

## 'Mud' (Hashtl'ishnii) gearing up for New Zealand run

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 16 February 2018 09:31

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## Family, alcoholism explored in new Sundance Film Festival short film

Shaandiin Tome is a young lady of many pursuits. In addition to being an honors graduate of the University of New Mexico, the Navajo-born Tome is also a filmmaker who possesses Sundance Film Festival experience — including a Sundance Full Circle Fellowship.

The Red Valley, Ariz., native debuted her short film “*Mud*,” last month at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. The showing drew a packed house, which included film

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aficionados from around the world.

"*Mud*" made its local debut Feb. 9 at Gallup's historic El Morro Theatre and amid a standing room only audience. These days, though, Tome is swamped overseeing scheduled showings of "*Mud*," shot in Gallup, Lupton, Ariz., and Black Hat, N.M., and gearing up for film festivals in California, Connecticut and New Zealand.

Years in the making, "*Mud*" boasts a Native American cast and was one of two selections at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival Native Film Lab. The film's producer is Aroonsri Khamsamran of Taos, N.M. Tome is the "*Mud's*" writer and director.

"The film is doing great," Tome said after the El Morro showing. "It's exceeding expectations and people are really interested in it."

### About The Film

The star of the just under 10-minute film is Ruby, an alcoholic mother played by Trini King (*Edge of America* 2003).

Ruby seeks to remedy the relationship she has with her son, Joseph, played by Forrest Goodluck

(*The Revenant* 2015)

. Ruby's cousin, Harold, is the perfect "side" character, and is played by Ernie Tsosie (*Turquoise Rose* 2007, *Drunktown's Finest* 2014, *Legends From the Sky* 2015)

of the

*Ernie & James*

comedy duo fame.

King is from Shiprock, Goodluck is an Albuquerque native and Tsosie hails from Fort Defiance, Ariz. King and Tsosie are Navajo. Goodluck's ancestry includes Hidatsa, Mandan, Tsimshian and Navajo.

"Making the film was a vey rewarding thing to do," Tsosie said. "This is social commentary to a

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large degree. There is a very real message in the film.”

The fiction film offers a definitive look into the history and ongoing struggle with identity as it pertains to Native Americans. Tome, who went through family experiences of alcoholism while growing up, notes that a lot of folks are tangentially familiar with Native Americans — associating tribal culture with alcoholism and other social ills.

Ruby succumbs to alcohol in the film, seemingly struggling with identity as it relates to being a Native female.

“Who are Native American women in our society when you’re talking about life off of the reservation?” Tome mused during a question and answer session after the El Morro showing. “Ruby struggles with identity. Ruby is a caring mother. She is challenged by identity and culture. We all struggle with something.”

There are more films in the works, Tome said.

Alison Smith, 35, of Smith Lake, N.M., said she’s eager to see another Tome film, no matter the subject. “I thought it was a well-made film,” Smith said. “You can tell a lot of thought went into it.”

Tome summed up the purpose of her film.

“I wrote *“Mud”* to capture a mother-son relationship and how a mother is striving to tell her son she loves him,” Tome explained. “This film serves as a reality that a lot of Native people face, but it is also a conversation-starter to how we as a people can strive towards a life where we are able to discuss the harshness of addiction and the impact it has on not only those addicted, but the community as well.”

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