

Second Annual Four Directions Talent Search Kicks Off

Due to the tremendous success of last year's Four Directions Talent Search, the Oneida Nation and NBC are expanding this year's search by offering American Indian and First Nations comedians a chance to audition at one of 15 venues across the United States and Canada.

The search is not limited to comedy acts. Screenplay and teleplay writers also are being sought.

This year's event will kick off with the first round of tryouts on Oct. 4 at the American Indian Community House in New York City. Tryouts will continue Oct. 5 in three locations: Seattle, University of Washington; Denver, University of Colorado; and Cambridge, Harvard University. The Oct. 6 search will be held in the following venues: Calgary (TBA); Missoula, University of Montana; and Toronto, University of Toronto.

Additional tryouts will be Oct. 16 in Kansas City, Haskell Indian Nations University; Phoenix, Arizona State University; and Chicago, University of Illinois. Venues on Oct. 20 will include Norman, University of Oklahoma; Albuquerque, University of New Mexico; and Raleigh, North Carolina State University.

Nov. 2 tryouts will be held in Sacramento, California State University; Minneapolis, University of Minnesota; and Athens, University of Georgia. On Nov. 3, the search will be held at San Bernardino, California State University; Vermillion, University of South Dakota; and New Orleans (TBA).

Those chosen at each venue will go on to the semifinals at the Oneida Nation's Turning Stone Casino Resort in Verona, N.Y., on Nov. 16-17, with the finalists going to PSNBC in New York City on Nov. 18.

More than 200 American Indian and First Nations actors and comedians tried out at one of five venues last year or submitted written work for consideration.

Vanessa Shortbull, an Oglala Lakota and a finalist in the inaugural Four Directions Talent Search, became

Alcatraz Is Not An Island to Air Nationally on PBS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) and KQED presents director James M. Fortier and producer Jon Plutte's one-hour documentary *Alcatraz Is Not An Island*, with *Law and Order* star Benjamin Bratt (Quechua) providing voice-over narration.

Alcatraz Is Not An Island is the first in-depth look at the history, politics, personalities, and cultural reawakening of the 1969-71 American Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island. It won the Best Documentary Feature award at the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco, was a Land Grant Award finalist at the 2001 Taos Talking Pictures Festival and was an official selection for the 2001 Sundance Film Festival.

The film will premiere nationwide on PBS on Nov. 7, 2002, at 10 p.m. (check local listings), and is a co-presentation of ITVS and KQED. Additional funding was provided by the California Council for the Humanities, the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Mission Indians, and the Muscogee Creek Tribe of Oklahoma.

The filmmakers also are working with ITVS to develop a community outreach program to bring the film directly to reservation and urban Indian communities with an emphasis on Native youth, as well as educational

institutions plus human rights and social activism venues.

The occupation of Alcatraz was not just an Indian story, it's a story of people seizing control of their own futures through social and political activism. In these times of re-examining the role of activism in America, the 1969 Indian occupation of Alcatraz reminds us that a place for action exists in the political world and that positive change can be made despite overwhelming government resistance.

This is an opportunity to educate, to continue a dialogue on these issues, and to inspire the next generation of activists. Perhaps most importantly, it's a chance to honor those who have sacrificed so much and dedicated their lives to the advancement of all free people.

For thousands of Native Americans, the infamous Alcatraz is not an island - it's an inspiration. After generations of oppression, assimilation, and near genocide, a small group of Native American students and "urban Indians" began to occupy Alcatraz Island in November 1969.

"Alcatraz is not an island ... Alcatraz is an inspiration, it is the idea that you can control your own destiny, and self-determine your own future." Richard Oakes, Mohawk

"The government did all these things and sat on tribes for so many years ... and yet still, in 1969, there's still a group of people who were willing to stand up and say, we want our freedom. We want to be Native people. We want our own governments. We want the right to self-determination. It's a revolutionary act." Wilma Mankiller, Cherokee

They eventually were joined by thousands of Native Americans in retaking "Indian land" for the first time since the 1880s.

Alcatraz Is Not An Island is the story of how this historic event altered U.S. government Indian policy and programs, and how it forever changed the way Native Americans viewed themselves, their culture, and their sovereign rights.

The story of the occupation of Alcatraz is as complex and rich as the history of Native Americans. This documentary examines the personal sacrifices, tragedies, social battles, and political injustices many Native Americans experienced under the U.S. government's policies of assimilation, termination, and relocation - all eventually leading to Alcatraz.

Out of Alcatraz came the "Red Power" movement of the 1970s, which has been called the lost chapter of the civil rights era. Thirty years after the takeover, *Alcatraz Is Not An Island* provides the first in-depth look at this historic event, which sparked a new era of Native American political empowerment and a cultural renaissance.

the new Miss South Dakota in June, which made her eligible to compete in the Miss America finals Sept. 21 in Atlantic City.

Jim Ruel, an Ojibwe from Milwaukee, another of last year's finalists, landed an invitation to attend a casting call for the NBC series *Ed*.

"It's time to break the stereotypes of American Indians present in the entertainment industry," said Ray Halbritter, Oneida Nation repre-

sentative. "Our cultures have been co-opted and distorted by the mainstream media for the entertainment of others. The talent search is yet another way for all of us to help ensure that Native culture remains relevant for today's young people and for generations to come."

For more information or an application, call 315-829-8399 or visit www.fourdirectionstalent.com. All participants must submit proof of tribal membership.

