, are revitalizing languages, and more. Most importantly, Native and Indigenous creatives possess the talent and experience to author, create, and produce content for mass audiences.

The 2020 Indigenous Futures Survey of 6,400 Native peoples from all 50 states, representing 401 tribes found that:

94%

of respondents noticed when Native peoples were not represented.

90%

were disappointed with the exclusion of Native peoples.

96%

reported feeling upset or offended with negative or misleading representation of Native peoples.



Amber Midthunder, Legion (FX)



Q'orianka Kilcher, The Alienist (TNT)

The Data Shows Room to Improve

Analysis from Reclaiming Native Truth¹ in 2018 found that the inclusion of Native characters in primetime television and popular films ranged from 0–0.4%. Subsequent studies have found very little movement forward on Native representation. In 2020, the University of California Los Angeles published the Hollywood Diversity Report,² which analyzed content from 2018 and 2019. The report found Native representation to be between 0.3%–0.5% in film. In television,³ Native representation was virtually nonexistent—varying by content, representation was found to be between 0 and 0.6% with Native women being less likely to be represented. The 2021 Hollywood Diversity Report⁴ showed Native representation in film stagnant at

0.6%. Additionally, these reports found that creative roles, like writers or directors, showed virtually no Native representation.

With new streaming providers offering more original content, many services have leaned into showing more diverse stories. Data from Nielsen⁵ show that in 2019, Native representation on subscription video on demand (SVOD) (0.19%) was higher than broadcast (0.11%) or cable (0.10%). But while streaming services gained in 2020, rising to .32%, representation within broadcast (0.10%) and cable (0.04%) both dropped. As with other sets of data, Native representation is often dominated by male representation; Native women continue to have less visibility overall.

NATIVE REPRESENTATION IS OFTEN DOMINATED BY MALE REPRESENTATION, NATIVE WOMEN CONTINUE TO HAVE LESS VISIBILITY OVERALL.



Sterlin Harjo (Sundance)



Wild Indian (2021)



BE A CHAMPION OF NATIVE REPRESENTATION AND STORIES 8

Reservation Dogs (FX)

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

When working with Native communities, it is important to learn and educate yourself and the creative team. Too often, Native peoples are placed in the position of having to educate and advocate for themselves and their community, providing cultural competency in projects, often as an additional, uncompensated labor. This section is not exhaustive but provides some necessary level setting when engaging in conversations about and with Native communities.

NATIVE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LIVE, THRIVE, AND LEAD ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.

Terminology and Definitions

Tribe: a term used to describe the Native nations that entered into agreements with the United States government.

In the U.S., there are 574 federally recognized tribes⁶ in addition to 63 state-recognized tribes.⁷ Each of these nations is a sovereign government that oversees land, tribal citizenship and provides services.

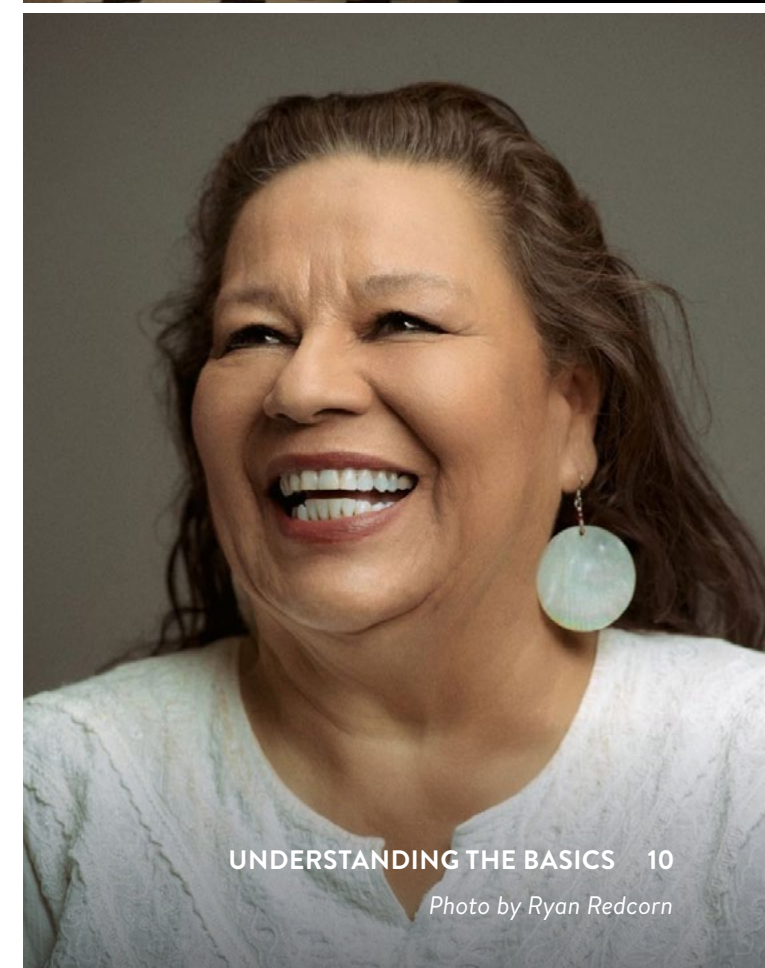
Native American: a more formal term used to represent the original inhabitants and caretakers of the land that is now referred to as the United States. Often, this term is used within the community and is appropriate to use when talking about two or more peoples with a different tribal affiliation. Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian peoples do not feel included in this term, and it would be most appropriate to use *Native American and Alaska Native* or *Native American and Native Hawaiian* to be inclusive. Whenever possible, it is most appropriate to identify people by their preferred tribal affiliation when describing individuals or individual tribes.

Native: a less formal term to describe the original inhabitants of the United States and can be a shorthand to include Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Indigenous: a term used to represent the original inhabitants of a certain geographic location, or a term used when referring to *all* the original inhabitants of the world.



Photo by Ryan Redcorn



American Indian: a general term that has been used in federal law and U.S. government departments, and therefore appears in federal, state, or local legislation and within judicial proceedings. While this term is used by the federal government, the term has fallen out of usage and acceptability by Native peoples today. This term should not be used to refer to Native peoples unless in the context described above.

Alaska Native: a general term used to represent the Indigenous peoples of the land that is now referred to as Alaska.

Native Hawaiian: a general term used to represent the Kānaka Maoli, the Indigenous peoples of the land now referred to as Hawai'i.

Tribal Sovereignty: describes the inherent right of tribes to govern themselves and the existence of a government-to-government relationship with the United States. A tribe is an independent nation with the right to form its own government, adjudicate legal cases within its borders, levy taxes within its borders, and establish its membership. The relationship between tribal governments and the U.S. federal government is unlike any other racial or ethnic group. Tribes are distinct and sovereign nations with complex histories of government and diplomatic relations that pre-date the existence of the United States. Federally recognized tribes have a government-to-government relationship with the federal government, meaning tribes have a special trust relation with the United States. As stated by the Native Americans Rights Fund, “The federal government has a trust responsibility

to protect tribal lands, assets, resources, and treaty rights.” Citizens of federally recognized tribes are dual citizens of both their tribe and the United States. State recognized tribes have a government-to-government relationship with the state where they reside.



Photo by Tailyr Irvine

Treaties: Many tribes entered into formal agreements with the United States federal government. In exchange for ceding their land, tribes were promised education and healthcare for their citizens in perpetuity—commitments that have never been fully

realized. The United States has broken over 500 treaties with the Native nations who stewarded this land long before the United States was founded, and there has been a long history of abuse and mismanagement by the U.S. government.

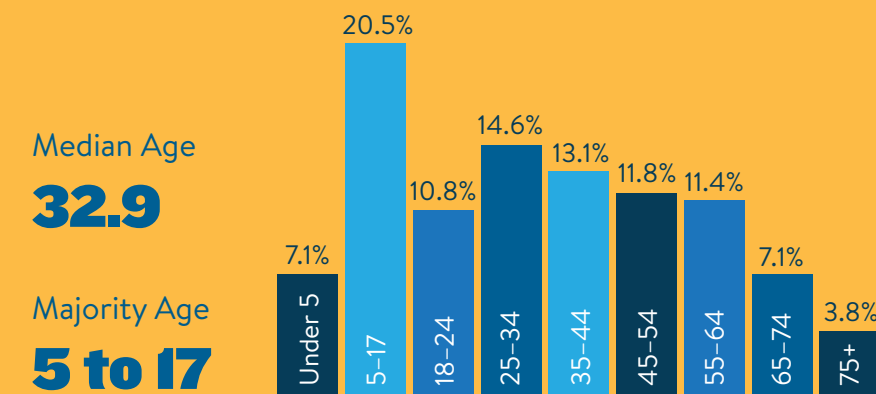
WE ARE STILL HERE

Native Population Growth

The Native population grew 160% since 2010 to 9.7 million peoples.

