

Senator John Pinto Memorial Fund Information

Purpose: Senator John Pinto recognized that as the New Mexico film industry moves forward, so must the Native American film industry. Administered by the New Mexico State Film Office, these grants will be awarded to help create and increase enthusiasm for film in the Native Community and to open new doors into the film industry in New Mexico.

About: This \$100,000 appropriation was possible through one of two 2019 junior bills.

Process/Qualifications:

- Applicants must be a registered member of one of the tribes or pueblos of New Mexico which include – Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia, Zuni, Jicarilla Apache, Mescalero Apache, and the Navajo Nation.
- The grants were awarded to projects by Native students and Native filmmakers living and working in New Mexico. The grants awarded were \$5,000 per project. Only 1 project per applicant may be submitted.
- Funds can be used toward pre-production, production, and post-production.

List of submission materials:

- A bio/CV/resume for each project member. Work samples may be submitted via an online streaming service, like Vimeo or YouTube.
- Information on project content & objectives, including but not limited to the logline, treatment, artistic statement and distribution plan.
- A line-item total budget for the project and specific budget for how the funds will be used.
- A list of funding/grants received to date.
- Two (2) letters of support (credibility of the applicant, their credentials, and the reasons why they deserve the funding).
- If awarded, a letter of agreement will be provided by the New Mexico State Film Office and must be signed.

Outcome: Twenty (20) \$5,000 grants were awarded to Native film students and filmmakers living and working in New Mexico. Awardees came from: Navajo, Santa Clara Pueblo, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of Acoma, Zuni Pueblo, Dine', Taos Pueblo and San Ildefonso Pueblo.

On August 4 – 7, 2020 the submission committee held video meetings with each filmmaker to check-in on their projects and to offer any advice or direction that the filmmakers needed.

- Projects must be completed within 2 years of receiving funds;
- Projects must include a credit to NMFO and suggested wording such as “Thank you to the Senator John Pinto Native Filmmakers Memorial Fund”;
- The completed project must be screened in New Mexico;
- A trailer and production photos must be provided to the New Mexico Film Office for marketing materials to include but not limited to: press releases, websites, social media etc.

Awardees:

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.

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.

“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.”

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.

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.”

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.

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.

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

"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."

Submission review committee:

Ramona Emerson



Ramona Emerson is a Diné writer and filmmaker originally from Tohatchi, New Mexico. She received her degree in Media Arts in 1997 from the University of New Mexico and her MFA in Creative Writing (Fiction) in 2015 from the Institute of American Indian Arts. She has worked as a professional videographer, writer and editor for over twenty years and is currently working on her 8th film project, *Crossing the Line*. She is an Emmy nominee, a Sundance Native Lab Fellow, a Time-Warner Storyteller Fellow, a Tribeca All-Access Grantee and a WGBH Producer Fellow. Ramona just finished her first novel, *Shutter* the first of a trilogy, and is now working toward publishing and adapting the series into a screenplay. Through her storytelling, Emerson looks at contemporary stories about her people and aims to question and redefine the expectations of Native cultural identity, highlighting stories that are not a part of mainstream media. She currently resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico where she and her husband/producer, Kelly Byars run their production company Reel Indian Pictures.

"Senator John Pinto understood the importance of Native filmmakers telling their own stories. This grant could not come at a more perfect time as filmmakers of color are finally making strides in taking back our stories and insisting that we are writing the screenplays, running the cameras, directing and producing, all on our own. The time has come and I know that Senator Pinto would be proud to see the first projects to come from his invaluable support. We will continue to fight to make sure this fund continues and the voices of Native filmmakers continue to be supported. That is what he would have wanted," said Ramona Emerson.

Nanobah Becker



Nanobah Becker: is an award-winning writer/director who earned her MFA in directing from Columbia University. Her first two short films, *FLAT* and *CONVERSION* (Sundance Film Festival), were selected to screen at numerous festivals in the U.S. and internationally. *THE 6th WORLD*, a sci-fi short she wrote and directed, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival. The National Gallery of Canada selected the film for inclusion in its prestigious exhibition *SAKAHÀN: International Indigenous Art*. She directed *I LOST MY SHADOW* by Laura Ortman, which won best Music Video at the imagineNATIVE film + media arts festival. Her second collaboration with Laura Ortman, *MY SOUL REMAINER*, was in the 2019 Whitney Biennale and also recently acquired by the Baltimore Museum of Art. Nanobah is a citizen of the Navajo Nation and was a dialogue director on the Navajo language dub of *FINDING NEMO*. Nanobah was born and raised in Albuquerque and currently lives in Los Angeles.

