DEAR VIEWERS, SPONSORS, SUPPORTERS, DONORS, PRODUCERS AND PARTNERS,

Yá’áti’ééh, O’siyo, and Hau. These are greetings in my Native languages, Diné, Tsalagiyi, and Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota (or Navajo, Cherokee and Sioux) respectively, which mean far more than just hello. Together my traditional words mean welcome, friend, nice to meet you, and friendly greetings. Since July 2020, I am the new Executive Director of Vision Maker Media. I step into an honorable position as formed by my predecessors from the founding Executive Director, my father Frank Blythe and then followed by Shirley Sneve (Sicangu Lakota).

Like many in this country, 2020 was a year of transitions for Vision Maker Media, from staff positions to dealing and adjusting with the COVID-19 pandemic to implementing remote working from home. With great team work, we were able to accomplish so much with forward thinking, creative innovation and nimbleness. Among these changes, our greatest accomplishment was educating more audiences by developing our online film festival and the additional Indigenous Day, Halloween, Veterans Day, and Native American and Alaska Native Heritage Month online film programming.

After postponing the March Vision Maker Media Film Festival several times, the team decided to move to an online film festival and did
so in swift manner from planning to launch. Alongside transitioning the film festival from in-person to online, came new learning and an updated website. Between the launch of the new website beginning August 1, 2020 and the beginning of the film festival August 31, 2020, we experienced an unpredictable outcome—our fundraising and marketing dramatically increased with new support. We were now reaching new audiences worldwide with more than 164,000 streams to view films by and about Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Indigenous peoples of the world. For the remainder of 2020, we continued to reach new audiences who engaged with our content through our online programs and panel discussions with nearly 15,000 new email subscribers, a 140% increase in website traffic and a huge growth in our social media following. We also maintained our existing partners, while working with new local and national partners, within public media and the Lincoln community in Nebraska. We are very proud and appreciative of all these partner collaborations.

Among our support to film producers, we witnessed the following films finish their post-production work and brought them to premiere in PBS broadcasting: **ATTLA, Return to Rainy Mountain, Skindigenous Season 2, The Blackfeet Flood**, and **Words from a Bear**. We launched our new Short Films Program by funding short narrative film projects that includes a mentorship with recognized master producers in the film industry. In our thirty years of film funding for television, we were able to maintain our long documentary film support through our Public Media Fund, where selected projects head toward future PBS broadcasting.
IN SUMMARY, VISION MAKER MEDIA:

- Supported 16 new film projects in short and long formats,
- Funded $825,306 in film project support, and
- Sent 5 films to PBS broadcasting.

We were very fortunate and are ever so grateful to our individual donors, sponsors and major funders, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), all whose sustaining support in 2020 enabled us to continue our funding to Native American storytellers through this pandemic.

With all our lessons learned from 2020, we look forward to continuing our online programming; building new partnerships with producers, public media entities, Native communities and PBS stations; and we prepare for more challenges as we all endure the pandemic.

Hózhó (Navajo life practice that encompasses harmony and balance within and surrounding us),

FRANCENE J. BLYTHE-LEWIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
(Diné, Sisseton-Wahpeton, Eastern Band Cherokee)
OUR VALUES

COMMUNITY
We bring Indigenous storytelling to your home through community-based digital events, social media feeds and online film programs.

EDUCATION
We help educators effectively cover present-day and historical Native topics through free viewer discussion guides.

NEW IDEAS
We develop new and innovative outlets to present Indigenous knowledge to new audiences.

NURTURING YOUTH
We nurture the next generation of storytellers through partnerships with sustainable Native youth media training programs.

MENTORSHIP
We provide Native filmmakers with professional workshops, internships and mentorship programs.