(that's 2.9% of the U.S. population)

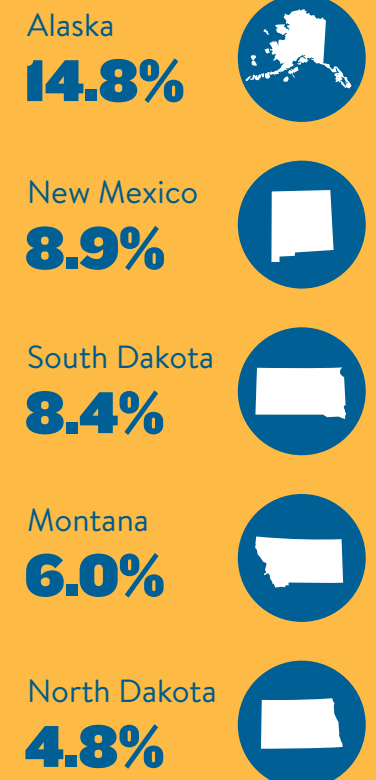
Age Range of Native Population (in Years)



Median Age
32.9

Majority Age
5 to 17

Top States with Native Populations



Source: 2020 US Census



Photo by Ryan Redcorn

History of Discrimination: Native peoples were not granted U.S. citizenship until 1924.⁸ Even so, Native peoples were not guaranteed the right to vote in every state until 1962.⁹ For many Native peoples, cultural and spiritual practices were illegal until 1978¹⁰ when the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed—finally guaranteeing access to and use of sacred sites, objects, and materials. The fight for basic rights for Native peoples is still part of modern history. Today, tribes and Native activists are still fighting to protect sacred sites, secure clean drinking water, and ban extractive practices, like fracking and oil pipelines that impact the health, safety, and well-being of their citizens.

First Nations: a general term used to represent the Indigenous peoples in the land that is now referred to as Canada.

Indian Country: a term that has both a formal and informal context. Indian Country is a legal term used in Title 18 of the U.S. Code where it broadly defines federal and tribal jurisdiction in crimes affecting American Indians on reservations. Indian Country is simultaneously used as a broad and informal term in contemporary Native vocabulary describing both reservations, land held within tribal jurisdictions, cities, and states with large populations of Native peoples, and reference the traditional homelands of all Native peoples within the United States.¹¹

Tribal Citizenship and Indigenous Identity:

Each tribe sets their own criteria and rules for citizenship. While some Indigenous peoples are citizens of their tribe, some are not. Some individuals may be a citizen of one tribe, but also maintain *affiliation* (connection) with a different tribe through family lines. Individuals who are not enrolled citizens of their tribes may have *heritage or descendancy*—meaning they have a family line connection to a tribe but are not recognized as citizens by the tribal government. *First Nations* individuals or Indigenous peoples of Mexico and South America are part of the vibrant Indigenous community within the United States, but do not possess the same rights as citizens of federally recognized tribes in the U.S.

Reservation: a term used to describe a land base that a tribe reserved for itself when it relinquished its other land areas to the U.S. through treaties. More recently, Congressional acts, executive orders, and administrative acts have created reservations. Some reservations today have non-Indian residents and landowners. Tribal governments exercise jurisdiction over these lands, which makes Indian Country the fourth largest state in the nation.¹²

Colonization: a term used to describe the violent and destructive actions of colonizing Native lands. When discussing the impacts of colonization, we are referring to the forced removal of Native peoples from their lands, government-funded and run assimilationist boarding schools, among other destructive acts of genocide.



Be a Myth Buster

Popular culture has created and reinforced many myths about Native communities and Native peoples that creatives should be mindful of when creating content that includes or centers Native peoples. There is a significant opportunity through your work to clear up the common misconceptions that too often shape Americans' views of what it means to be Native.

MYTH 1: All Native peoples receive free government benefits just for being Native.

The most persistent and toxic negative narrative is the myth that many Native Americans receive government benefits just for being Native, do not pay taxes, or go to college for free. This false narrative has been found to increase feelings of “unfairness” and undermines relationships between Native peoples and other communities of color. This misunderstanding is held by many Americans across the country—even among elected officials and policymakers. Contrary to stereotypes, Native peoples are required to and pay federal taxes like other Americans.

MYTH 2: All Native peoples/tribes are rich from tribal gaming.

This myth showcases the dual false narratives that often exist in representation of Native communities. Native peoples are often shown living in poverty accepting government benefits while also being portrayed as flush with casino money. In reality, only 39.3% of Native tribes have casinos, and only 12% of those tribes generate more than 68% of

their revenue from gaming. Only 8.9% of the total Native population profit from gaming,¹³ and these benefits mostly come through in tribal government services and economic and community development.

MYTH 3: Most if not all Native peoples live on reservations.

While most Native peoples remain connected to their sovereign tribal communities, approximately 75% of Natives live in urban and suburban areas.¹⁴



Photo by Tailyr Irvine

75% of Natives live in urban and suburban areas.

574 The number of federally recognized sovereign nations.

63 The number of state recognized tribes.

MYTH 4: All Native peoples are alcoholics and are destitute.

One of the most common depictions of Native peoples is as lazy alcoholics or Native communities rife with poverty and generally reliant on the U.S. government for handouts. Native peoples report abstaining from alcohol at higher rates than the overall population and have drinking patterns similar to White Americans.

MYTH 5: All Native American cultures are the same.

Most Americans hold the belief that all Native Americans are a monolithic population, wear headdresses, live in tipis, and possess horsemanship skills because Native representation onscreen has often only encompassed the Westerns genre or period pieces. Predominantly, these storylines represented Native men and cultural elements of tribes from the *Great Plains*. This of course

is inaccurate and does not come close to representing the diversity present within Indian Country. In 2021, there were 574 federally recognized sovereign nations, and 63 state recognized tribes, each possessing their own unique language, culture, and traditions. Consultation with an individual from that exact community or tribe is the only way you can fully understand the proper history and culture of each tribe.

MYTH 6: All Native people look the same.

There is an abundance of diversity within Indian Country and across Indigenous communities. Often, because of how Native peoples have been portrayed in popular culture, perceptions of Native representation have been seen as narrow. Representation in popular culture has normalized the existence and inclusion of white mixed identities but has excluded others. There is no one way to look Native American, in fact there are many Indigenous peoples who are multiracial or biracial, including those with Latinx and Black identities. While certain communities may share visual commonalities, it is important to remember that there are members of those communities who might not possess those traits. It's important to be inclusive when depicting the Native community.



Photo by Tailyr Irvine

Avoid Offensive Language

Creating an inclusive environment within a writing room, on set, or at a studio is important. There are commonly used language and phrases that can be harmful to Native peoples and should be avoided. Here are some examples:

“Lowest Man/Person on the Totem Pole”

As discussed in the sections below, totem poles are of spiritual significance and part of Native culture. This phrase minimizes their significance and disrespects Native peoples.

“Circle the Wagons”

This phrase is rooted in the western expansion and the colonization of Native lands. The phrase also furthers stereotypes of Native peoples as aggressors and “the enemy.”



Zahn McClarnon, *Mekko* (2015)

“Off the Reservation”

This phrase is a reference to the forcible removal of Native peoples from their lands onto reservations where their movements were restricted upon penalty of death.

“Savage”

This phrase was used by Western colonizers to reinforce ideas that Native peoples were inherently violent and therefore in need of assimilating. When used today, it can be viewed as a slur by Native peoples.

“Spirit Animal”

