

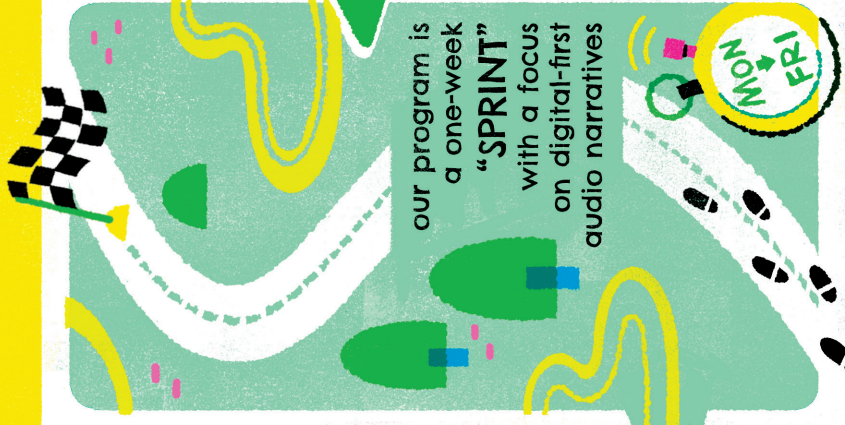
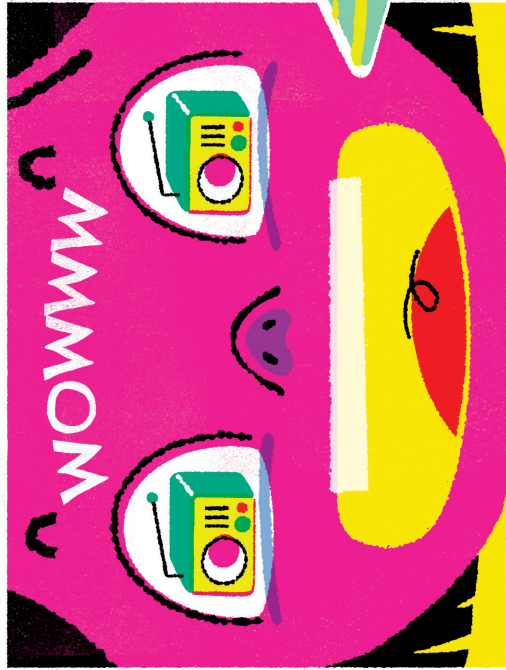
NEXT GEN RADIO ALBUQUERQUE



November 2023

want to join NPR NEXT GENERATION RADIO?

NEXT GEN RADIO
is coming
to your city



our program is
a one-week
"SPRINT"
with a focus
on digital-first
audio narratives



it's for
CURRENT COLLEGE
STUDENTS, RECENT
GRADS, and
EARLY CAREER
PROFESSIONALS.



APPLY NOW!

do you love

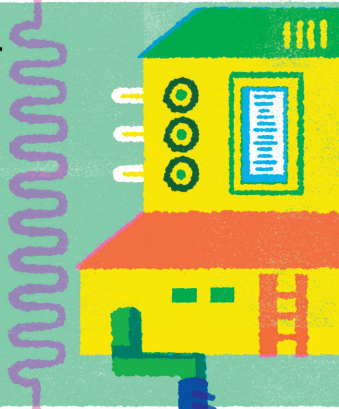


nextgenradio.org

you will be paired with a
mentor to combine all of
these digital skills!



you will produce a
non-narrated audio story!



you will write a web story
with skills and videos!



COME BE PART OF
THE NEXT GENERATION
OF STORYTELLING!



ILLUSTRATION BY YUNYI DAI

Going full CIRCLE

BY DOUG MITCHELL

During the past 23 years of leading the NextGenRadio project, I've experienced many "life is a circle" moments. When I was young, growing up in Oklahoma, my family and I would regularly go camping in Northern New Mexico and visit state and national parks here. This state is truly the Land of Enchantment. Fast forward to the summers of 2013-2015, when I was an adjunct at Georgetown's master's of journalism program in Washington, D.C. The class was called "Field Reporting". Myself and the associate dean would bring six students each semester to this area and have them find stories in "Indian Country." None of the 18 students I taught during that time had ever been to New Mexico, let alone interviewed anyone Indigenous. One student did get an interview with the now Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland during her inaugural run for Congress in 2014. I hadn't been back to "ABQ" since that last class in the summer of 2015. I've spent the week reminiscing and connecting with old friends and colleagues who are still here. I remain undecided on "red" or "green."