LEADERSHIP
We propel our staff and filmmakers to lead the next generation of Native media-makers in creative thinking.
Vision Maker Media (VMM) is the premiere source of public media by and about Native Americans since 1976. Our mission is empowering and engaging Native people to share stories. We envision a world changed and healed by understanding Native stories and the public conversations they generate. We work with VMM funded producers to develop, produce and distribute programs for all public media. VMM supports training to increase the number of American Indians and Alaska Natives producing public broadcasting programs. A key strategy for this work is in partnerships with Tribal nations, Indian organizations and Native communities. Reaching the national public and a global market is the ultimate goal for the dissemination of Native public media that shares Native perspectives with the world.
2020 AT A GLANCE

- **164K** views during our first **online indigenous film festival**
- **5 new films** sent to broadcast
- **28 ongoing projects** including **six new shorts**
- **46K native films aired**
- **34 total films in broadcast**

Photo from *Almost an Island*
BOARD MEMBERS

MARY KATHRYN NAGLE
BOARD CHAIR
(Cherokee Nation)
Partner, Pipestem Law

MARY SOLIS-AUSTIN
VICE CHAIR
(Pascua Yaqui/Blackfeet)
California Arts Council

FRANZ JOACHIM
SECRETARY
General Manager & CEO,
New Mexico PBS

RANDAL P. HANSEN
TREASURER
Assistant General Manager of NET

JOELY PROUDFIT
(Luiseño)
Director, California Indian Culture & Sovereignty Center

WALT POURIER
(Oglala) Nakota Designs

ROBIN BUTTERFIELD
(Winnebago/Chippewa)

ELIZABETH WEATHERFORD
Indigenous Media Initiative

PATRICK YACK
Executive Director,
Florida Public Media
FILMS RELEASED TO BROADCAST
Words from a Bear examines the enigmatic life and mind of Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Navarro Scott Momaday, one of Native America’s most celebrated authors of poetry and prose. The film visually captures the essence of Momaday’s writings, relating each written line to his unique American experience representing ancestry, place, and oral history.

Premiered: November 18, 2019
Distributor: American Masters/PBS Plus
Filmmaker: Jeffery Palmer
*Return to Rainy Mountain* is a documentary film that tells the story of N. Scott Momaday. It is a personal account of his life and legacy told in his own voice, and in the voice of his daughter Jill. Momaday speaks of his Kiowa roots, family, literature, oral tradition, nature, identity, and the sacred and important things that have shaped his life.

**Premiered:** November 19, 2019  
**Distributor:** PBS Plus  
**Filmmaker:** Jill Momaday (Kiowa)
THE BLACKFEET FLOOD

On June 8, 1964, a driving rain buckled dams and flooded vehicles on the Blackfeet Reservation, sweeping crying children from mothers’ arms, and ferrying homes and bodies across the prairie. By the time it ended, more than two-dozen Blackfeet Indians had drowned in the worst natural disaster in Montana history. More than a half-century after the worst disaster in Montana history, two Blackfeet families struggle to come to terms with the 1964 flood.

Premiered: November 25, 2019
Distributor: WORLD
Filmmaker: Ben Shors
ATTLA tells the gripping but virtually unknown story of George Attla, an Alaska Native dogsled racer who, with one good leg and a determined mindset, rose to international fame to become a legendary sports hero among both western and native communities across the country.

Premiered: December 16, 2019
Distributor: Independent Lens
Filmmaker: Catharine Axley
SKINDIGENOUS SEASON 2

SKINDIGENOUS returns for its second season with 13 new episodes profiling some of the most talented Indigenous tattoo artists in the world. The adventure once again takes us deep into the world of various tribes and communities using the art of tattoo as a lens. Through this series, tattoo becomes a point of entry into our characters’ lives, their spirit and their soul.

Premiered: April 9, 2020  
Distributor: APT  
Filmmaker: Nish Media
Each year, Vision Maker Media, with funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), funds an average of 10-12 media projects that represent the cultures, experiences, and values of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Films were reviewed and approved based on Native involvement, topics, guideline eligibility, relevance and quality.

Films are funded at all stages of the production process, with some still in research while others are nearing the end of production. Keep up-to-date with Vision Maker Media’s newsletter and social media to watch these films develop and catch their big premieres!

90% NATIVE-LED
100% SIGNIFICANT NATIVE INVOLVEMENT
At the historic moment in California’s history half a century in the making, where Columbus Day becomes Indigenous People’s Day 50 years after the occupation of Alcatraz, a group of native artists/activists address issues of contemporary indigeneity.

