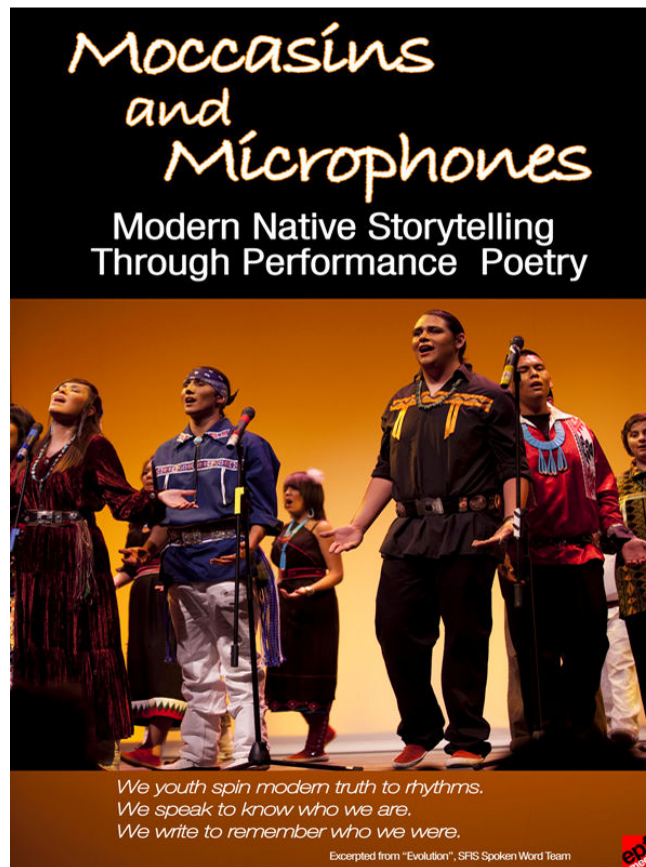




## MOCCASINS AND MICROPHONES MODERN NATIVE STORYTELLING THROUGH PERFORMANCE POETRY



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Moccasins and Microphones: Modern Native Storytelling through Performance Poetry explores the fascinating world of a dynamic team of indigenous youth writers from the Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) in New Mexico. Led by teacher and poet Timothy P. McLaughlin, the SFIS Spoken Word Program empowers its student members to create and perform original poems centered in Native philosophies. Over an eight-year history, the exquisite artistry of this ever-evolving team has been highly recognized through numerous awards, a bevy of media appearances including in The New York Times and on The PBS News Hour, and performance tours throughout the United States and to the Baltic nations in Eastern Europe. This documentary film journeys with the SFIS Spoken Word Team as the core group (including several graduating twelfth graders) prepares and presents a theater production of their finest poems woven with traditional and contemporary song and dance. The young SFIS poets will enchant your heart and enliven your spirit as they continue the ancient tradition of Native storytelling through the powerful new medium of performance poetry.

## **About Santa Fe**

The spoken word program featured in this film was a program of the Santa Fe Indian School, which is located in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico, and the state's fourth-largest city. It is located in the northern part of New Mexico, in the foothills of the southern Rocky Mountains, and is more than 7,000 feet above sea level. According to the official City of Santa Fe government website, it is the oldest state capital city in the United States, and also the one with the highest elevation.<sup>1</sup>

The city is recognized around the world for its rich and diverse culture and arts communities, including those of the Native Americans that live there. In 2005 Santa Fe was designated a Creative City by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Creative Cities are those that have recognized creativity as an important factor in their urban development. On its website, UNESCO explains that in Santa Fe, expressions of Native American culture such as dance, weaving, jewelry, and pottery are an important part of what makes the city so creative.<sup>2</sup>

## **Native American Tribes of New Mexico**

There is evidence that Native Americans were the first residents in the Santa Fe area, and that they lived throughout New Mexico for thousands of years before European explorers arrived. Some of these early Native Americans were hunter-gatherers, and had nomadic lifestyles. Others practiced agriculture and created permanent settlements.

In 1540, the first Spanish explorers came to the area, and around 1600, they built permanent settlements there. They established Santa Fe as their permanent capital in 1610. For many years, there was conflict as the Spanish tried to conquer and convert the Native Americans living in the area, while the Native Americans tried to push the Spanish out. In the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Native Americans

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<sup>1</sup> City of Santa Fe, "About Santa Fe." [https://www.santafenm.gov/about\\_santa\\_fe](https://www.santafenm.gov/about_santa_fe)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Santa Fe." <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/santa-fe>

in the Santa Fe area did manage to successfully drive out the Spanish, and keep them out for more than ten years. However, ultimately, they were unable to hold back the tide of explorers and settlers.

