



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MKE-17-029

TITLE: Misappropriation of Native Identity in Film & Television

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, Hollywood diversity and inclusion efforts have failed to recognize and implement the concerns of Native people. Historically, in Hollywood, dating back to 1898, most portrayals of Native people were by non-Natives; and

WHEREAS, Hollywood has not accurately portrayed the Native American experience in film. Film and television have not prioritized casting Native actors or telling accurate histories of Native people. Hollywood has portrayed Native people as relics of the past and as the enemies of westward expansion. These representations do not accurately portray the thriving, modern Sovereign Nations that exist in the US; and

WHEREAS, if a script calls for a Native American character, it is only right for a Native American person to be cast for that role; and

WHEREAS, stories told from a Native point of view are not widely supported by Hollywood. Studios, directors, producers and casting directors have not made substantial efforts to include Native American stories, actors and filmmakers in the film and television they produce; and

WHEREAS, Native people are concerned with our collective image, identity and acceptance and believe these misrepresentations jeopardize our future; and

WHEREAS, visual representations of Native People in film shape how American society views our sovereign Nations and the citizens of those Nations. Representation matters; and

WHEREAS, inaccurate and negative depictions of Native people in film and television can negatively impact Native Youth. Negative images and representations through film and television lead to negative treatment of Native youth impacting their self-esteem and mental health; and

WHEREAS, the stories of Indian Country are best portrayed in Hollywood by Native storytellers, including Native filmmakers and actors.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) calls on the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to lead Hollywood's diversity efforts to promote Native Actors, Native stunt men and women, Native people in front and behind the camera and Native stories in film. NCAI calls on the Casting Society of America to cast Native Actors to represent Native people in film and television. NCAI calls on the Writers Guild of America to represent and promote Native Americans in screenwriting. NCAI urges producers, studios and directors to highlight stories that accurately and positively portray Native people and Tribal communities as they are the stories of America; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI engages the film and television industry, theater and new media to work collaboratively with Tribal Nations to find financing, tax, labor and material incentives that would promote filming and storytelling on Tribal Lands; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI calls on the Film Industry including writers, directors and producers to engage in meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations, Tribal historians and Tribal elders to ensure that stories are told accurately and to consider the complex histories and cultures of indigenous peoples of North America and their Tribal Nations in film and television. The film industry should require free, prior and informed consent from those Tribal Nations and their peoples regarding stories that portray their societies; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2017 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee, WI, Oct 15, 2017 - Oct 20, 2017, with a quorum present.



Jefferson Keel, President

ATTEST:



Juana Najel Dixon, Recording Secretary