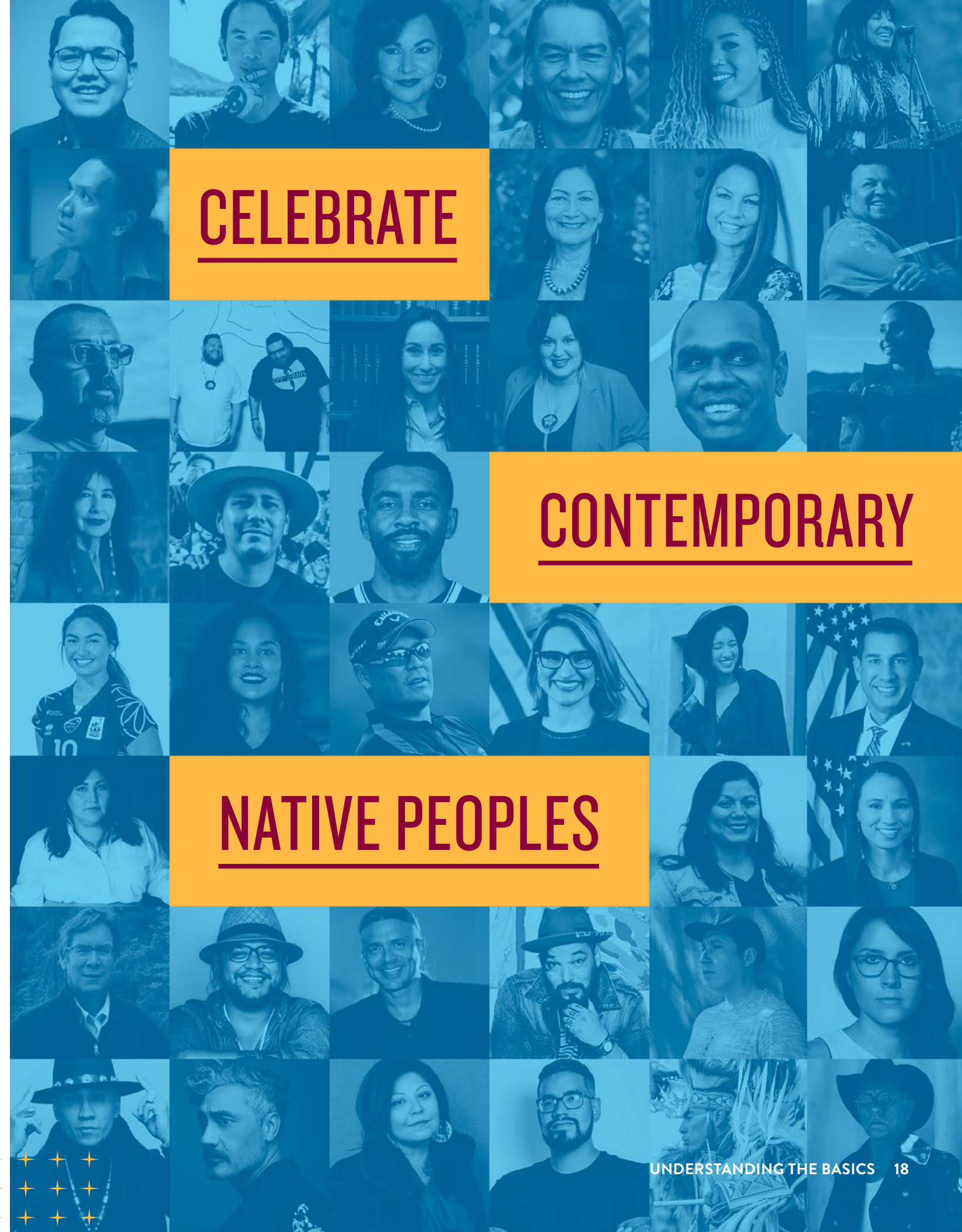
The popular use of this phrase reinforces incorrect stereotypes about Native peoples and spiritual beliefs, while also being a form of cultural appropriation.

“Powwow”

This phrase has been used to describe meetings or gatherings in office settings. This use is incorrect and is an example of how Native cultures and traditions have been appropriated.

“Tribe”

This phrase has been used as a colloquial term referring to your friends, families, or a group that share your interests or passions. This use minimizes Indigenous tribes, our rich histories, and cultures, and should be avoided unless referring to a specific group of Indigenous peoples.



BEST PRACTICES IN STORYTELLING

In the last year, there have been efforts to combat racism and the exclusion of underrepresented voices within the industry. Studios and companies are making changes that are helping diversify the types of characters and stories being told, as well as supporting diverse storytellers. This shift has also increased interest in and support of Native content.

Native peoples want to be seen and should be seen. Here are best practices you can use to help guide the creation of authentic and accurate content.

NATIVE PEOPLES WANT TO BE SEEN AND SHOULD BE SEEN.

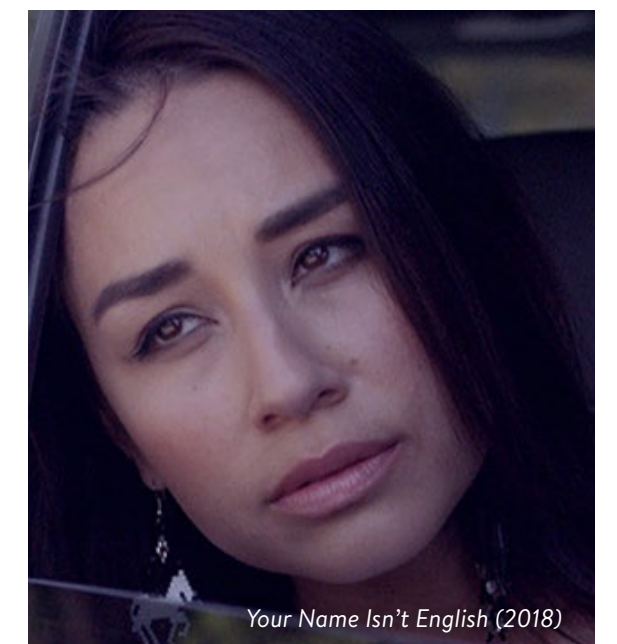
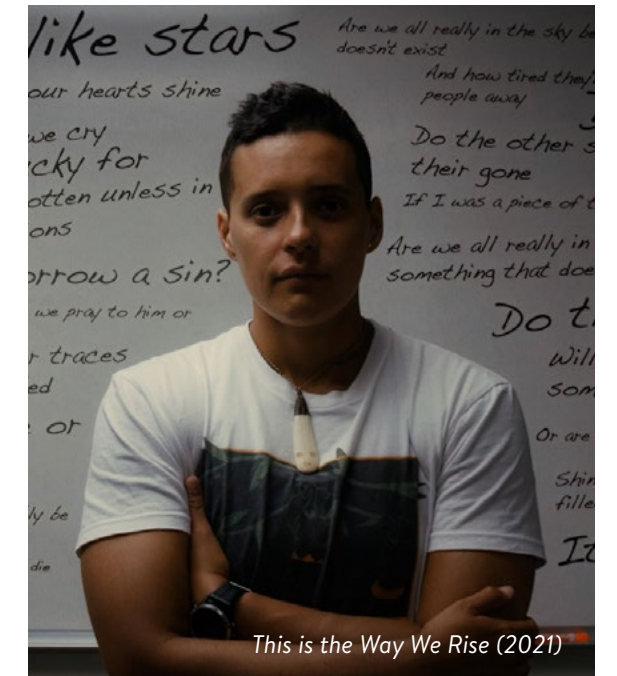
Photo by Tailyr Irvine

Include Native peoples when creating Native content.

The most effective way to create authentic and accurate content is to hire and employ Native creatives in various roles within the production from beginning to end, as writers, producers, and directors who can help create from their own experience and community. Be sure to make Native characters as fully dimensional human beings, and try to show Native joy, our humor and humanity, rather than only focusing on our pain and our trauma. Being intentional within the production extends to all elements, from casting to production design, to wardrobe. As we continue to move toward authentic and accurate content, it's important that we show the rich diversity of Native communities, including mixed race Native identities and gender identities.

Normalize the inclusion of Native peoples.

Native representation must also extend past stories that center Native peoples. When writing or directing content, it's important to ask how Native peoples can be included and normalized. When casting for non-racially specific roles, there is an opportunity to cast Indigenous talent in those roles. When creating shows that portray a diverse experience, it's important to welcome Native writers into those rooms as well. True representation and inclusion must include making space and providing opportunities to bring in Native perspectives and experiences.



Respect Native cultures.