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Next Generation Radio Project is a week-long digital journalism training project designed to give competitively selected participants, who are interested in radio and journalism, the skills and opportunity to report and produce their own multimedia story. Those chosen for the project are paired with a professional journalist who serves as their mentor. This #NPRNextGenRadio project was funded by University of New Mexico and Indigenous Journalist Association and based in Albuquerque. Zine cover artwork by Lauren Ibañez. Zine design by Amara Aguilar & Cameo Hill



Meet the reporters

Logan Booth (she/her)

Member of the Seneca Nation



Logan Booth is an independent multimedia storyteller based in Syracuse, New York. Booth is passionate about amplifying Indigenous voices and creating space for Indigenous women in the communications field. She is a recent graduate of Syracuse University with a degree in public relations and English, and a minor in Native American and Indigenous Studies. Previously, Booth worked as an account coordinator at Day One Agency, as well as a teaching assistant for Syracuse University's Climate of Resistance Community Audit. In her freetime, Booth is a traditional smoke dancer and travels to different territories throughout the year to compete at powwows.

Alex Lee (she/her)

Enrolled member of the Navajo Nation (Diné)



Alex Lee is a multimedia journalist reporting in Farmington, New Mexico. She is currently a staff reporter covering education at Tri-City Record, a start-up newspaper in Farmington. Previously, Lee served as editor-in-chief at the Fort Lewis College student news outlet, The Independent. During her time at FLC, she found her passion for audio storytelling about Indigenous populations. After graduation, she hopes to report on Indigenous communities or practice constitutional law within journalism.

Lee Gavin (he/him)

Enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation



Lee Gavin is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. He works as an AV tech specialist for the communications department of the tribal government. Lee is an active member in the tribal community and commits his time to learning about traditional culture and values, with his urban upbringing and his perspective growing up in Portland, Oregon. He found art through music and subculture. Lee is a featured artist in the Phot-Choch exhibition and This IS Kalapuyan Land art shows curated by Steph Littlebird, as well as displayed at art galleries in Portland and Astoria, Oregon, respectively.

Molly Mamaril (she/her)

Native Hawaiian



Molly Noelaniokakai Gismervik Mamaril serves at the intersection of storytelling, community outreach and economic development. She is currently the Community Innovation Connector at the Honolulu-based non-profit, O'ahu Economic Development Board. Molly was born in Hawai'i, raised in Minneapolis, and returned to the Islands in 2012 after being drawn to explore her family's heritage.

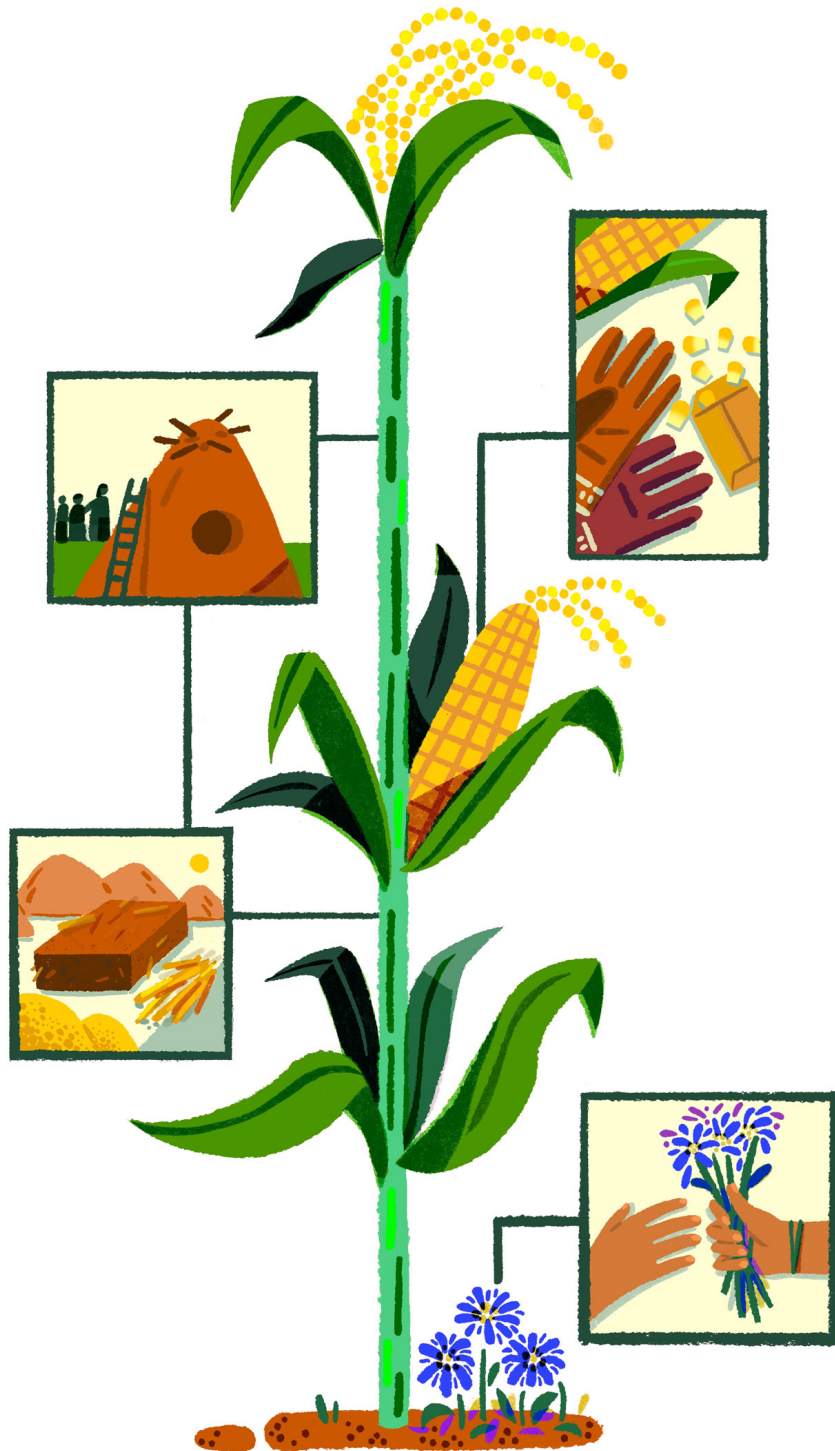
Raven Marshall (she/her)

