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Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian (2009)

Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond takes an entertaining and insightful look at the Hollywood Indian, exploring the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples through a century of cinema. Reel Injun is a documentary about cinema through the perspectives of the people who appeared in its very first flickering images and have survived to this day to tell their own stories with their own cameras.

The Cowboy

1. What are some of the characteristics associated with John Wayne and other John Wayne like actors in Westerns?
2. How are Native Americans portrayed in John Wayne type Westerns?
3. What are some of the implications for how Native Americans are understood by the dominate (white) American culture?

4. What does it mean for Indians to speak their own language in these Westerns to them versus to Whites?

Little Big Man and Dances with Wolves

What does it mean when the Native American film critics says that Little Big Man was one of the first movies to portray Indians in non-stereotypical roles?

While both of these movies cast Native Americans in a better light, they are both from whose perspective?

Chief Dan George was an important actor who changed how Indians were perceived. How did he act differently than past Indians on the screen?

What was some of the positives and negatives about how Native Americans perceived the portrayal of Indians in Dances with Wolves?

“The Renaissance” in Indigenous Filmmaking

What is difference between films made in the “Renaissance” and those from the Cowboy era?

What do the narrators mean by “Native-ness now?”

Why is the film “*Smoke Signals*” so different than other films with Native Americans in it?

One of the Native American film critics states that the film “*The Fast Runner*” has now moved the conversation to the “other side”. What does he mean by this and why is this movie so significant to the narrators of this documentary?