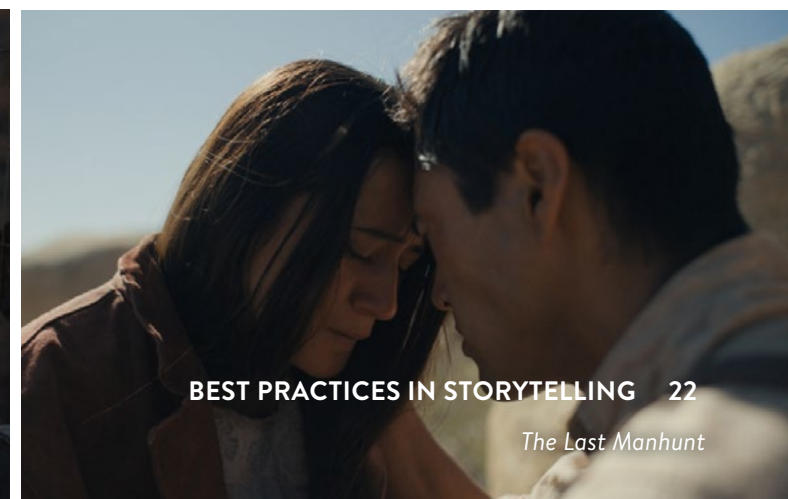
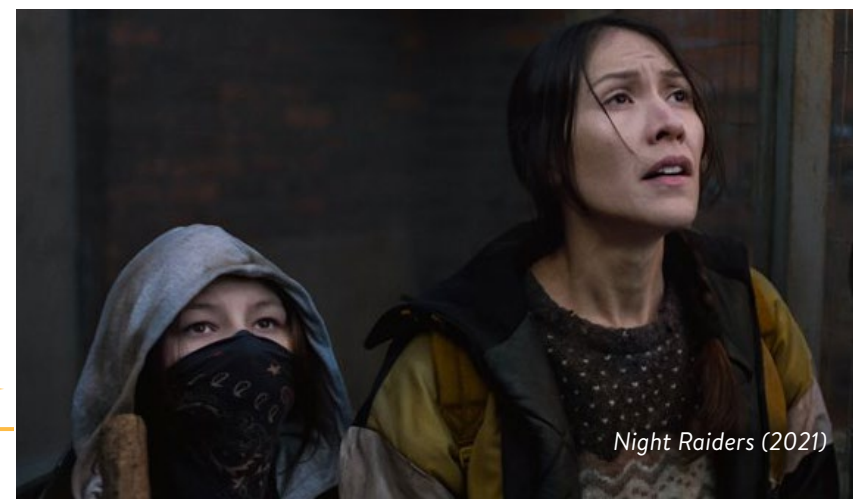
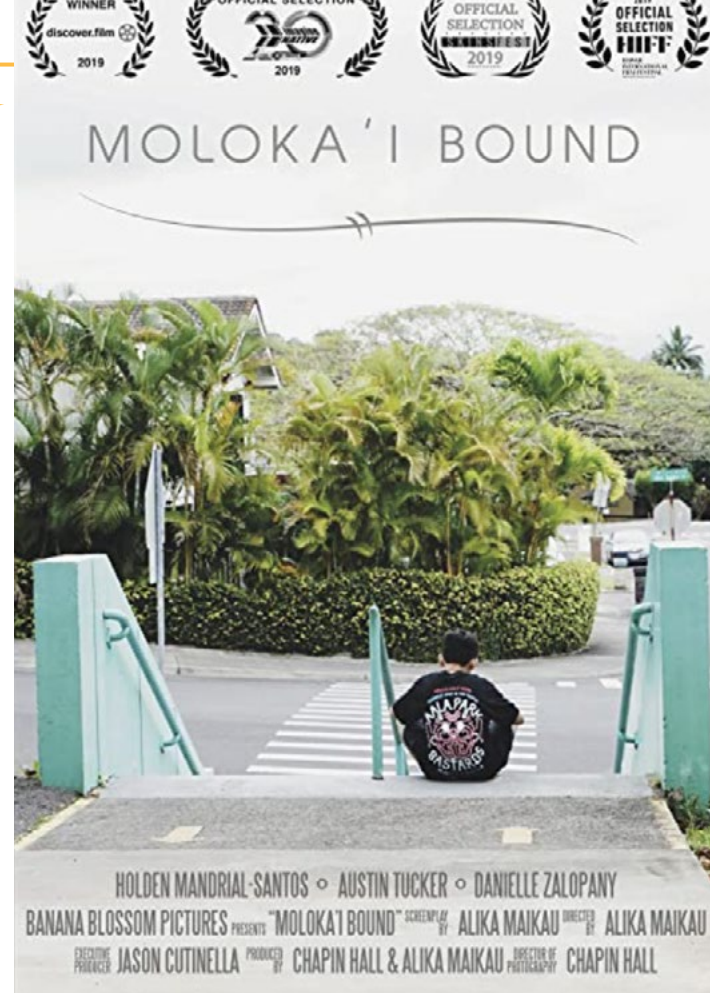
When depicting Native cultures or seeking to adapt or find inspiration from Native stories, you should never assume Native culture is up for interpretation or use. Many tribes have specific practices, protocols, or boundaries when it comes to sharing with those outside

the community. Some practices, language, or traditions are not meant for public consumption. Creatives should work directly with Native communities and tribes to be respectful and authentic in their storytelling.

Be open to feedback from the community.

Work with Native creatives, tribal governments, and when needed, cultural consultants who can ensure your story is moving in the right direction. It's important that the Native peoples who you bring in to help shape these stories, and to guide on cultural representation, have the ability not only to voice their opinions, but also have the

power to veto, change, and correct any issues that they find within the project. Utilizing cultural consultants when depicting a specific culture is necessary to ensure respectful and accurate representation. A consultant should not be a replacement for a Native creative working within the production.



CREATING AUTHENTIC CONTENT

Native representation has often been confined to the Western genre. As Native actors and talent take on new roles, it's an excellent example of how Native representation can continue to expand. From Michael Greyeyes' (*Nêhiyaw/Muskeg Lake Cree Nation*) work in *True Detective* and the critically acclaimed *I Know This Much is True*, to Amber Midthunder (*Fort Peck Sioux*) as a leading role in *The Ice Road* and *Legion*, Native talent can play multi-dimensional characters with interesting and complex storylines.

Creating authentic content should include ensuring Native creatives are able to participate across the industry as fully dimensional human beings—not as the stereotypical Native characters that have too often defined us.

How to Create Authentic Content

- 1 **Combat Negative Stereotypes.**
- 2 **Improve the Representation of Native Women.**
- 3 **Know What's In and What's Out in Native Representation.**
- 4 **Avoid Cultural Appropriation.**
- 5 **Understand and Respecting Cultural Protocols.**

Michael Greyeyes, *I Know This Much is True* (HBO)

Combatting Negative Stereotypes

The creation of authentic and accurate content fights negative stereotypes of Native peoples. Below is a list of some of the most common stereotypes that harm Native peoples, which you should avoid.

Romanticized Portrayals

This representation is rooted in a caricatured version of Native peoples that have long appealed to non-Native audiences and can be recognized as depictions of the *brave warrior* or the *healing shaman*.¹⁵ Often, these characters portray a whitewashed and idealized version of westward expansion. They will also frequently reflect the other stereotypes defined below.

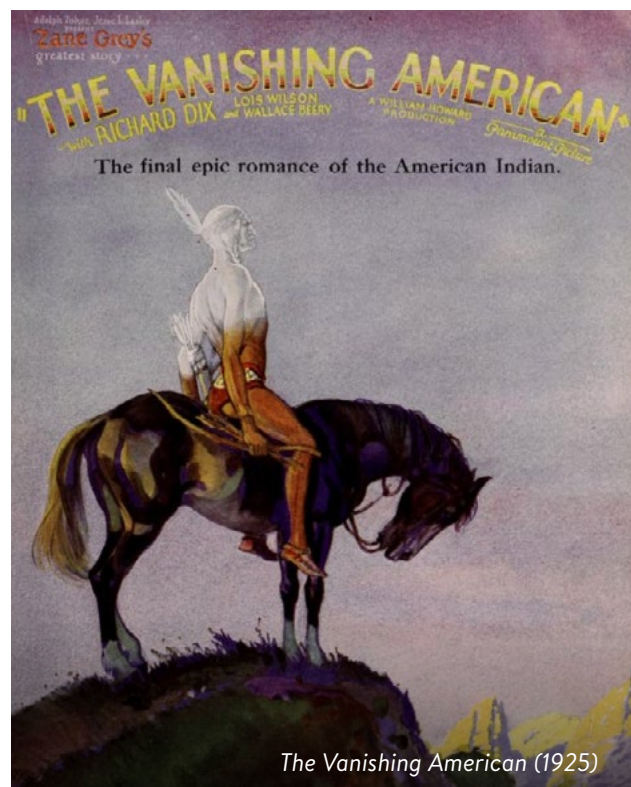
Magical and Mystical Native/Indian

The representation often depicts a Native character as possessing special magical abilities that come from their identity as a Native person. Often this representation is shown in tandem with cultural practices, real or fake, and rely on appropriative elements. While many Native tribes have traditional roles like medicine men or spiritual leaders, their practices are not meant for mass commercialization or consumption.

Bloodthirsty Warrior

This representation depicts, often male, Native characters as violent aggressors. Within the Western genre and colonial period pieces, Native characters have often been shown as villains to the sympathetic, white protagonists.





The Vanishing American (1925)



The Indian in the Cupboard (1995)



The Lone Ranger (2013)



Gilligan's Island

Stoic or Noble Savage

This representation is often rooted in a belief that Native peoples, particularly Native men, are unemotional. These types of characters often result in beliefs that Native peoples are cold and calculated, often in contrast to empathetic white characters.

The Guide

This representation often shows Native characters as subservient companions of, often white, protagonists. Usually these characters, through their wisdom or mysticism, help provide answers or realizations that help move the protagonist's character forward. These characters are often one-dimensional.

Poor and Lazy

Native peoples are often depicted as lazy alcoholics or drug addicts. Entire Native communities are portrayed as poverty stricken and in need of a, often white, savior. This stereotype has driven beliefs that Native peoples are not capable leaders, are unable to solve problems, and are not trustworthy.

The Vanishing

This representation centers on the idea that a Native character is the "last of their kind" or portrayed as lost and disconnected from their culture. Both representations reinforce ideas of "true" Native peoples as vanishing and a romanticized relic of the past. This stereotype reinforces the erasure of Native peoples from modern America, and often portrays Native peoples in need of saving or protection by white protagonists.

Similarly, while not a stereotype in and of itself, the continued erasure and normalization of scenes and places without the existence of Native peoples contributes to false ideas that Native peoples are a dwindling population or no longer exist. This is especially problematic when stories are set in places with high Native populations, like Hawai'i, but do not include casting Native peoples in either speaking or non-speaking roles.