Member of the Lakota Tribe, Sicangu, Ithanktonwan



Raven E. Marshall is a multimedia storyteller and senior at Cal Poly Humboldt, where she studies journalism. She works as the Native Media Producer at The Cultural Conservancy located in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her upbringing was rooted in a strong sense of culture, community and a responsibility for taking care of Mother Earth. She is drawn to stories that cover environmental issues with an intersectional lens, exploring the ways race, gender and sexuality play into people's narratives.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EEDOON CHOI



Santa Clara Pueblo artist **FINDS HOME** *as a sanctuary for community*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY YUNYI DAI

BY LOGAN BOOTH

Eliza Naranjo Morse (Tewa, Santa Clara Pueblo) feels home is a sanctuary for her artistry. Growing up on traditional Santa Clara Pueblo land in Española, New Mexico, she has always looked to her community as a sort of guidance in her grounding at home.

In her family's communal field that Naranjo Morse cultivates year-round, it becomes clear that her familial ties have a deep history of resilience with the place she resides on. She stands on a piece of land that was given back to members of the Santa Clara Pueblo people stemming from the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. According to Porter Swentzell, Ph.D., Executive Director of Kha'p'o Community School, the treaty recognized the end of the Mexican-American War, which recognized Pueblo people as rightful owners of the land, as well as U.S. citizens. However, since the United States failed to recognize Pueblo people as U.S. citizens in that timeframe, it became a catalyst for a series of U.S. Supreme Court cases around the ownership of land for the Pueblo people.

But her grandparents didn't receive the land that was awarded to them on the treaty from lands that have been foreclosed on until the 1940s. The land has since then been passed down to Naranjo Morse's parents, then to herself. Cultivating the land is an integral part of Naranjo Morse's identity and understanding of the space she inhabits.

Farming is viewed as a source of strength and pride for her Española community. Naranjo Morse finds many uses in the agriculture that she cultivates. Naranjo Morse acknowledges



LISTEN TO THE STORY



PHOTO BY LOGAN BOOTH / NEXTGENRADIO

Eliza Naranjo Morse (Tewa, Santa Clara Pueblo) gathers corn stock from a field she shares with her family in Española, New Mexico, on Monday, Nov. 13, 2023.

the farm not only as an outdoor studio, but as a responsibility to take care of the land from her Pueblo ancestors.

“I come back to the field every year. There’s this maturity that happens as years pass, it’s like a studio in a sense of commitment to a process. It’s a sense of experimentation. And then as I get older, the sense of generosity within it shows itself,” Naranjo Morse said.

As a multimedia artist, she finds resilience in using these materials she takes care of for the Pueblo community she is largely involved in.

As a Cultural Movement Instructor at the Kha’ P’o Community School, Naranjo Morse works as part of the Tewa Team whose primary efforts are to relay the values, language and cultural ways of her community. In the field, she breaks down larger pieces of corn stalk into smaller pieces with ease, collecting the stock for an upcoming traditional sandbox made of Adobe clay and traditional materials.

One way in which Eliza builds community is by using materials she gathers from her home for her artistry.

In her home studio space, Naranjo Morse displays her various art pieces, from large painted canvases to sculptures using clay to depict where we



“In the food we cook, in the way we educate our children, in the way we care for our elders, it doesn’t always have a tangible or, like, commodified result. But there is a spirit of creativity in anything you choose to do.”

are as human beings, and where we’re going. Naranjo Morse finds a universe of possibilities in imagining how people within her community come together to gather knowledge and tools that support each other. She beamed as she shared her creative process as something that’s not a Westernized definition of beauty.

