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Reel Injun, a Provocative and Entertaining Look at the Portrayal of Native Americans in Cinema to Air November 2, 2010

Film to Air During Native American Heritage Month

(San Francisco, CA)—Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond takes an entertaining, insightful, and often humorous look at the Hollywood Indian, exploring the portrayal of North American Natives through a century of cinema and examining the ways that the myth of “the Injun” has influenced the world’s understanding—and misunderstanding—of Natives. Narrated by Diamond with infectious enthusiasm and good humor, *Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian* is a loving look at cinema through the eyes of the people who appeared in its very first flickering images and have survived to tell their stories their own way. Nominated for four Gemini Awards, *Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian* will air nationally on the upcoming season of the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, November 2, 2010.

Tracing the evolution of cinema’s depiction of Native people from the silent film era to today, Diamond takes the audience on a journey across America to some of cinema’s most iconic landscapes, including Monument Valley, the setting for Hollywood’s greatest Westerns, and the Black Hills of South Dakota, home to Crazy Horse and countless movie legends. Clips from hundreds of classic and recent Hollywood movies illustrate Diamond’s points, while celebrated Native and non-Native film celebrities, activists, film critics, and historians discuss their perceptions of the big screen Indian in candid interviews. Diamond meets with Clint Eastwood (*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, *A Fistful of Dollars*, *Unforgiven*) at his studios in Burbank,



Scenes from Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian, coming to Independent Lens November 2, 2010.

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California, where the film legend discusses the evolution of the image of Indians in Westerns and what cowboy-and-Indian myths mean to America.

Legendary Native American activists weigh in on pivotal moments in American Indian history, including Russell Means, who remembers being in the trading post during the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee, and Sacheen Littlefeather, who recounts the acceptance of Marlon Brando's Oscar in protest of "the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry." Others offering their perspectives include notables such as Robbie Robertson, the half-Jewish, half-Mohawk musician and soundtrack composer (*Raging Bull*, *Casino*, *Gangs of New York*); Cherokee actor Wes Studi (*The Last of the Mohicans*, *Geronimo*); filmmakers Jim Jarmusch (*Dead Man*) and Chris Eyre (*Smoke Signals*); and acclaimed Native actors Graham Greene (*Dances With Wolves*, *Thunderheart*) and Adam Beach (*Smoke Signals*, Clint Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*).

Reel Injun's humor and star power is balanced with insightful commentary from film critics and historians, including CBC film critic Jesse Wente; Angela Aleiss, author and scholar of American Indian Studies; and Melinda Micco, associate professor of ethnic studies at Mills College, California. The film also explores the range of non-Native actors who have portrayed Natives onscreen and reveals the bizarre secret identity of the iconic "weeping" Indian, Iron Eyes Cody.

To learn more about the film, and the issues involved, visit the companion website for *Reel Injun* at www.pbs.org/independentlens/reel-injun. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmakers, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmaker

Neil Diamond (Director/Writer)

Neil Diamond, one of Canada's foremost Aboriginal filmmakers, hails from the Cree community of Waskaganish on the coast of James Bay. His recent credits include *The Last Explorer* (2009), a feature-length docudrama retracing the steps of Diamond's own great uncle, Aboriginal guide George Elson, on an ill-fated voyage into the heart of uncharted Labrador. An integral part of the Rezolution Pictures International creative team, Diamond has directed two award-winning documentaries: *One More River* (2004), a behind-the-scenes look at the Quebec Cree's decision to accept another hydro project on their land, was named Best Documentary at the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois, while awards for *Heavy Metal: A Mining Disaster in Northern Quebec* (2004) included Top Prize and Audience Pick at Norway's Riddu Riddu Festival.

Diamond also directed three seasons of *DAB IYYU*, the six-part series for Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN) about Cree elders. His 2001 directorial debut, *Cree Spoken Here*, garnered the Telefilm/APTN award for Best Aboriginal Documentary. In 1993, Diamond co-founded *The Nation*, the first news magazine to serve the Cree of northern Quebec and Ontario. His columns "Rez Notes" and "The Last Line" offer edgy, irreverent perspectives on the Cree issues of the day. Diamond is also an award-winning photographer whose work was used in the James Bay Cree's international campaign to stop the construction of more hydro Quebec dams on their land.

About Independent Lens

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community, or moment in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.