"There absolutely is nothing else like the SJP Memorial Fund out there. To be able to help support 20 talented indigneous filmmakers is an incredible honor. I cannot wait to see their finished projects," said Nanobah Becker.

Chris Eyre



Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho) is an internationally recognized film and television director and producer who has received many awards for his work including, a Peabody, an Emmy and a Sundance Audience Award. Eyre's directorial-debut was the Miramax Classic Film "SMOKE SIGNALS (1998), which won Eyre the 1998 Sundance Filmmakers' Trophy and 1998 Sundance Audience Award. In 2018, "SMOKE SIGNALS (1998) was inducted by the Library of Congress to the National Film Registry for movies of historic and cultural significance to be preserved for all time. Eyre's television credits as a director include multiple episodes of FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS (NBC) and work on LAW AND ORDER – SVU (NBC), as well as directing the dramatic mini-series WE SHALL REMAIN (2009) for PBS. Eyre began by attending the graduate film program at New York University and went on to the Sundance Institute's Directors' Lab being mentored by Robert Redford in 1995. Eyre's film "EDGE OF AMERICA (2004)" was selected as the "Opening Night" film at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival, and garnered Eyre the highly prestigious, Outstanding Directorial Achievement from the Directors Guild of America (DGA) in 2005. Eyre has directed and/or produced over fifteen-feature films. In 2017, Eyre's company created and supervised the cultural team that advised language and Cheyenne Native American culture for the Christian Bale feature film "HOSTILES (2018)" directed by Scott Cooper. Chris Eyre is currently developing a television series with fellow producers George RR Martin (Game of Thrones) and Robert Redford to be in production in 2020. Chris Eyre resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"In the face of all that is happening in our country today, I'm incredibly proud to see the state and the people of New Mexico supporting new and emerging Native American filmmakers success. Storytellers are critically to our history, culture and most importantly, our entertainment! Thank you to the late-Senator Pinto for his vision, to the filmmakers for their stories, and to the state of New Mexico for being New Mexicans!!" said Chris Eyre.

Beverly Morris



Beverly Morris is a Producer/Director and owner of Chain Reaction Productions, a Native American film company that develops, produces and directs video projects for and about Native American People. She was one of the founders of Native Images, a video production center at the Institute of American Indian Arts. She served as the Director of the Summer Film and Television Workshop at the Institute of American Indian Arts in collaboration with the Walt Disney Studios/ABC Entertainment Talent Development Programs. Ms. Morris produced and directed Dancing with Photons, profile of Navajo physicist, Dr. Fred Begay, and produced Looking Toward Home, a one-hour program about Native American people living in urban areas. Ms. Morris produced the pilot for a ten episode PBS series Growing Native, co-produced by KNME TV-5 and Native American Public Telecommunications. She is currently in the post-production phase of Chasing My DNA: Travels From the Steppes of Mongolian to Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. Ms. Morris serves on the Institute of American Indian Arts Board of Trustees. Ms. Morris is a member of the Qawalangin Tribe (Aleut) of Unalaska, Alaska and lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.

"I was thrilled to be asked to serve as one of the judges for the Senator John Pinto Film Grant project because I wanted to learn about what our Indigenous filmmakers in New Mexico were up to. I am impressed with the variety of film projects submitted and I look forward to watching all of the films soon. Congratulations to our Native Filmmakers," said Beverly Morris.

Application video: Click on the image below to play the video or on the links provided. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=232637238022180&extid=TAS6jkLDGPB3XpEH> or click here to view on NMFO website: <https://nmfilm.com/for-communities/education/native-film-fund/>



Press Releases:

- NMFO press release: <https://nmfilm.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SJP-Awards-PR.pdf>
- ABQ Journal press release: <https://www.abqjournal.com/1475455/20-native-filmmakers-receive-sen-john-pinto-grants.html>
- Indianz.com press release: <https://www.indianz.com/covid19/2020/05/17/senator-john-pinto-native-filmmakers-memorial-fund-new-mexico/>
- Taos News: https://www.taosnews.com/tempo/taos-pueblo-pinto-filmmakers-senator-john-pinto-fund-grants/article_daad58f2-0c0f-5a09-b2d4-d3d792c5ae6f.html
- KRQE: <https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/new-mexico-film-office-accepting-applications-for-sen-john-pinto-memorial-filmmakers-fund/>
- Indian Country Today: <https://indiancountrytoday.com/the-press-pool/senator-john-pinto-native-filmmakers-memorial-fund-submission-deadline-extended-to-may-22-2020-NEkIMaXrtUSlzyiWKJyKxQ>