“A lot of them are kind of rough. They’re made from material I gather. And they’re kind of like the freest creative process. I begin by building structures, and then changing them, and then adding material from the field and trash I find at the dump for treasures,” Naranjo Morse said.

She sees her work in education, museum institutions, and meeting different people as these sorts of creative spiritual vessels. To her these institutional structures are a place for possibility.

Naranjo Morse is currently in the process of building her space, which was passed down from her mother in 1984. Her adobe structure serves as the heart of her home. Her mother asked her to keep the oven, as she works to build her home on the outside, weaving together her memories into a place that she is able to freely create because it’s something that she loves to do.

“When I think of art from my mother’s side of the family, well, gosh, and my dad’s too, as well, there’s a sense of like, you create because you love to,” Naranjo Morse said. “In the food we cook, in the way we educate our children, in the way we care for our elders, it doesn’t always have a tangible or, like, commodified result. But there is a spirit of creativity in anything you choose to do.”



PHOTO BY LOGAN BOOTH / NEXTGENRADIO

“I’m fortunate to get to see my work in education and museum institutions, meeting all kinds of people who are gathering together around a meeting table and just bringing their brilliant selves to create something new,” Eliza Naranjo Morse (Tewa, Santa Clara Pueblo) says in her home in Española, New Mexico, on Monday, Nov. 13, 2023.

10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31

Next Gen Radio &
Indigenous Journalists Association

2023

11

1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30

12

1 2
3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31



ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY WHANG

ALBUQUERQUE

NPR's Next Generation Radio partners with the Indigenous Journalists Association to offer a 5-day digital-first workshop centering Indigenous stories & storytellers in Albuquerque.

- Indigenous People's Day 2023
- Next Gen Radio & Indigenous Journalists Association Project

ANATOMY OF A NEXT GEN REPORTER



ILLUSTRATION BY YUNYI DAI



PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNY FARRIS

Heart Museum band members Justin Hale (guitar), Derrick Joe (drums), Toni Heartless (lead vocals), Delwyn Johnson (bass/vocals) and Alonzo John (guitar).

“ALBUQUERQUE IS PISSSED”



Toni Heartless, Diné and Filipino and originally from Shiprock now living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the lead singer in melodic hardcore band Heart Museum. Through his music he has found a sense of belonging while dealing with the frustrations often associated with hopelessness within Indigenous communities.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAUREN IBAÑEZ

BY LEE GAVIN

Anthony Lee sits amongst his recording equipment that takes up most of his living room adorned with a mix of Kokum scarves, colorful artwork and instruments. Born and raised in Shiprock, New Mexico, and known as Toni Heartless, he is the lead singer of the melodic hardcore band Heart Museum. His entrance into the hardcore scene was a tumultuous journey of finding himself despite the hurdles many in the Indigenous community are faced with.

Finding a way to define “home” has never been easy for him. Life at Shiprock is at times, hopeless, he said. Shiprock has gone from a bountiful community that once thrived to an unsafe community due to nuclear waste from the uranium mining that is creating an environmental breakdown.

“You look at old photos of Shiprock during the fair, and you see mountains of fruit, watermelon, cantaloupe, just an abundance of food. Um, and now, we’re millions of dollars in debt. Nobody knows where the money is.”

His involvement in music came from a place of necessity, and the desire to see what was not provided for the community he grew up in. In 2017, Heartless opened Asterix venue in Shiprock to create a space to play music. The venue promoted shows to bring hardcore to his hometown. Money was tight and he couldn’t keep the venue going. He had gotten



LISTEN TO THE STORY



PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNY FARRIS

Toni Heartless performs with his band Heart Museum at Alien Fest in Dulce, N.M. When asked what makes Albuquerque hardcore unique, Heartless said, “Albuquerque, I’ve noticed Albuquerque hardcore is very aggressive.”

“You find out that there’s just a group of people that are just fighting their hearts out trying to keep the community, trying to keep some growth.”

to the end of his rope and something had to change.

He moved to Albuquerque in 2021 to begin working with his stepfather in construction. It was difficult for him to think he had given up on his dream, but he found a way to make music whenever he could. Heartless was able to find purpose and really connect with other people who, like him, had oftentimes not felt like the place they grew up really defined “home” to them.

In hardcore, Heartless found a place where he can feel at home and find more meaning in his daily life. He hopes to continue finding new ways to express himself through his multiple musical endeavors, and finding inspiration from bands ranging from My Chemical Romance to Avenged Sevenfold.

“I would say hardcore is kind of a mix of punk and metal,” he said. “Like, it’s got the speed and thrash of punk, but you know, the distortion and grittiness of metal.”

Being from a marginalized community has always been something at the forefront of Heartless’ mind. As many other marginalized people, the oppression and injustices made him angry and that reflects in his creative process. That was the driving creative force behind the song “Relentless.”