The Over-Sexualized Woman

This representation is one of the most damaging stereotypes of Native women. Often Native women are portrayed as oversexualized, scantily clad, voiceless, or silent, and depicted as an object of desire, and victims of violence. These depictions of Native women are rooted in the male gaze

and portray Native women without agency. This stereotype has serious repercussions within the community. Native women and girls experience some of the highest rates of sexual and physical violence, most often perpetrated by non-Native men.¹⁶

The Exotic

This representation shows Native and Indigenous peoples as being the "other." This portrayal often normalizes Western, or white ways of being, in contrast to our Native ways of life. Native peoples or practices are seen as being simple, laughable, and different. This reinforces ideas and practices of whiteness as the dominant, "civil," and "ideal" way of existing.

Improving the Representation of Native Women

Women remain underrepresented in television and film today. This also holds true within Native representation, which is dominated by Native men. According to Nielsen’s 2020 Inclusion Analytics Report, even in subscription video on demand (SVOD) that has the highest rates of Native inclusion, Native women only have 0.4% of the screen share. When Native women are represented, their inclusion has often focused on trauma, sexual or physical assault, or has portrayed Native women without agency.

Ali Nahdee (*Anishanaabe*), a writer and critic, created the Aila Test, an intersectional model of the Bechdel Test to look at and review Native women’s representation.

Depicting violence against Native women can be harmful. Whenever possible, it’s helpful to infer to violence rather than graphically depict it. Working with Native women creators is one way to ensure these portrayals are not

harmful. Some questions worth asking about the storyline are:

- Am I treating this Native character as disposable?
- Is the violence necessary?
- Does the violence move the story forward?
- Is the violence against this character being treated solely as an opportunity to further the growth of another character (white, male, etc.)?

Examples of positive, authentic representation of Indigenous women:

Films like *Moana* (Disney, 2016) and Elle-Maija Tailfeathers’ (*Blackfoot/Sámi*) *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open* (2019), and the critically acclaimed *Reservation Dogs* (2021) and *Rutherford Falls* (2021) on television, are examples of positive and multi-dimensional representation of Native women.



The Aila Test includes three questions:

- 1 Is [the character] an Indigenous woman who is a main character?
- 2 Does [the character] not fall in love with a white man?
- 3 Is [the character] not raped or murdered at any time in the story?

What's In And What's Out In Native Representation

Since the beginning of Native representation in Hollywood, Native representation has shifted and changed in a positive way.

What's In

- Contemporary representation that shows who Native peoples are today.
- Depicting specific tribes and cultures rather than “Pan-Indianism” (where content takes many cultural elements from unrelated tribes to create a representation that is not accurate).
- Showing the diversity of Native communities, including mixed race Native identities and gender identities.
- Showing Indigenous joy, our humor, and our humanity rather than only showing our pain and trauma.
- Having multi-dimensional characters who are driven by Indigenous values, such as: Respect for family, community, land, and care for future generations.
- Native peoples being an integral part of the storyline process from beginning to end as writers, directors, talent, consultants, etc.
- Working with Native creatives to pitch original content and storylines.

What's Out

- The use of non-specific and ambiguous tribal identities as an attempt to ignore the expressed concerns of specific depictions of a tribe or to avoid working with Native creatives and consultants.
- Use of made-up or unrelated languages to depict specific tribal languages.
- Relying on the magical, mystical Indian stereotypes that misrepresent Indigenous peoples.
- One dimensional characters that rely on stereotypical representation, like the use of casinos to represent Native wealth or corruption, and storylines and content that only depict Native peoples as destitute.
- Over-sexualized representation of Native women.
- Unnecessary and graphic depictions of violence against Native women, girls, or persons.
- Having non-Native actors depict a Native character.
- Bringing in Native consultants or talent to only rubber stamp or fix an issue at the end of the creative process.
- Excluding Native creatives in all parts of the process, from writing, directing, acting, and production.

Common Questions

We would like to include a Native character, but we don't have any Native writers, directors, or producers tied to the project. What should we do?

Even the most well-intentioned writers and crew may have blind spots when it comes to Native characters and storylines. When creating Native stories and characters, it is crucial to bring in Native writers, directors, and producers. Having Native creatives involved in production also ensures you are creating authentic stories. This also applies to bringing in Native artists and designers when creating sets, costumes, marketing materials, etc. As you are beginning work on the production, reach out to Native creators in your network, or to Native-led organizations who work on cultivating talent, who can help connect you to talent directly or to individuals who can assist in your search.

We have Native art, stories, or iconography that we want to include in our content. Can we use it?

When depicting specific art, stories, language, traditions, or music, you should never assume that they are able to be used. Many tribes have different cultural protocols— some stories, dances, and even languages for example are not meant to be viewed by those outside the community because they are sacred. Working with cultural consultants may be helpful, but in some instances, it



is important to work directly with tribal governments for their consent and to work with their preferred knowledge keepers to ensure you are being respectful.

Our cultural consultant signed off on a scene/character/portrayal, but we are also hearing negative feedback from members of the community. What should we do?

This is an example of why it's important to have Native peoples be part of every aspect of the process. Cultural consultants do not always have all the answers for the needs of your project. They also don't necessarily have training on best practices in representation. Sometimes, portrayals can be technically accurate but are also harmful. Acknowledging

that harm has been caused, whether intentional or unintentional, is an important first step. Listening to feedback from the community, even when inconvenient, is an important part of the process. Learning through listening will show you what you should correct or do differently in the moment and with future productions.

Can Native characters have special powers or be superheroes?

Yes of course! Just remember context matters. When we talk about the harms from stereotypes or tropes, like the magical, mystical Indian, these stereotypes show up in specific contexts, often as Native peoples being the only characters with mystical qualities. If you are creating a world in your content where witches, vampires, zombies, or superheroes exist, then it makes sense that Native peoples in that world might also have these characteristics.

We have a Native character. What are best practices in casting?

When casting a Native character, you must cast a Native actor. Placing a non-Native person in this role will have negative repercussions on the actor themselves, the character, the production, and the community. This practice is “redface”—the act of playing Indian. When it comes to casting, whenever possible, cast as specifically as possible—i.e., if your character is Navajo, cast a Navajo actor, to ensure authenticity.

Avoiding Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is the unacknowledged, inappropriate, or incorrect adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, dress, or traditions of one culture by members of another identity or culture. Often done, but not always, by those in a position of dominance or power who control and shape narratives about others to serve their interests.

The cultural appropriation of Native cultures has created false narratives and stereotypes of Native peoples and popularized inaccurate beliefs about specific tribes. For example, in *Pet Semetary*, Stephen King appropriated the traditional stories of the Wendigo from the Mi'kmaq when creating the origin story of the haunted cemetery that brought creatures back to life.¹⁷ In the popular series *Twilight*, Stephanie Meyer inaccurately tied the origin stories of werewolves to the history and culture of the Quileute Tribe—creating a false narrative that necessitated the tribe having



to deny and go so far as creating a website to address it.¹⁸ The use of Native stories, culture, and history within these two examples, depict specific cultures, but do so in ways that harm and solidify harmful stereotypes about Native peoples.

Cultural appropriation has many forms when it comes to Native representation. It is the misappropriation of the cultural traditions of one specific tribe to another, it is the casting of a non-Native actor as a Native character, and it is also the use of Native culture without the consent or inclusion of Native peoples. Stories that center Native peoples, should be rooted in place, culture, and experience.

Before beginning work on the script, production, or casting, it's important to ask yourself:

1. Do I have the blessing and consent of the community I am depicting to tell this story? Did I listen to their concerns and respond accordingly?
2. Is the community I'm engaging with being fairly and appropriately compensated?
3. Am I the person best positioned to tell this story? If the answer is no, how can I do the work of creating the best team to tell this story? How can I position a Native voice to lead the creation of this work?
4. What are my own gaps, in knowledge and experience, that I must address before telling this story?
5. How am I creating processes to ensure the voices of Native peoples are included?

Understanding and Respecting Cultural Protocols

Cultural protocols are different for every community, but these protocols should be respected and valued. It is important to engage with and listen to tribes and Native creatives when depicting specific cultures. The protocols below are intended to be general guidance.

Incorporating Traditional Stories, Myths, and Traditional Elements

Cultural practices like dances, ceremony, feasts, powwows, prayers, songs, and offerings have protocols that vary from tribe to tribe. Similarly, traditional stories are part of the deeply held customs and beliefs of tribes. There are restrictions or boundaries tribes have for sharing those stories or practices with those outside of the community. When seeking to showcase certain elements of Native culture, it's important to recognize that depicting religious and spiritual ceremonies should not be done. Working with Native creatives, consultants, and tribes directly can ensure representation is respectful and accurate.

Regalia (Traditional, Ceremonial, and Cultural Attire)

Regalia, or traditional, ceremonial, and cultural attire, of Native peoples are not costumes. Regalia varies among tribes and regions, and includes shawls, headdresses, dresses, moccasins, bustles, etc. Headdresses, while commonly used, are not traditional to all tribes. Traditional regalia is sacred and is often created by family members or specific artists,

or passed down through family lines, and are made from specific materials and with specific practice. When looking to incorporate the use of traditional attire, it is important to include Native creatives and consultants to understand if it is appropriate. If traditional or cultural attire is used, hire Native artists, designers, and traditional craftspeople from the tribe or community being used in the story to make the items.