**APACHE 8: BEYOND THE FIRE (WORKING TITLE)**
**DOCUMENTARY | RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**

The recent catastrophic fires caused by climate change are a wakeup call to recognize the importance of Apache methods of fire prevention and fuel management. Young Apache women firefighters are taking on the responsibility to protect their 1.67 million acre reservation and set an example for the rest of the world.

**HEALTHY ACTIVE NATIVES SERIES**
**DOCUSERIES | RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT**

Frustrated with the lack of information about Native health, Waylon Pahona founded the Facebook page Healthy Active Natives (HANs) to empower Native People. Now over 74,000 members, HANs is one of the world’s largest Native American Health and Fitness groups on Social Media today. This journey follows three Native individuals struggling with physical and emotional limitations who derive inspiration and the strength to be healthy from the HANs community.
More than 2.4 billion acres. That’s how much land Indigenous people of the United States once held. Today they control just 56 million acres, or 2 percent of what was once theirs. But across the country, farmers, local governments and environmental advocates are returning that land, acre by acre. Not because they have to, but because they want to. *The Land Remembers* chronicles this story of a growing grassroots movement of reconciliation.

Very few encounters between European colonists and Native Americans could be considered to have benefited the Native population, either directly or indirectly. Yet a relationship that began over 200 years ago between the Kashia Pomo of the Northern California coast and Russian settlers who founded Fort Ross has recently been revived, energizing the tribe’s cultural traditions in their successful quest for ownership and return of ancient lands.
OLDER THAN THE CROWN
DOCUMENTARY | POST-PRODUCTION

After the deliberate separation and an unjust declaration of extinction, the Sinixt people return to their ancestral land in Canada to continue practicing and protecting their aboriginal rights.

WHEN THEY WERE HERE
DOCUMENTARY | PRODUCTION

Indigenous women and girls face rates of violence unlike any other group. The stories of these women and girls go beyond the statistics and figures used to define them. They were mothers; they were grandmothers; they were daughters; they were loved when they were here.

GOOD HEALTH TV
DOCUSERIES | NEW MEDIA

A mini-series of four short (1-3 minute) videos, each telling a unique story of art, cultural revitalization, community-building, or social justice reformation, as told directly by American Indian people, with the goal of inspiring others to do the same.
Out beyond the vast and expansive landscapes of the Navajo reservation, a decade’s long epidemic of violence and discrimination continues to exist and thrive in the towns and cities that border Navajo communities. This four-part docuseries examines the epidemic of violence that surrounds Navajo communities, identifying and exposing the racial tension that exists in these towns through the history of those who have fought and continue to fight to make a change in these spaces.

What happens when an opera imagines myths erased from America’s dark past? How does art and culture grapple with the uncomfortable truths at the heart of this country’s identity? How can performance and activism rediscover erased aspects of Native culture and the land? These questions and more are what we will explore in Sweet Land, an hour-long Artbound episode, produced by L.A.’s experimental opera company, The Industry, and KCET / Public Media Group of Southern California.
SHORT FILM FELLOWSHIP

Vision Maker Media funded six short film fellowships in 2020. Our Fellows will be funded and provided mentorship throughout the production of their short film. Meet our next generation of Indigenous storytellers and check out their upcoming projects!
SEEDS: Two young girls, trying to understand love in all its forms after they lose their parents, run an errand for their older sister, Raven, who may be pregnant.

MORNINGSTAR ANGELINE
CHIPPEWA CREE/BLACKFEET

ANTHONY FLOREZ
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE

TWOBEARS: Casey TwoBears is a Marine Corps veteran, ex-junkie, and former county inmate. While working as a janitor for a boxing gym, Casey volunteers to be the sparring partner for the local “champ” to prove his worth as a warrior in the ring but also to prove himself as the modern warrior that his daughter and granddaughter can depend on.
**FIRECRACKER BULLETS:** Through spoken word poetry, a young water protector from the Standing Rock occupation contemplates his PTSD while working at a Native firework stand on the 4th of July.