“I do feel like it did come from a place of aggression,” he said. “But also I wanted it to be a seed for conversations.”

There is a lot to learn from the Albuquerque hardcore scene, but what Heartless wants people to know is that “Albuquerque is pissed.”

“They’re pissed off. These guys are pissed off and they got a lot to be pissed off about, you know? You got a lot of reservations around here, everybody’s shooting each other, everybody’s stealing from each other, fentanyl. Regardless, I know some of these things are gonna be, I mean, times are tough. Things are tough everywhere. But I would say Albuquerque is pissed off for sure.”

Hardcore is often a place where someone can express their frustrations, both physically through aggressive moshing, and their lyrics. Even in the way the musicians downtune their guitars with the heavy gritty and sludgy breakdowns found in the music. Hardcore is a call to action, it’s the way they manifest their resistance, where sometimes wandering youth can find a place that makes them feel accepted, despite how anyone else may judge them.

“You find out that there’s just a group of people that are just fighting their hearts out trying to keep the community, trying to keep some growth.”



Plugging into Home

Artist reflects her world through soundscapes

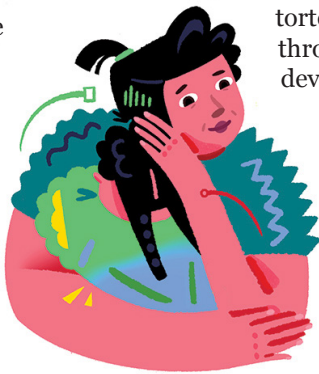
BY ALX LEE

Nestled inside the South Valley of Albuquerque sits a studio that is capturing distorted sounds of activism and culture. Complete with cables, zines, and the occasional stuffed animal, the work-space holds a sense of home for Diné and Chicano sound artist Autumn Chacon.

“When you hear my sound art, sometimes it just sounds like, you know, a static-y radio,” Chacon said. “Maybe you can’t even tell it’s art, or sometimes maybe that sound really resonates with you and it brings back something that you understand.”

Her audio installations are not the familiar sounds the average listener would connect to music.

The distorted heartbeat of her grandma put through a guitar pedal is a favorite among the sound pieces she’s produced. Flipping the expectation of a heartbeat and the person it belongs to was an emphasis Chacon wanted to showcase. Her work blends sounds that have been



ILLUSTRATIONS BY YUNYI DAI

recorded by herself and distorted, processed and looped through various electronic devices.

Chacon found a new music scene through her work in radio and public broadcasting that allowed her to experiment with her background in stringing audio together, writing, and creative production.

She describes the overall sound music

scene as “white.”

“Other cities that have this type of scene, it’s like, white guys who have a lot of gear and they kind of have enough gear to mess around,” she said.

When she entered the practice of sound engineering, she endured the gatekeeping of older white men to her joining their ranks. Due to the resistance of her would-be peer group and her lack of formal training, she taught herself.

“I already have this piece of equipment open with all of its wires hanging out,” she said. “I can sort of do whatever I want. I know enough to keep it alive.”



PHOTO BY ALX LEE

Autumn Chacon is a sound artist and lives with her daughter in Albuquerque, N.M. Chacon says home is not a place but rather the family that surrounds her.

Between finding another community and her own self-education, she was able to skirt those barriers.

“Albuquerque is unique in that it’s got a high number of women of color who are part of this scene,” Chacon said. “So I’m happy to be one of those women. And I think that came to be because artists on occasion collaborate with each other.”

Chacon’s studio is packed with equipment in various states of repair that she has accumulated over the years. She learned her craft, in large part, by repairing and using old gear as she acquired it.

“I had to sort of learn to make new tools, basically,” she said.



A VHS television, a cassette player and a full shelf of worn sound processors also adorn the studio space, in addition to a boom box, speakers, albums and other gear. Stickers on the side of Chacon’s computer tower demonstrate her activism within the Indigenous community.

A Standing Rock performative piece featured Chacon and three actors staging a meeting with the manager of a bank that would fund the construction of the pipeline. The piece concludes after the bank and street were closed down by police, rejecting their peaceful demonstration.

These pieces reflect the upbringing that Chacon had while growing



up in a Diné and Chicano household. Now, she's raising her daughter with the same expectations of being a caretaker.

With a mother who is Diné and a father who is Chicano, Chacon's always been tied to the Albuquerque area.

"Either three hours to the west is where my mom's from, or three hours to the north is where my dad's from, so this is kind of right in the middle for me, and I consider anywhere within that six hour stretch my home," she said.

Whether it's at the Navajo Nation Fair or around the Albuquerque area, Chacon says it's not hard to find family and those important people in her life.

"They say New Mexico, even though it's a big state, it's really like a small town," she said.

Chacon's 5-year-old daughter has already shown an inclination toward her own sense of social justice.