Photo by Ryan Redcorn



Sivan Alyra Rose, *Chambers* (Netflix, 2019)

Totems and Sacred Objects

Totems and sacred objects are representations of sacred spirits and beings that are part of Native cultures. For example, the Kānaka Maoli and many Pacific and Polynesian Indigenous cultures have ki'i/tiki which are sculptures and representations of ancestral gods. Other Native cultures utilize totems to represent clans and sacred beings, others have masks that are used in ceremony to depict sacred beings. The inclusion of these objects should be avoided.

Native Languages

Native languages are an important and integral part of Native cultures. Each is unique. While some regions have similarities in language, there are specific uses and practices within each community. Accuracy

and specificity are paramount when including Native languages, and can only be gained when working with language experts who can advise, correct, or translate to the specific language you are portraying. The only way to ensure accuracy is to work directly with a fluent speaker.

Incorporating Traditional Names in Content

Traditional names are spoken in their Native language. It is important to understand the importance and inclusion of this representation—it's imperative that we normalize the existence of these names. Sometimes, English translations are used to replace the use of traditional names. This practice contributes to the erasure of Native languages and anglicizes Native characters.

Intellectual Property And Permissions

Intellectual property (IP) and ownership of traditional practices and knowledge is an evolving part of law globally. The intention of the protocols around engaging with tribes, community members, and leadership is to ensure that tribes can protect and safeguard their practices.

Many western norms and processes around recognizing intellectual property of culture are lacking. For example, to formally file for IP protection or copyright of a story, custom, music, etc. there must be an individual or entity that is recognized as a sole owner of that IP. For Native peoples, there are many traditional knowledge keepers, but none

are sole owners of those ceremonies and traditions. In the true spirit of recognizing the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, we must recognize that a non-Native entity cannot formally own the rights to a traditional story but can work in collaboration with the leadership of tribes to ensure the representation is respectful and accurate.

There is precedent within the industry of major corporations recognizing the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to their culture. This precedent should act as a foundation for all studios and productions who are seeking to incorporate or use Native cultural knowledge or heritage within their projects.



Ramona Emerson (KQRE)

“ INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAINTAIN, CONTROL, PROTECT, AND DEVELOP THEIR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OVER SUCH CULTURAL HERITAGE, TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND TRADITIONAL CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS.

Article 31, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Case Study: Sámi Culture and Frozen II

Following the release of the popular film *Frozen* (2013), Walt Disney Corporation was rightfully reprimanded for its role in participating in cultural appropriation by using very recognizable elements of Sámi culture without the consent or consultation of the Sámi people.

Before production of *Frozen II* began, the Sámi entered a formal contract with Disney—the first such agreement that affirmed Sámi ownership and right to their culture. The agreement is a benchmark for recognizing the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to assert control over the way their culture and stories are represented onscreen.

The agreement began with this formal recognition:

“Whereas, it is the position of the Sámi that their collective and individual culture, including aesthetic elements, music, language, stories, histories, and other traditional cultural expressions are property that belong to the Sámi...”

The agreement included a recognition of the Sámi’s right to “free, prior, and informed consent”:

*“Whereas, it is the position of the Sámi that to adequately respect the rights that the Sámi have to and in their culture, it is necessary to ensure sensitivity, **allow for free, prior and informed consent** and ensure that adequate benefit sharing is employed.”*



The agreement recognized the need for reciprocal benefit sharing, which ensured the Sámi were formally recognized for their collaboration with screen credit among other benefits, and created an advisory group of experts to “ensure culturally sensitive, appropriate, and respectful representation of the Sámi and their culture,” which benefited both the filmmakers and Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Resources

- [Language included in the ceremonial agreement between Walt Disney Animation Studios and the Sámi people](#)
- [Canadian resources on understanding Intellectual property rights](#)

BEST PRACTICES WHEN WORKING WITH NATIVE COMMUNITIES

When engaging with and working with Native communities and tribes, it is important that studios and productions build open and transparent relationships with tribes and Native communities.

Respect

Tribes, Native communities and those they choose to represent their interests, should be treated with dignity, and should be actively included in the process. Collaboration relies on all parties having equal say and authority in the result.

Reciprocity

Engagement with tribes and Native communities should not be one sided; the community should also benefit from the project. Reciprocity can mean different things to different communities. Reciprocity

should include opportunities for learning and growth for the community, giving back by way of community service and engagement, or perhaps working to ensure communities have access to screenings or dubbed versions of the project in their Native language. Reciprocity should always include sharing the profits with the community. Those that assist should always receive due compensation and credit.

Honesty

Honesty is the foundation of any relationship. For example, it is imperative that studios and productions are transparent with tribes and Native peoples about the story being told, the time and needs the production has, the kind of disruption expected when filming on their lands, or how productions plan to market or commercialize aspects of the project.

Q'orianka Kilcher, Kimberly Guerrero, and Jason Gavin (SAG-AFTRA)

Protocols For Shooting on Native Lands

For Native peoples, our culture and practices are rooted in place—both our traditional homelands and the lands where we currently reside. The wide-open skies of the Blackfeet and Shoshone lands in Montana, the desert lands of the Diné and Pueblo peoples, and the lands of the Kānaka Maoli of Hawai'i are home to not only places of deep spiritual significance, but also burial sites and preserves meant to be protected for future generations.

There are great examples of how productions can work with Native communities and film on Native lands. For example, *Reservation Dogs* on FX, from filmmakers Taika Waititi (*Māori*) and Sterlin Harjo (*Seminole/Muscogee Creek*), was filmed on the tribal lands of the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma. *Barkskins*, a limited series from National Geographic, was filmed on Kanien'kehá:ka lands.



Photo by Tailyr Irvine



Photo by Ryan Redcorn



Photo by Ryan Redcorn

Below is an example of steps studios should be mindful of when considering filming on tribal lands.

- **Film on homelands.** When projects and productions are creating stories that center a specific Native tribe, if possible, the production should consider filming on the homelands of the tribe.
- **Contact the tribal government.** When a homeland is identified, the showrunner, director, or executive producer should begin the process of establishing a dialogue with the tribal government. This can take place over a series of calls, in-person meetings, and conversations. At those times, the project provides information and transparency on the nature and subject matter of the project; if Native creatives and/or tribal citizens are part of the production and creation; and the timelines, needs, and ideas the project is looking to fulfill.
- **Be open and listen.** Be sure to provide open and honest answers to any questions that the tribe has and listen to and accommodate the concerns and wishes of the tribe if possible.
- **Provide compensation.** Consider how the production will compensate the tribe. This can be fees paid to the tribe, the creation of training programs for tribal citizens, or the hiring of tribal citizens into the production. From background actors to below the line positions, there are excellent community-based networks that can be assets to your production.

- **Acknowledge.** Productions should begin the filming of projects in a traditional way. Land acknowledgements or formal blessings can be conducted by tribal leadership or representatives. Sometimes, communities will extend a formal welcome.
- **Respect the location.** Keep in mind that certain places within a reservation may be off limits to outsiders—these include sacred places and burial sites. It's important to work directly with tribal offices and cultural preservation experts to be mindful of these locations.

- **Leave if asked.** If a tribe asks you to leave, cease filming, or delete certain shots, you must.
- **Remember cultural protocol.** Ensure cast and crew are well versed in the cultural norms and practices of where you are filming. It may be appropriate to hire a community liaison within the production.
- **Be a good guest.** Remember that you have no claim or entitlement to be on the land. You must work to be welcomed as a guest.

Resources For Filming in Hawai'i:

The Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) have a special connection to the land. It's especially important to be respectful of the wishes of the Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i. For more information on filming within Hawai'i it may be helpful to visit the [Film Office](#).



Understanding The Impact Of Telling Native Stories

When depicting highly sensitive content be mindful of ways to ensure you are being mindful of the impact your story may have.

Some steps you can take to ensure cultural competency are below.

- **Sensitivity reads:** Before scripts and storylines are locked, it may be necessary and appropriate to conduct sensitivity reads. This provides an opportunity to ensure that bias, stereotypes, harmful depictions, etc. are addressed before filming.
- **Be respectful:** When writing, filming, and marketing the project you may re-traumatize the communities you are depicting. It is imperative that studio leadership, cast, and crew go through the process of learning and educating themselves on the subject matter and the responsibility everyone on your production

carries while telling this story. This means taking measures to be respectful of the families and descendants of those you are depicting—this may mean asking for the consent of those individuals to telling the stories.

- **Cultural sensitivity training:** It is important to provide cultural sensitivity training to members of the cast and crew before a production begins and/or before filming sensitive scenes.
- **Community review:** After filming, it may be helpful to have community members or representation strategists review to provide input on tone, depictions, etc.
- **Support:** Ensure you provide emotional support and resources needed by the community or individuals on set who are impacted by your storytelling.



