

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

PECHANGA: Film fest spotlights Native Americans

California's American Indian and Indigenous Film Festival caps off the three day event at Pechanga Resort & Casino on Saturday, Nov. 21.

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With dozens of film festivals popping up around Southern California, Joely Proudfit, saw one audience that wasn't being reached.

Proudfit, who is a descendant of the of Pechanga Band of Luiseño Mission Indians and teaches *Imagining Indians: American Indians, Media, Film and Society* at Cal State University San Marcos, worked with a group of students from the college, staff and tribal members put on the inaugural San Diego American Indian Film Festival festival in 2013.

"It was sad to know so many Native Americans hadn't seen the films," Proudfit said. "Tribal people were driving two and three hours just to come to the festival."

With a name change to California's American Indian and Indigenous Film Festival, Proudfit, the event's executive director, hopes that this year's attendance will triple the 800 festival goers from the first year.

The festival, presented by The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center at California State University San Marcos, runs on campus Thursday, Nov. 19, and Friday, Nov. 20, before finishing with a day of screenings at Pechanga Resort & Casino on Saturday, Nov. 21.

“For Native Americans, most people know us through the media,” Proudfit, said. “November is also a time of year people have Native Americans on their radar.”

The festival received more than 600 submissions and 20 feature length films, short films and documentaries were chosen for screening. Proudfit said many of the films include redemptive and positive stories.

Among Saturday’s highlights is the Youth Track program, which will be led by Native American filmmaker and artist Steven Paul Judd. Attendees 18 and younger can attend a workshop facilitated by Judd and view a variety of short films. The workshop includes learning how to create cinemagraphs, which are similar to the popular GIFS or photo stills with moving parts.

“It’s exciting to expose a younger audience to Native American filmmaking,” Judd said. “It’s up to the kids how creative they want to be.”

Judd said the festival offers filmmakers a place to go watch Native American movies and gives a voice to people that didn’t have a platform before. Smartphones can shoot in high definition and social media gives budding filmmakers a wider audience, making the process easier and less expensive.

“It levels the playing field,” Judd said.

Short films that will screen include “Amazing,” “Clouds of Autumn” and “First Contact.”

Judd’s short “Ronnie BoDean” will screen Saturday during Youth Track and in the evening ahead of the feature film “Mekko.”

The film, which is 13 minutes long, is about an anti-hero similar to John Candy’s character in the comedy “Uncle Buck,” Judd said.

Judd said he is thrilled to be making films, something he wanted to do from childhood.

“When I was younger I loved pop culture, reading comic books and going to the movies,” Judd said. “I realized, when I did go to the movies, there was never anyone who looked like me unless it was a Western, historical movie or documentary.”

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