



Photo: ASU Gammage / Tim Trumble

Native Nation: An Interactive, Immersive Event

Native Nation takes place amidst a working art fair, where audiences are encouraged to wander from booth-to-booth, chatting with Native vendors, eating local food, and perusing Native artworks and fashion. Within that experience, scripted scenes erupt around the audience, at times asking audiences to participate in the scene and with each other. The lines between actors and audience, reality and theater, land and people, self and community, are quickly dissolved. Based on the lives of local Native community members, *Native Nation* weaves together stories of the foster system, the treatment of two-spirited people, environmental justice, food sovereignty, missing and murdered Indigenous women, the reentry process for veterans, and youth efforts to bring about change through activism.

The script for *Native Nation* was created over a two year-long development process led by Sicangu Lakota playwright Larissa FastHorse and Cornerstone director Michael John Garcés, in collaboration with dozens of Indigenous community members throughout Arizona. Through Cornerstone's signature community-engaged theater process, community members participated in story circles, script readings, and throughout the rehearsal process to develop characters, narratives, and ideas that bring to light modern issues in the community.

The world premiere of *Native Nation* at Arizona State University Gammage in April of 2019 was the largest Indigenous theatrical experience in the history of American theater, with a two-day arts festival, exhibiting works from over 400 Indigenous artists from 22 federally-recognized tribes native to Arizona.



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Bring *Native Nation* to Your Community

Part cultural performance, marketplace, and community gathering space, *Native Nation* is an immersive event unlike anything audiences have experienced before, and an opportunity for Indigenous community members to share their stories in new ways.

As a tour host location, Larissa FastHorse and Cornerstone will collaborate with your Indigenous community members to adapt the *Native Nation* script to surface new stories relevant to your community and find local Indigenous artists to participate in the art fair and the performance. With each project, we enter the community and its spaces, mindful of the community's challenges and obstacles and seeking to direct resources and attention to community needs and goals, as articulated by community members. The organizing and creation process is the work, as much as the final production. During previous processes we have taught workshops, served food, organized volunteers to winter proof houses, and seen lives changed as we worked together.

Tour hosts could be:

- Universities or other schools
- Local government agencies
- Arts Presenters and Regional Theaters

Tour requirements include:

- Access to an outdoor performance and art fair space plus staging area for production and hospitality
- 2-4 engagement residencies plus customized development rehearsal and performance residency

By the end of each stop on the tour, we hope that audiences take home some amazing Indigenous art that they purchased at the fair, learn how to get involved in local Native issues, learn how to pronounce the name of the people on whose land they are standing, and begin thinking differently about that land. Most of all, we hope it is a place where all families can come together to laugh, have fun, and be inspired to learn more.

About Cornerstone

Cornerstone Theater Company makes new plays with and about communities. By combining the artistry of people with many levels of theatrical experience, we act upon the conviction that artistic expression is civic engagement and that access to a creative forum is essential to the wellness and health of every individual and community. Our plays celebrate many voices, and are staged in theaters and in parking lots, in factories, schools and subway stations. We strive to include people who have not been on stage or even seen theater. We've taken up residence in small towns and urban neighborhoods, collaborating with locals from start to finish to tell their unique stories through theater.

Since 1986, Cornerstone has commissioned more than 100 playwrights, produced over 150 new works, trained thousands of students in our methodology, and worked with tens of thousands of community members across the country.



Native Nation director and Cornerstone artistic director, Michael John Garcés, and Native Nation performer, Rosetta Walker



Native Nation playwright, Larissa FastHorse

About Larissa FastHorse

Larissa FastHorse, is an award winning playwright and choreographer from the Sicangu Lakota Nation. Larissa's produced plays include *What Would Crazy Horse Do?* (KCRep, Relative Theatrics), *Urban Rez* (Cornerstone Theater Company), *Landless and Cow Pie Bingo* (AlterTheater), *Average Family* (Children's Theater Company of Minneapolis), *Teaching Disco* (Squaredancing to Our Elders: a Class Presentation (Native Voices at the Autry), *Vanishing Point* (Eagle Project), *Cherokee Family Reunion* (Mountainside Theater), and *The Thanksgiving Play* (Artists Rep, Playwrights Horizons, Cincinnati Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse).

Larissa was awarded the NEA Distinguished Play Award, Aurand Harris Fellowship, AATE Distinguished Play Award, William Inge Residency, the Joe Dowling Annaghmakerrig Fellowship Award and numerous Ford Foundation and NEA Grants. She is currently an NEA Theatre Panelist, a TCG Board Member, and co-founder of Indigenous Direction, a consulting firm for companies and artists who want to create accurate work about, for and with Indigenous Peoples.



Cornerstone Theater Company's *Urban Rez* (2016) / Kevin Michael Campbell

About the Trilogy

Native Nation is second in a series of three productions in collaboration with Indigenous people of US lands.

First in the series was 2016's *Urban Rez*, a feast of culture with a side of satire, in collaboration with the Native American community in the Los Angeles Basin, where all Native tribes have been declared extinct by the federal government. Called “engaging and informative” by the LA Times, *Urban Rez* becomes a hotbed of chaos when guests are presented with an opportunity that could change everything — federal recognition. This potentially lucrative offer threatens to upend familial bonds and relationships as community members are confronted with the insidious and absurd task of figuring out who's out and who's in. How far is the tribe's self-appointed leader willing to go to beat the system, stay out of jail, and protect what is sacred?

Currently in development, the *D/N/Lakota Project* is the third production of the series, and will be working with Native communities in South Dakota, exploring the strength and perseverance of their culture, language and identity in the face of adversity. With residents of the Rosebud, Pine Ridge and other Lakota reservations, as well as Rapid City, Cornerstone will present this new production in multiple South Dakota locations. Expect music, marketplaces, dance, fashion, ritual, and telling of current Native stories in an interactive, accessible theatrical experience. Partner organizations include First Peoples Fund, Racing Magpie, Black Hills Playhouse, the City of Rapid City and Lakota culture bearers.

Did you know?

There are 573 federally recognized Native American tribes.

There are 326 federally recognized Indian reservations, found across 25 US states.

There are 183 tribally-controlled elementary, secondary, and residential schools.

5 million people identified as American Indian or Alaska Native in the 2010 census.

"I applaud the collaborative approach, artistic vision and innovative mindset brought to the project, as well as your ability to translate that into an experience that was truly life-changing for so many. Native Nation epitomizes our university's creed of inclusion and positive social impact, and I appreciate your efforts to give voice and expression to members of our communities while helping the public think deeper about important issues."

– Michael M. Crow, President, Arizona State University

"I wanted my daughter to see how [theater] works, especially since this is a Native production, with a Native playwright. You don't see that at all."

– Ceyshe Napa, Navajo, nonprofessional performer in Native Nation ASU Gammage.

Learn More

For information about tour availability, pricing, and a technical rider, please contact Megan Wanlass at mwanlass@cornerstonetheater.org or 213-613-1700 ext. 101.

For additional information about *Native Nation* visit: cornerstonetheater.org/projects/native-nation-touring/.

Native Nation is a recipient of the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project Creation and Touring Grant, with lead funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Travel stipends and presenter touring subsidies available.

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