Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Filmmaker seeks local talent

An original short film production is set for this summer based on the skills of a budding young Navajo female, Shaandiin Tome, who briefed the Gallup City Council on the project May 23 at the regular city meeting. “Actors and actresses are needed for film production,” Tome told council members.

The film is about young Navajo mother who lives her last day before she succumbs to alcoholism. A character by the name of Ruby struggles with her 18-year-old son in the film that was selected by the Utah-based Sundance Film Institute and Native and Indigenous Program in Los Angeles. The organization operates under the bigger Sundance Film Festival.

“We will be holding a casting call June 4,” writer and director Tome said. Tome, who submitted the film story, was selected along with filmmaker Erin Lau of Hawaii.

Tome, the daughter of former Navajo Nation spokesman Deswood Tome, said the casting call for actors will be from 12 noon to 5 pm. in the Knifewing Production Studios at 204 W. Coal Ave., across the street from El Morro Theatre in downtown Gallup. Knifewing Segura is the founder and CEO of the annual Gallup Film Festival.

“We invite everyone who’d like to tryout for a role in this production,” Tome said. “Taped auditions of those interested are welcomed.” Tome said there are roles for at least six speaking

characters. “Filmmaking is all about starting with a desire,” Tome said.

The title of the film is MUD and is based on the Navajo word “hastl’ishnii,” which is Ruby’s clan. Tome, a cum laude film and media graduate of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, wrote the film. She was first chosen as a Full Circle Fellow with the Sundance Institute in 2016.

After graduating from UNM Tome worked on film sets in multiple roles from running sound, pulling focus and serving as a production assistant. Gallup filmmaker Sydney Freeland helped Tome with MUD.

Gallup Councilor Allan Landavazo asked Tome if there was one or more persons who has influenced her filmmaking work. Tome replied that Freeland, who made “Drunktown’s Finest (2014),” has given her numerous pointers.

“Everyone has been helpful,” Tome said. “Knifewing has been helpful. Sydney has been helpful.”

Tome said her work in technical positions has been for independent films, documentaries, and major motion pictures. The film is Tome’s first taking aim at writing and directing. Late last summer she interned for the Sundance Institute in Los Angeles and served on staff during the 2017 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

Most recently, Tome was awarded a “Best Cinematographer” recognition by the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe for work in a production of “Raven.”

Production for MUD is scheduled to begin in July.

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