**SONYA OBERLY**
**NEZ PERCE**

**RESPECTED BY HER PEOPLE:** The film will confront the ideas of representation and preconceived ideas concerning the American Indian female identity. The film examines the idea of Indigenous feminism. Specific emphasis will be placed upon images and language from the Nimipuu community.
LONNIE BEGAYE
NAVAJO

ÍINÁ (TRANSLATION FOR LIFE): A high school senior works to fix his grandfather’s old truck to get his grandmother to the annual Navajo Nation fair for the last time before she takes her journey. Having nothing but a bicycle to gather the needed items, he travels long distances from his home to the nearest town in order to grant his grandmother a wish to spend it back where her life started.

SAKYA CALSOYAS
NAVAJO

THE LITTLE SHEEPHERDER: One day out herding her sheep, a young Diné girl encounters a group of young boys that do something that enormously upsets her, so she takes action. In doing so she starts a feud in their tiny community that plays out in an era where Indigenous rights and freedoms were not guaranteed and often illegal, and this feud will need to rely on “the old ways” to bring the story to a happy ending.
ACTIVE FILMS

PRODUCTION
Ancestors in the Archives Clans (K’eh)
Chasing Voices
Searching for Sequoyah
Without a Whisper
Daughter of a Lost Bird
Home from School
Indian Country Today TV
MANZANAR, DIVERTED
Sisters Gone: Missing and Murdered in Alaska
“Untitled” by TPT

BROADCAST
ATTLA
The Blackfeet Flood
Skindigenous Season 2
Words from a Bear
Return to Rainy Mountain

POST PRODUCTION
Almost an Island
Sisters Rising
Blood Memory

NEW MEDIA
Indigenous with Stacey Thunder
A Kayak to Carry Us
Rematriation
Native Music VR Trilogy
Indigeneity Learning Media
Indigi-Genius
Osage Murders

R&D
Violence Against Women Act
When They Were Here
Vision Maker Media hosted an online, five-week-long celebration of American Indian, Alaska Native and worldwide Indigenous films. Accompanying the films, the festival featured a collective of inspiring filmmakers in engaging digital conversations, creating a space for both healing and learning.
FEATURED FILMS

Blood Memory
And Now We Rise
nîpawistamâsowin:
We Will Stand Up
Sisters Rising
LN3: Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe in Resistance
Clearcut
A Kayak to Carry Us: Stories in Stone
A Kayak to Carry Us: Lived Knowledge
He Hekenga Tūhura
Now is the Time
The Blackfeet Flood
Wildfire
Keemooch
Leitis in Waiting
I Am Me
Sweetheart Dancers

Nancy From Now On
Inyanka Sni
Hinekura
Rematriation
The Boxers of Brule
Ways to See
Rustic Oracle
Rū
Powwow Highway: The LEGO Movie
Oh Corbeau! Oh Corbeau!
(Oh Crow! Oh Crow!)
ATTLa
Little Chief
Minnies War Bonnet
The Fake Calendar
Akhămëyimo nitānis /
Keep Going My Daughter
Moroni for President
“This festival has made my month. Watching Netflix and Hulu, you kind of get depressed seeing a couple points of view. I binge-watched the Vision Maker Film Festival, and it made my soul feel different and my emotions found allies through all these films. Thank you for this experience. This is truly one of the bright places in cinema today. Truly humbled by these films.”

-ATTENDEE

“Awesome job to everyone who was involved! The experiences shared were insightful, authentic, and powerful. I look forward to seeing what’s next and to continue to be an ally for our Native communities.”

-ATTENDEE
DIGITAL PRESENCE

SOCIAL MEDIA

10K +1.9K
FACEBOOK FANS

9.4K +8.5K
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

16K +531
TWITTER FANS
+140% SESSIONS

+114% NEW USERS

+27% AVERAGE SESSION DURATION
FUNDRAISING
INDIVIDUAL GIVING

$48,200 +23% RAISED
154 +31% NEW DONORS
389 +7% DONATIONS
$124 +18% AVERAGE GIFT

25% ADDITIONAL
40% NEW DONORS
27% RENEWING
THANK YOU

Generous support for this fiscal year was provided by the following. If you would like to support more Native stories by Native people, please visit visionmakermedia.org