"Her teachers tell me, 'don't mess with her friends,' she'll definitely let you know that's not okay," Chacon said.



PHOTO BY ALX LEE

Most of Autumn Chacon's work blends sounds together. Her collection of gear ranges from analog to digital.

Albuquerque activist Maria Brock's research in early childhood has shown that by age 3, children understand the concept of caring for others, Chacon said. For her daughter, that sense of taking care of those around her and understanding her effect on them is enough.

Her daughter is with her at installations and Chacon finds advocacy within that part of her life. Often men are not confronted with the dilemma of arranging childcare while



PHOTO BY ALX LEE

Autumn Chacon reviews sound mixes on her computer in her Albuquerque studio on Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Chacon is a self-taught electronic artist.

pursuing art full-time, she said. For her, that's not the case.

"I can't install conceptual work with a 5-year-old or 4-year-old running around, hiding under tables."

Having her daughter with her provides a sense of home while on the road and while she's working.

Chacon advocates using the teachings she learned from her loved ones. Like the records found in her studio, it's a full circle with sound artist Chacon in how she delivers art and represents home while doing so.



Scholar aims to give back to her Native Hawaiian community after earning doctorate in New Mexico

Leilani De Lude is a Native Hawaiian Ph.D. student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Amidst the challenges of living away from the islands, she finds connection in the vivid memories of Mākaha, O‘ahu, inspiring her to serve the Hawaiian community when she returns home.

BY MOLLY MAMARIL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EMILY WHANG

“If there’s one thing my dad has always told me, it’s ‘Go ahead, go learn whatever you want everywhere else, but you have to bring it back to Hawai‘i.’ I always knew I was going to come back home.”

Leilani Jean Kauluaao De Lude enjoys reflecting on memories of her childhood in Mākaha, on the island of O‘ahu. Now a second-year political science Ph.D. student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, the 25-year-old tries to orient herself in her new landscape.

“As somebody who can’t situate herself with north, south, east, west — I’m always looking for the ocean and the mountains,” she said.

To De Lude, home is the ocean and the land. She recalls tents on the beach during family reunions and honoring loved ones who passed away by spreading their ashes, flowers and lei in the water.

Growing up, her parents played key roles in providing their children with a culturally grounded upbringing. Her mom is white and her dad is Hawaiian. While her mom isn’t originally from the culture, she embraced raising her kids Hawaiian.



PHOTO BY MOLLY MAMARIL / NEXTGENRADIO

“There is no place like home, especially when it comes to Hawai‘i. And the best version of [myself] has always been in Hawai‘i,” De Lude reflects.

However, throughout her youth, people questioned De Lude’s Hawaiian-ness.

“When people are like, oh, you’re blonde and you have blue eyes, how can you be Hawaiian?” De Lude recounts, “I’m always like, oh, I’m Hawaiian. Don’t worry about it. Having been in Hawai‘i for so long helped me solidify that I am not only Hawaiian, but I’m a Hawaiian who was raised in Mākaha, where all my other family was raised.”

She is especially grateful for her mom’s support when she and her siblings would cry after being treated as less than because they were more “white presenting.” She experienced firsthand the dynamic of a mixed household and the challenges that come with feeling the need to prove that you belong.

“We’re past blood quantum — we’re all Hawaiian, whatever stage we’re at,” said De Lude. “That’s how we connect to identity and that diversity is something we celebrate.”

Land stewardship is second-nature for many kama‘āina (Native born, children of the land), such as De Lude, who take on extra responsibility to preserve the identity of their home.

“I grew up in a politically active family,” she said. “My dad and his siblings were always active in Hawaiian politics. We would go to protests surrounding Hawaiian sovereignty. We would stick up for land. We still talk about Hawaiian politics at the dinner table.”

In her day-to-day life, De Lude commits herself to pursuing community-based research on Native Hawaiian identity, connection to land and sovereignty. Her interest in data began at Hawai‘i Pacific University when she was a student on the Native Hawaiian Survey research team.

A facet that plays into her future in research is the growing Hawaiian diaspora. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the majority of Hawaiians now live outside of Hawai‘i. Two of De Lude’s siblings now live in the continental U.S. and they’ve shared their struggles with identity — being in a new environment where nobody understands what it means to be Hawaiian.

The high cost of living, limited quality jobs and expensive housing are key elements in many residents’ decisions to move away from home. There are many steps that people go through before making the decision to leave, including living with family in multigenerational homes.

“There’s also this brain drain in which there’s just not enough jobs,” said De Lude. “It’s a lot of pushing off more than willingful leaving.”



During the Maui wildfires in August, De Lude was home on summer break. From the neighboring island of O‘ahu, she was heartbroken about the devastation that the Lāhaina community was experiencing.