TAPPING INTO NATIVE TALENT

A common belief is that there is no available or qualified Native talent to hire. This is false. Programs like those at the Sundance Institute’s Indigenous Program, which has supported Indigenous creatives since 1994, have trained prominent and upcoming Native creatives as producers, writers, and directors. In the last couple of years, there has been an increase in agencies who are managing and representing Native talent.

NATIVE STORYTELLERS HAVE STORIES TO TELL, AND THE TALENTS AND SKILLS TO SHARE THEM.

Kyle Bell (Sundance)

How Studios And Production Companies Can Promote Native Stories

Create pathways for original content that is created by Native creators.

There are many stories waiting to be told. Too often, Native creatives are brought in to refine and execute on an existing piece of content. Creating pathways and pledges to fund and develop original content by Native creatives supports emerging and established Native talent.

Create process to track and measure your support of Native creatives.

By understanding how many Native projects, creatives, and talent work within your company, you can set and achieve standards

for Native inclusion. Making your studio accountable for more screen time, hiring, and content ensures your company is part of building a more inclusive industry.

Hire and support Native talent in executive-level positions.

Ensuring Native talent are hired in decision-making positions—from executive positions within companies to board positions—supports Native creatives as they develop, pitch, and film their content. Having an internal executive that can connect and impact internal process and company culture builds a more inclusive industry.



Sydney Freeland (New York Times)

Supporting Native Storytellers

Create opportunities for talent beyond Native storylines.

Many Native leaders in the industry have recognized how important it is for Native talent to have opportunities, as it is essential to build experience in order to gain access to different projects. However, many expressed a sentiment that Native creatives are often placed in a “Native box” and not considered for projects without Native characters.

Hire Native talent.

Opportunities for shadowing, interning, or staffing are integral to building a pool of Native talent both above and below the line. Programs like the *Warner Media Access Program* have placed over 500 individuals in below the line positions. With a focus on traditionally excluded groups, and with those entering the industry, it is a great example of how studios and companies can create a “grow your own” program.

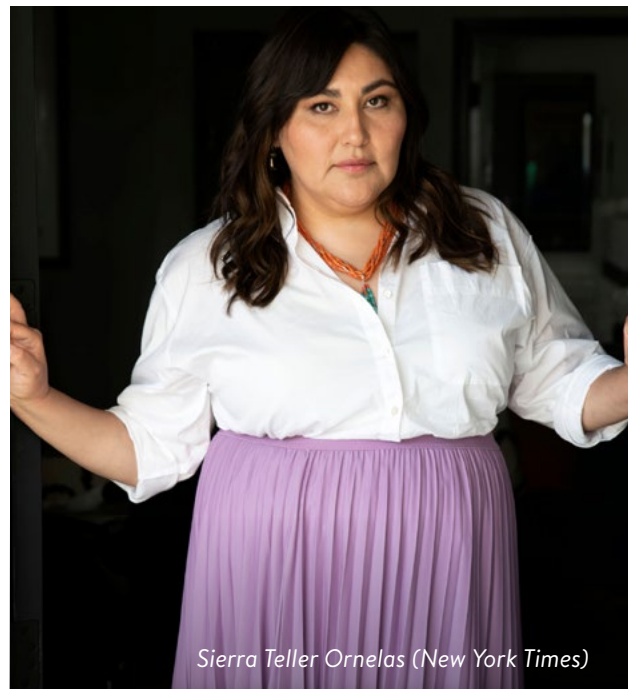
Diversify your entire production team.

Executive producers, directors, and showrunners are key to setting standards and tone within productions and can also support building a more diverse production team. As the executive producer and co-creator of *Rutherford Falls*, Sierra Teller Ornelas (*Navajo*) lead a diverse writer’s room with half of the room made up of Indigenous writers—some who came from non-traditional routes, including stand-up

comedy. Sterling Harjo (*Seminole/Muscogee Creek*) and Taika Waititi’s (*Māori*) *Reservation Dogs* included a history-making all Native writers’ room, leading cast, and directors. Both productions also brought in Native artists into below the line positions as well.



Taika Waititi (*Wired*)



Sierra Teller Ornelas (*New York Times*)

Breaking Out of the Consultant Model

When Native cultures are onscreen, it should be done responsibly and accurately. There are ways to move beyond the cultural consultant model and include Native creatives in all aspects of production, which will strengthen and support the stories being told.

While Native cultural consultants have a role to play within the industry—too often Native consultants have been used as an afterthought, under compensated, and with no power to influence the outcome of a production.

They are too often brought in to check a box—to guard against criticism, and often to greenlight the already established story and ideas of the showrunner or director. This current model does not foster meaningful collaboration and inclusion, and has the potential to perpetuate content that harms our communities. To fully create authentic and accurate portrayals of Native peoples, we must transform the cultural consultant model into one that welcomes Indigenous peoples into key creative spaces: writer, director and/or producer.

The consultant model has limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed:

1. Cultural consultants are often used INSTEAD OF Native writers, directors, or producers although the changes that are often needed are creative ones.
2. Productions often seek and staff a cultural consultant that is expected to consult on all aspects of a production—from reviewing scripts to signing off on sets and wardrobes.
3. There is no formal training that ensures the consultant is well versed or experienced to complete the wide range of needs—meaning they may not be in the best position to provide these services.
4. At times, cultural consultants with knowledge or expertise from one tribe are asked to provide knowledge or expertise of a different tribe.
5. Productions may be technically accurate in their depictions of a particular culture but can still be a damaging or harmful representation of Native peoples. Cultural consultants may not always be able to provide this additional level of guidance.
6. Cultural consultants are outside the set power structure that exists within productions and are often unable to make meaningful and necessary change.

Studios and companies can be part of an inclusive solution for Native representation. When creating content that centers Native characters:

- 1** Hire at minimum one (1) Native writer to ensure authentic and accurate representation.
- 2** Hire at minimum one (1) Native director OR producer.
- 3** Hire an appropriate Native cultural consultant to advise and provide input on history, dress, or customs of the specific tribe you are depicting that works alongside the Native writer and reports to the Native producer or director.



Compensation Matters

Whenever you are asking for information, knowledge, or advice when it comes to Native culture, language, and representation you *must* appropriately compensate those individuals. Too often, Native knowledge is being requested and used and Native creatives

and peoples are not acknowledged or given appropriate credit for their work. Any time you are engaging Native writers, actors, or cultural consultants, the individuals should be compensated for their work at a rate comparable to other subject-matter experts.

CONCLUSION

We are in an incredible moment in time where high-quality content is more available than ever. The diversity of the stories being told across the entertainment industry is only growing, and the way in which studios, platforms, and content creators are approaching the telling of authentic stories is evolving.

As we move forward, we can champion and support work that advances Native representation in impactful ways, create stories, characters, and content that are entertaining, moving, complex, and are both commercially successful and critically acclaimed. The opportunities before us are limitless.

But we cannot sit by and hope for the best. We must take a thoughtful, conscious, and deliberate approach to engaging Native talent in all areas of production, from concept to completion. Everyone doing the work of telling Native stories must be mindful of the ways in which storytelling has harmed Native and Indigenous communities and tell a more

balanced version of contemporary Native life not based on myths or harmful stereotypes. Native peoples are more than our trauma; what we don't have does not define us. Because what we do have are stories, and the talents and skills to share it. And as audiences have shown, they are eager for more.

Acknowledgements

IllumiNative would like to thank the Native creatives and allies who contributed their time, stories, and thoughts that helped inform the guide. We are indebted to your efforts to challenge and change the industry to be more inclusive of Native stories and Native peoples.

We would also like to thank the leaders and programs who have worked for decades to support and champion Native talent.

IllumiNative would like to thank the Walt Disney Corporation for their financial contribution that made the creation of this guide possible.

Photo by Ryan Redcorn

Additional Resources

Writer's Guild of America West: Native American and Indigenous Writers Committee

wga.org/members/membership-information/committees/native-american-indigenous

Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity Tips for Accurate Representation: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders
static1.squarespace.com/static/5f8a09a4bd8bae2e8075da0b/t/60d5ffdddb559033f0953144/1624637406983/TTIE_Factsheet_NHPI_June2021.pdf

Sundance Institute's Indigenous Program
sundance.org/programs/indigenous-program/

State of Hawai'i Film Office
filmoffice.hawaii.gov/filming-in-hawaii/

Navajo Nation TV & Film Office
navajonationtvandfilm.com/

Cherokee Nation Film Office
cherokee.film/

Additional Learning

Native American Journalists Association (NAJA): Reporting and Terminology Guide
najanewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NAJA_Reporting_and_Indigenous_Terminology_Guide.pdf

Cross-Cultural Digital Storywork: A Framework for Engagement with/in Indigenous Communities: Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning Vol 2, Issue 1, S2016
esj.usask.ca/index.php/esj/article/view/61489/46498

First Nations Resources

On-Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts, and Stories
iso-bea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/On-Screen-Protocols-Pathways.pdf