Esra A
Chrystie Adams
Nadema Agard
Chris & Dawn Amory
Mary Amory
Stephen Amory
John Andrews
Cathryn Antkowiak-Howard
Gwen Archer
Molly Ashford
Callen Aster
Mary Bailey
Mary Barber
Rebecca Barker
Maria Barrera
Ann Beck
Helen Bishop
Kenneth Blume
Frank Blythe
Richard Bosshardt
Allo Boubou
Elizabeth Bowman
Forrest Boyd
Robin Brack
Thomas Bristol
Leif Brostrom
Ruth Brown
Tamzin Brown
Leslie Browning
Ariel Brownstein
Sharon Buchbinder
Louise Burg
Cynthia Burton
Pamela Butler
Sandy Cargile
Janet Carlson
Victor & Joanne Chandler
Lucille Charley
Sharie A. Chickering
Gail Clarke
Michael Close
Nathan Cole
Kent Convers
Karla Crescenta
Peter Crockett
Krista Cuellar
Jeff D
Jo Anna Dale
Christine Davis
Sofia de Cardenas
Christina de la Cruz
Phyllis Deal
Janice Deeds
Cara Denyer
Allison DeSario
Linda Dick-Olson
Deborah DiPlacido
David C. Dister
Dennis Dohner
Elaine Dorough Johnson
Jean L. Eden
Judy Eggleston
Verna Ehret
Connie Eigenmann
Rick Eisenstein
Jake Elder
Teresa Enking-Novak
Amy Epstein
Jeff & Angie Erks
Pam Evans Mitoraj
Darlene Farrow
G Steven Ferris
Paul Filipkowski
Veronica Flores
Lawrence Forte
Katsitsionni Fox
Josje Fransen
Misty Frazier
Susan Friedenberg
Joshua & Cassandra Fye
Lydia Garvey
Jennifer Gauthier
Margaret Gerard
Mark M. Giese
Helen Gildred
Mallory Glaser
Martina Gockel-Frank
Louis Goldich
Lori Gottula
Katharine Grant
Rohanna Green
Anne Greene
Robert Grossman
Fia Grunwald
Veronika Gukova
Isaac Hager
Evelyn Haller
Eleni Haloftis
Mitchell Hambley
Colin Hampson
Randy Hansen
Emily Hantz
Mary Harvey
John Haworth
DeLynn Hay
Meg Hayes
Ric Haynes
Angelia Hickman
Erik Higgins
Eleanor Hines
Morgan Hoeffel
Duncan Horner
Charles Horton
Jack Hoyer
Ron Hull
Walter F. Hunter
Gerald Hurt
Karen Hutt
Joshua Icban
Barbara Ida
Rochelle Igrisan
Marc Imlay
Margaret Jacobs
Katrina Jagodinsky
Kay Jantzen
Ray & Elizabeth Jenkins
Susan Jennys
Nicki Jimenez
Franz Joachim
Seva Joseph
Kyo Sin Kang
Irene Kao
Charles Kapela
Julie B. Kaplan
Constantin Kehaya
Faye Kennedy
Torsten & Jean Kjellstrand
Kathleen Kler
Michelle Kobbah
Ramona Kohrs
Elizabeth Koopman
Karla Kozach
Theodora Kramer
Susan Kus
Susan Kyle
FINANCIALS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND BREAKDOWN

The following is a summary of the audited financial information for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2020 financial statements.

REVENUE & SUPPORT

CPB Grant Revenue................................................................. $1,358,591
Other Grants & Contributions................................................. $331,631
Earned Income............................................................................ $183,326
Total Revenue & Support.......................................................... $1,873,548

EXPENSES

Programming................................................................................. $1,431,219
Management & General............................................................. $481,232
Fundraising..................................................................................... $44,649
Total Expenses........................................................................... $1,957,100

NET ASSETS

Net Assets Beginning of Fiscal Year........................................... $2,062,262
Change in Net Assets.................................................................. $-83,552
Net Assets End of Fiscal Year...................................................... $1,978,710
The 2020 Vision Maker Media Annual Report was made in-house by staff.