“I worried, especially living on that dry side and seeing the Wai‘anae mountain range go up in flames for the past couple of summers,” said De Lude. “I knew that it was a real threat not only to Maui, but to my family on the west side [of O‘ahu].”



PHOTO BY MOLLY MAMARIL / NEXTGENRADIO

The west side of the island of O‘ahu is dotted with beaches and the Wai‘anae mountain range. Mākaha, Leilani De Lude’s hometown, sits in the distance. “Home to me looks like Mākaha. There are the tide pools near the reefs with Hawaiian sea salt, little hermit crabs, wana (sea urchins) and seaweed,” says De Lude, a Native Hawaiian pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Hawaiians a greater voice in decision-making. She wants to show a culturally grounded way of doing research that not only has community support, but also accounts for the deeper political elements at play when researching with, and for, Native Hawaiians.



When she returned to Albuquerque for the fall semester, she found comfort in friendships with other Indigenous students and professors who could empathize with the loss of land. A local hula hālau (school) hosted a fundraiser to support wildfire victims and she found it to be a new way of connecting with Hawaiians in Albuquerque.

“The fires really pushed the community to come together,” De Lude said. “Being in New Mexico has shown me that other native populations experience this same feeling of loss or emptiness ... just being out of place when you’re away from home.”

Despite the challenges of living on the Islands, De Lude’s goal is to return to Hawai‘i as a professor. She hopes to be an approachable teacher who can relate to being an Indigenous college student and ideally mentor youth to get to the same place.

“It took a village to get me here,” said De Lude. “And I hope that it shows other Native Hawaiians they can also pursue a Ph.D. in whatever field that they want.”

Moving forward, she intends to contribute to the body of research that gives

“There is no place like home, especially when it comes to Hawai‘i,” said De Lude. “And the best version of [myself] has always been in Hawai‘i.”



LISTEN TO THE STORY >>>

Finding home within: How a Native adoptee rekindled her connection with family and culture

Kara Bobroff is a Navajo and Lakota tribal member who was adopted by non-Native parents and grew up estranged from her biological family and culture. Bobroff's journey to reconnection helped her find peace in her identity and brought a new family member into her life.

BY RAVEN E. MARSHALL
ILLUSTRATIONS BY EEJOON CHOI

“I had gone to the Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock, and I just remember, I was just blown away!” said Kara Bobroff. “One, it was so much fun, and two, I was just like, what is this? You’re in the community with all of these different Navajo people!”



Bobroff said. She is Navajo of the Salt Clan on her biological mother's side and Lakota on her biological father's side.

Bobroff remembers the story her mother told her about the day she got a call asking if she'd be open to adopting a baby. If not, she'd go into the foster care system.

“And so she was like, ‘Nobody's gonna put my baby into the foster care system.’ So it was like an immediate, resounding yes.”

Bobroff's family provided a safe and loving environment for her. Even though she was the only Native among her four older siblings, she always felt accepted and loved unconditionally. Her parents were both

Bobroff, an educator who serves Indigenous youth in Albuquerque, remembers the first time she attended the Navajo Nation Fair, around age 14 or 15, and recalls the sense of amazement of being surrounded by so many other Navajo [Diné] people.

“I knew I was adopted, but I didn't know what it meant to be Native American, or Native, or you know, Navajo or Lakota at all,”



PHOTO BY RAVEN E. MARSHALL / NEXTGENRADIO

“My grandmother gave me some money and I had, not a ton, but enough to buy this one ring. I'll keep that for the rest of my life,” says Kara Bobroff from her grandmother's home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Bobroff bought the ring as a teenager at the Navajo Nation Fair, her first experience being surrounded by people who looked like her.

educators and instilled a sense of social justice in all their children.

Growing up, Bobroff's grandmother's house always felt like a central gathering place for her and her family. Her family gathered to mark joyous moments like birthdays there, as well as holidays and even more somber moments like her adoptive mother's memorial service eight years ago.

She remembers one particular ring at the Navajo Native Fair that caught her eye. Bobroff ended up buying it with money that her grandmother gave her. Later, she learned the cultural significance of each stone and mineral. It's something she wears every day and says she will have for the rest of her life.

But while home was a happy place for Bobroff, school was not. One of her particularly negative memories from elementary school was when a classmate called her a racial slur.

“And I just remember feeling bad in that moment,” she said. “My brother met me, and I asked him, ‘What does an “N-word” mean?’ And he just was like, ‘What!’”

This experience marked a change in how Bobroff saw her identity and altered her relationship with school. She says she didn’t feel comfortable speaking in school for three years after that.

It was memories like this that inspired Bobroff to become an educator as an adult and work in spaces that serve Indigenous youth. In 2006 she helped to establish the Native American Community Academy in Albuquerque, which aims to create a learning environment that is supportive of the Indigenous community it serves.