Today, there are twenty-three Native American tribes in the state of New Mexico. One is the Navajo, and three are Apache tribes. The other nineteen are considered to be Pueblo Tribes. A Pueblo is a sovereign tribal nation with its own government, traditions, culture, and way of living. The Pueblo nations—also referred to as the Nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico—are: Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia and Zuni. According to the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, overall New Mexico has almost 220,000 Indian citizens, comprising about 10.5 percent of the state’s population<sup>3</sup>.

## **The Santa Fe Indian School and the Spoken Word Program**

The Santa Fe Indian School, located in the city of Santa Fe, is owned and operated by the Nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico. The boarding school was established in 1890, and its original goal was to assimilate Native American children into the general population. However, today the school works to support, rather than erase, the cultural beliefs and traditions of Native Americans. It is open to Native American young people in grades seven through twelve. The school works to prepare its students for careers after graduation, but also teaches them to honor their cultural values, and educates them about the issues facing Native American communities.

The Santa Fe Indian School’s spoken word program was founded in 2003 by Timothy P. McLaughlin. McLaughlin is a poet, spoken word artist, and teacher. Spoken word is a type of poetry that is intended to be performed on stage. Artists use voice inflection and word play as part of their performance. In addition, they may also include utilize other elements including music, sound, or dance in order to express themselves. McLaughlin stresses that honesty is also an essential part of spoken word. He insists, “If it’s not honest, the poem will fall flat no matter how fancy the words are.”<sup>4</sup>

## **An Oral Tradition**

The Native American people have a rich oral tradition. Throughout their history, they have used storytelling to share their experiences and knowledge with one another, and to pass down their history and culture from one generation to the next. Like all Native American cultures, the Pueblo people continue this oral tradition today. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center explains that song, dance, and prayer are an essential part of Pueblo culture. The organization says that it is through these expressions that the Pueblo people celebrate seasonal cycles and connect to their community, their ancestors, and their traditions. Overall, song, dance, and prayer are an important way for them to connect to their past and their future. In explaining these oral traditions, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center says, “They ensure that life continues.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, “New Mexico’s Twenty-Three Tribes and the Indian Affairs Department.” <http://www.iad.state.nm.us/history.html>

<sup>4</sup> Tim McLaughlin, “Teaching Philosophy,” Santa Fe Indian School. [http://www.sfis.k12.nm.us/teaching\\_philosophy](http://www.sfis.k12.nm.us/teaching_philosophy)

<sup>5</sup> Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, “History & Culture.” <https://www.indianpueblo.org/19-pueblos/history-culture/>

## Glossary

- **Ariel Antone:** Antone was a co-captain of the spoken word team. She attended the University of Arizona in Tucson.
- **Nolan Eskeets:** Eskeets is a graduate of the Santa Fe Indian School and was an apprentice coach for the spoken word team. He became a Gates Millennium Scholar and a student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.
- **Marty Fragua:** Fragua was part of the spoken word team at Santa Fe Indian School. He attended the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.
- **Gates Millennium Scholar:** A Gates Millennium Scholar is a recipient of a scholarship through the Gates Millennium Scholars program, which was established in 1999. The program aims to help minority students with a significant financial need reach their highest potential.
- **Timothy P. McLaughlin:** McLaughlin is a poet and a teacher. He has taught in Native American communities in Montana, South Dakota, and New Mexico. In 2003 he founded the Spoken Word Program at the Santa Fe Indian School.
- **Clara Natonabah:** Natonabah was a co-captain of the spoken word team at the Santa Fe Indian School. She became a Gates Millennium Scholar, and a student at the Berklee College of Music in Boston.
- **Nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico:** The state of New Mexico has nineteen Pueblo nations: The Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia and Zuni.
- **performance poetry:** Poetry that is intended to be performed in front of an audience.
- **Pueblo:** A sovereign tribal nation with its own government, culture, and way of living.
- **Santana Shorty:** Shorty was a co-captain of the spoken word team. She became a Gates Millennium Scholar and attended Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.
- **Spoken word:** A type of poetry that is intended to be performed on stage.

## Additional Resources

### Books

- Marcia Keegan (1999). *Pueblo People: Ancient Traditions, Modern Lives*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.
- Timothy P. McLaughlin, ed. (2012). *Walking on Earth and Touching the Sky: Poetry and Prose by Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Indian School*. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.
- **Online Sources**
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Santa Fe." <https://www.britannica.com/place/Santa-Fe-New-Mexico>
- Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, "About the Pueblos." <https://www.indianpueblo.org/19-pueblos/>
- Santa Fe Indian School, "History." [http://www.sfis.k12.nm.us/about\\_sfis](http://www.sfis.k12.nm.us/about_sfis)



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