Indigenous Peoples and Intellectual Property in Canada
ic.gc.ca/eic/site/108.nsf/eng/00004.html

imagineNATIVE Institute (First Nations)
imaginative.org/institute

Indigenous Film Office (First Nations)
iso-bea.ca/resources/

Indigenous Arts Protocols: Ontario Arts Council
Video: youtube.com/watch?v=c6VuHJi6O0Q
English Transcript: arts.on.ca/oac/media/oac/Video%20Transcripts/Indigenous-Arts-Protocols.pdf

Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory: Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)
caut.ca/sites/default/files/caut-guide-to-acknowledging-first-peoples-and-traditional-territory-2017-09.pdf

Pathways & Protocols: A Filmmaker's Guide to Working with Indigenous People, Culture and Concepts: Screen Australia
screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/16e5ade3-bbca-4db2-a433-94bcd4c45434/Pathways-and-Protocols.pdf

Working with Indigenous People, Content, and Country: Screenwest
screenwest.com.au/filming-in-wa/resources/indigenous-resources/

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Information Sheet: Arts Law Centre of Australia
artslaw.com.au/information-sheet/indigenous-cultural-and-intellectual-property-icip-aitb/

Working with the Traditional People of Regional Western Australia: Screenwest
screenwest.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/3.2-Best-Practice-Guide-for-Filmmakers.pdf

Indigenous Screen Strategy, 2016-2020: Screenwest
screenwest.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Screenwest-Indigenous-Screen-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf

Citations

- 1 *Reclaiming Native Truth: A Project to Dispel America's Myths and Misconceptions*. (2018, June). <https://illuminatives.org/reclaiming-native-truth/>.
- 2 *Hollywood Diversity Report 2020 Tale of Two Hollywoods Part 1: Film*. (UCLA College of Social Sciences: 2020, February 6). <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/hollywood-diversity-report-2020/>.
- 3 *Hollywood Diversity Report 2020 Tale of Two Hollywoods Part 2: Television*. (UCLA College of Social Sciences: 2020, October 22). <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/hollywood-diversity-report-2020/>.
- 4 *Hollywood Diversity Report 2021: Pandemic in Process Part 1 Film*. (UCLA College of Social Sciences: 2021, April 22). <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2021-Film-4-22-2021.pdf>.
- 5 *Being Seen on Screen: Diverse Representation & Inclusion On TV*. Nielsen. (2020, December). <https://content.nielsen.com/1/881703/2020-11-17/b28d>.
- 6 *Tribal Directory*. Bureau of Indian Affairs. (2020, October). <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ois/tribal-leaders-directory/>.
- 7 *Federal and State Recognized Tribes*. National Conference of State Legislatures. (2020, March). <https://www.ncsl.org/legislators-staff/legislators/quad-caucus/list-of-federal-and-state-recognized-tribes.aspx#State>.
- 8 *Indian Citizenship Act*. Public Law 68-175, 43 STAT 253. (1924, June 2).
- 9 Dunphy, Peter. "The State of Native American Voting Rights." Brennan Center for Justice. (2019, March 13). <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/state-native-american-voting-rights>.
- 10 *American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (AIRFA)* (42 U.S.C. § 1996).
- 11 *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction*. National Congress of American Indians. (2020, February). https://www.ncai.org/tribalnations/introduction/Indian_Country_101_Updated_February_2019.pdf.
- 12 *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction*. National Congress of American Indians. (2020, February). https://www.ncai.org/tribalnations/introduction/Indian_Country_101_Updated_February_2019.pdf.
- 13 *Indian Gaming Facts*. National Indian Gaming Association. (2019, September). <http://www.northforkrancheria.com/files/Indian%20Gaming%20Facts%2021.pdf>.
- 14 *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010 Census Briefs*. U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2012/dec/c2010br-10.pdf>.
- 15 *The Lack of American Indian Representation in the Entertainment Industry and Its Affects*. Comicsverse. (2017, January). <https://comicsverse.com/the-lack-of-american-indian-representation-in-the-entertainment-industry/>.
- 16 *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. National Institute of Justice, André B. Rosay. (2016, May). <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>.
- 17 *Stolen Spirits: The Appropriation of the Windigo Spirit in Horror Literature*. Hunchman, K. N. Digital Literature Review, Vol. 7. (2020). <https://openjournals.bsu.edu/dlr/issue/view/233/69>.
- 18 *Twilight Saga's Issue with Indigenous Culture*. FilmDaze, Shea Vassar. (2020, May 20). <https://filmdaze.net/twilight-sagas-issue-with-indigenous-culture/>.

Photo Credits

Contemporary Native Peoples (collage)

NATIVE CREATIVES



N. Bird Runningwater (Cheyenne and Mescalero Apache Tribal Nations)
[Native News Online](#)



Taika Waititi (Māori)
[Luke Fontana](#)



Sterlin Harjo (Seminole Nation)
[IMDb](#)



Sydney Freeland (Navajo Nation)
[IMDb](#)



Sierra Teller Ornelas (Navajo Nation)
[New York Times](#)



Jana Schmieding (Lakota Sioux)
[IMDb](#)



Wes Studi (Cherokee)
[GQ](#)



Kyle Bell (Thlopthlocco Tribal Town of Oklahoma)
[Kyle Bell](#)



Alika Maikau (Kanaka Maoli)
[Hollywood Reporter](#)



Tantoo Cardinal (Cree and Métis)
[Macleans](#)

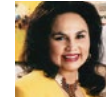


Baykali Ganambarr (Kokalango Mala)
[Fandago](#)

ARTISTS



Steven Paul Judd (Kiowa-Choctaw)
[The NTVS](#)



Joan Hill (Muscogee Cree)
[First American Art Magazine](#)



Gerald Clarke Jr. (Cahuilla Band of Indians)
[Palm Springs Life](#)



Frank Buffalo Hyde (Onondaga/Nez Perce)
[Meow Wolf](#)



Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation)
[Indianz.com](#)



Natalie Ball (Klamath)
[The Ford Family Foundation](#)



Blake Angeconeb (Anishinaabe)
[Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective](#)

ENTREPRENEUR



Larissa Crawford (Métis-Jamaican)
[Faze](#)

SCIENTISTS



Aaron Yazzie (Navajo Nation)
[Aaron Yazzie](#)



Robin Wall Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatomi Nation)
[Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

POLITICS



Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland (Laguna Pueblo)
[Wiki Commons](#)



Congresswoman Sharice Davids (Hochunk)
[Sharice Davids](#)



Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan (White Earth Ojibwe)
[Minnesota Government](#)



Congressman Kaiuli'i Kahele (Native Hawaiian)
[Kaiuli'i Kahele](#)



State Representative Ruth Anna Buffalo (Three Affiliated Tribes)
[New York Times](#)



Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, DOI, Bryan Todd Newland (Bay Mills Indian Community (Ojibwe))
[Indianz.com](#)



Robert Anderson, Principal Deputy Solicitor, DOI (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe)
[U.S. Department of the Interior](#)

MUSICIANS



Raye Zaragoza (of Akimel O'otham descent)
[Raye Zaragoza](#)



Taboo (Shoshone)
[NIH Medline Plus Magazine](#)



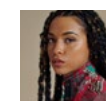
Halluci Nation (Tim "Zoolman" Hill (Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River)/Ehren "Bear Witness" Thomas (Cayuga First Nation))
[Halluci Nation](#)



Buffy St. Marie (Cree First Nations)
[NPR](#)



Supaman (Apsáalooke, Crow)
[Billings Gazette](#)



Princess Nokia (Tiano)
[Billboard](#)

WRITERS



Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek)
[Joy Harjo](#)



Tommy Orange (Cheyenne and Arapaho)
[New York Times](#)



Angeline Boulley (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians)
[Authors Unbound Agency](#)



Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians)
[Harper Collins Publishers](#)



Stephen Graham Jones (Blackfeet Nation)
[Stephen Graham Jones](#)



Tiffany Midge (Standing Rock Sioux)
[Missoulia.com](#)



Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes)
[Institute of Contemporary Art Miami](#)



Terese Marie Mailhot (Nlaka'pamux First Nations)
[The Paris Review](#)

ATHLETES



Madison Hammond (Navajo and San Felipe Pueblo)
[Indian Country Today](#)



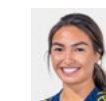
Rickie Fowler (Navajo)
[PGA Tour](#)



Notah Begay III (Navajo and San Felipe/Isleta Pueblo)
[Getty Images](#)



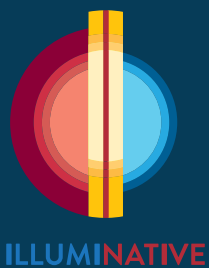
Kyrie Irving (Standing Rock Sioux tribe)
[NBA](#)



Lauren Schad (Cheyenne River Sioux)
[CEV](#)



Jordan Marie Daniel (Lakota Winyan)
[Jordan Marie Daniel](#)



IllumiNative is a national, Native woman-led nonprofit dedicated to increasing the visibility of Native peoples and challenging and changing the narrative about Native peoples. We envision a future where the self-determination and sovereignty of Native peoples is respected, where our children see themselves reflected in the world around them, and where Native peoples author and drive our own narrative.

To learn more, visit illuminatives.org