Bobroff says her curiosity around her biological family began to peak in her 20s. She caught a break, by chance, when her brother, who was going to law school at Stanford at the time, insisted that she meet a friend of his who he felt looked similar to Bobroff.

“I was like, ‘Why would I want to meet your friend from law school?’” she said.

She reluctantly agreed to a call. Once on the phone, the two of them realized they did share a lot in common. There were similarities in their voices, they were both adopted. Little by little they started asking each other questions about what they knew of their biological family. The more questions they asked, the more their answers complemented each other.

“I’m like, ‘Well, I knew my mom was in Denver when I was born’ and she’s like, ‘My mom was in Denver, too!’ She’s like, ‘What else do you know?’”

Bobroff shared this conversation with the social worker who was helping her reach out to her biological mother. That social worker later called back with news that her brother’s friend was, indeed, Bobroff’s sister. That confirmation was a hugely impactful moment in her life.



Especially since she recently tried to write a letter to her biological mother but never heard back.

“Knowing that you have people out there, and then knowing that there was no response [to my letter], but then something else positive happened was really a gift,” she said.

Bobroff and her sister have remained close friends and she refers to her as one of her best friends to this day.

It was common practice before the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), a federal law passed in 1978, for Native children to be taken from their families and put into foster care or adopted into non-native families — a method that led to tens of thousands of cases of Indigenous children being severed from their families and cultures. ICWA aims to mitigate those historical traumas by keeping these children with Native families.

Despite the consequences of being adopted by a non-Native family, Bobroff’s experience with her family has been positive. Simultaneously, she’s happy to draw closer to her Indigenous roots as an adult.

Bobroff says the journey she’s taken from growing up and struggling to fit in at school to finding her sister has been transformative. She’s learned a lot over the years and seems to have found more confidence in her identity as a Navajo woman.

“I don’t speak the language, I didn’t grow up this way. I always have felt fully accepted in my own family, in my own community, growing up, and all those things. But not 100 percent on either side, right?” Bobroff said. “But then I’m thinking, maybe nobody is, right?”

LISTEN TO THE STORY >>>



PHOTO BY RAVEN E. MARSHALL / NEXTGENRADIO

Kara Bobroff reflects on her love for New Mexico as she walks across her grandmother’s backyard toward a maple tree in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Nov. 13, 2023. “I can physically feel myself needing to, like, connect to the ground, near the river, go for a walk, look at the Sandias,” says Kara.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOUNDING DIRECTOR

Doug Mitchell

MANAGING EDITORS

Michelle Faust Raghavan
Founder, Claridad Media
Portland, OR

Adreanna Rodriguez
(Lakota Tribe)
Freelance Journalist/Producer Oakland,
CA

JOURNALIST MENTORS

Jes Abeita (Isleta/Laguna,)
Audience Engagement Director,
Underscore News
Portland, OR

Adrianna Adame (Mexican and
Chippewa Cree)
Reporter, Buffalo's Fire
Bismarck, ND

Carrie Jung
Education Reporter, WBUR
Boston, MA

Taylor Stagner (Southern Arapaho and
Eastern Shoshone)
Freelance Journalist
Riverton, WY

Christine Trudeau (Prairie Band
Potawatomi Nation)
Reporter, News From Native California,
Indigenous Journalists Association
(IJA) President
San Diego, CA

Audio Tech/Engineers

Tina Tobey Mack
Freelance Audio Engineer/Sound
Designer
Somerville, MA

Patrice Mondragon
Freelance Audio Engineer
Denver, CO

Illustrators

Yunyi Dai
Freelance Illustrator
Pasadena, CA

Eejoon Choi
Freelance Illustrator
Los Angeles, CA

Lauren Ibañez
Freelance Illustrator
Houston, TX

Emily Whang
Freelance Illustrator
Los Angeles, CA

Visual Editor

Furhana Afrid
Communications Specialist
Albuquerque, NM

Corinne Chin
Director of News Talent, The Associated
Press
Chicago, IL

Jaz'min Franks
Freelance Photographer and Creative
Director
St. Louis, MO

Copy Editor

Brent L. Smith
Freelance Copy Editor
Los Angeles, CA

Digital Editors

Dr. Amara Aguilar
Professor of Professional Practice of
Journalism, University of Southern
California
Los Angeles, CA

Heather C. Gomez (Jicarilla Apache)
Tribal Liaison, Rainforest
Innovations
Dulce, NM;

Laura Gonzalez
Adjunct Professor, University of
Southern California
Los Angeles, CA

Cameo Hill
Web Developer
Tempe, AZ

Alexis L. Richardson
Independent Editor & Content
Strategist
Philadelphia, PA

PREVIOUS PROJECTS



Oregon Public Broadcasting
opb2023.nextgenradio.org



Indigenous Oklahoma
indigenous2023okla.nextgenradio.org



St. Louis Public Radio
stlouis2023.nextgenradio.org/

Sponsored by



