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American Indian Film Institute® Announces Partnership With Alaska Airlines Extended An Additional Year

San Francisco, CA (August 30, 2021) The American Indian Film Institute (AIFI) reached new heights when it partnered with Alaska Airlines in 2020 to stream award-winning American Indian, Alaska Native, and First Nations independent films onboard domestic Alaska flights.* The partnership made AIFI, the world's first and oldest organization of its kind, the first and only complete native-centric programming offered on any airline in the U.S. Starting Aug. 1, 2021, a new catalog of films by Indian Country's best emerging and professional filmmakers will debut in the sky via Alaska Beyond™ Entertainment, the airline's free in-flight entertainment system, which will be available to passengers with WiFi-equipped personal electronic devices.

Images of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and First Nations people can be confining, and AIFI recognizes that the partnership provides an opportunity to update those images, to demonstrate that the people of Indian Country are contemporary people living in a modern world where technology plays a vital role. The partnership offers an opportunity to showcase talented Native filmmakers and provide insight into Indian Country's unique spiritual and planetary values while dispelling the negative notions and symbolism.

Our partnership with Alaska and the addition of Native films to its in-flight programming is a huge strategic win for the American Indian Film Institute. When inclusion and diversity are sitting center stage globally, this allows our organization and filmmakers to remind the world that we are still here as we share our beautiful stories and diverse cultures, said Mytia Zavala, Executive Producer of the American Indian Film Institute.

Zavala stated further, What's more, it is about the impact it will have on our young people: that they will get on an Alaska flight and see their resemblances and cultures represented in this way — on a plane and in the sky — is immeasurably impactful. This representation and inclusion tell our people — more specifically, our young people — that they have value and worth. This opportunity has the power to change lives, and that does not escape any of us.

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AIFI, celebrating its forty-sixth year of presenting the American Indian Film Festival®, pulled from its extensive library a compilation of animated shorts, live-action shorts, documentaries, and music videos, which will play alongside mainstream programs and films on Alaska Beyond Entertainment.

AIFI has long recognized that the less direct experience the public has with a specific sector of society, the more media depictions shape the public's perception of who those communities are. The partnership gives the institute a chance to change the public paradigm about who American Indian, Alaska Native, and First Nations people are from an authentic place of first-hand knowledge and perspectives that depict the concerns, struggles, and successes of those communities.

American Indian Film Festival

The 46th Annual American Indian Film Festival's virtual presentation runs Nov. 5-13, 2021. It is the first and longest-running festival showcasing independent films dedicated to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and First Nations culture and stories. For the past forty-six years, the film institute has supported and celebrated generations of Native filmmakers, performing artists, and audiences while simultaneously drawing into its circle of support: celebrities, industry professionals, student filmmakers, seasoned festival-goers, and newcomers. The institute and festival have become a trusted guide for those seeking to gain a multi-dimensional and realistic understanding of the heterogeneity that exists in Indian Country.

American Indian Film Institute

The mission of the American Indian Film Institute is to foster understanding and appreciation of the culture, traditions, and issues facing contemporary American Indians. AIFI supports filmmakers whose work expresses the native voices, viewpoints, and stories historically excluded from mainstream media; develops stories traditionally excluded from mainstream media; creates audiences for their work; and advocates for authentic representation of American Indians in the media.

*Q400 Alaska planes that mainly do short regional flights are not equipped with Alaska Beyond Entertainment.

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