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Donation Establishes the Nation's First 24-Hour Native American TV Channel
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians provides \$6 million to KVCR to launch a ground-breaking channel dedicated exclusively to Native American culture and history

SAN BERNARDINO, CA June 16, 2010 –A \$6 million donation by the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians will allow San Bernardino-based KVCR Television to launch the nation's first 24-hour Native American television channel, tribal leaders and the station announced today.

The Channel is a groundbreaking media initiative emphasizing the factual history, culture and current events of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. Planned to reach the airwaves in spring 2011, this one-of-a-kind channel will tell the stories of indigenous North American peoples and is the result of an ongoing partnership between KVCR and San Manuel.

“We fully anticipate this unique channel to become a model for public-television programming across the country,” said, Larry R. Cicalone, President of KVCR, a Public Broadcasting System affiliate. “The commitment of the San Manuel tribe to informing audiences about the contributions and achievements of Native Americans in history and modern times is precedent setting.”

This is the first time a Native American tribe has taken the lead in using a powerful medium to plan, produce and communicate cultural, historical and contemporary messages to be told on a scale previously not possible, Cicalone added.

“The power and influence for the good this channel will achieve cannot be overstated,” he said.

James Ramos, chairman of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, said becoming a partner with KVCR supports the tribe's mission of eradicating stereotypes that often stem from inaccurate depictions of American Indians in commercial television.

“Supporting this endeavor will help achieve that objective by allowing us to tell the story of Native Americans through themes and images that speak the truth and educate our audiences,” said Ramos, who also serves on the San Bernardino Community College District Board of Trustees,

Ramos said the content will demonstrate the broad appeal and educational and entertainment potential of Native American filmmakers, actors and story tellers.

“We truly will represent the Native voices of America,” Ramos said.

Noted Native American actor Wes Studi, who earned accolades for his work in Academy Award-winning films such as “*Dances with Wolves*” and “*The Last of the Mohicans*,” praised KVCR and San Manuel for their vision and commitment.

“As the first TV channel of its kind, it will be in a unique position to expose viewers to the untold stories of Native Americans. “First Voices” will be in a position to break stereotypes while preserving and celebrating our rich culture and collective history before a larger audience,” Studi said.

Establishing more outlets for Native American produced film and television is an important focus for Native American and filmmakers.

“There is a wealth of content produced and featuring Native Americans talent,” said Georgina Lightning, director of “*Older than America*,” an award winning motion picture of contemporary suspense that focuses on the lasting impacts of Indian boarding schools.

“This channel provides a needed forum for Native American artists, a common ground on which we can share our unique perspectives and express ourselves creatively.”

The tribe's charitable gift will be made in three installments of \$2 million over the first three-years that “First Voices” is in operation. Select members of the San Manuel tribe and KVCR will comprise the channel's operating board.

This effort is a direct outgrowth of a four-year partnership between KVCR and the San Manuel tribe. The tribe's earlier contribution of \$1.5 million paved the way for KVCR to purchase new digital master control equipment and convert from analogue to digital broadcast and expand from one to six channels.

The partnership also resulted in development of many radio and television programs, including three documentary series called “*People of the Pines*,” a direct translation of San Manuel's clan designation in the Native Serrano language: Yuhaviatam.

“*People of the Pines*” has aired multiple times locally and in markets across the country. The three-part, 12-episode series telling stories of struggle and perseverance is viewed in dozens of classrooms across Southern California as an educational tool.

People of the Pines production pictures available upon request

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