

## Film Prize Jr. launches third year in New Mexico

Written by gallupsun

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Film professionals, legislators, cabinet officials, teachers and students gathered at the National Hispanic Cultural Center on Sept. 7 to celebrate the launch of Film Prize Jr's third year in New Mexico. The statewide youth film education and festival program supports youth grades 5-12 to create short films.

Last year, the program grew by 55%, featuring 93 student films from over 50 schools in 20 NM counties. All of the films were featured on the big screen at their festival at the Albuquerque Convention Center in April 2023.

Students compete for scholarships and media grants in categories such as comedy, drama, thriller, animations, and documentary.

This year, the program is expanding, with support from the NM Department of Cultural Affairs and the Community Schools Division of New Mexico's Public Education Department. The program supports classrooms with a combination of virtual resources and in-person mentorship at partner locations across the state.

Kyndee Keeler is the CTE Director for Gallup-McKinley County Schools, which is adopting the Film Prize Jr NM program district-wide.

"We are grateful to Film Prize Jr for supporting our students to explore their passion in digital media and film production," Keeler said. "Film Prize Jr. NM provides accessible resources, industry expertise, and invaluable mentorship opportunities for our students in the Digital Media Pathways."

Last year, two GMCS students entered films into the Film Prize Jr. NM competition.

The program is being expanded into the Navajo Nation this year. Last year, 17 films made by Native students were featured in the competition.

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“Film Prize Jr. NM is creating unparalleled access to an artistic medium that allows our Native youth to be the tellers of their own stories in their own voices,” Lori Taphoahonso, founder of Indig•Image, an Indigenous image consulting business with a focus on the filmed entertainment industry, said. “The program has tremendous potential to impact accurate representation, imagery and histories in film.”

Film Prize Jr NM is also serving students in the most rural parts of the state, with 70 of their 150 student films in the last two years coming from communities with populations under 15,000.

Registration is currently open for the 2023-24 year, to any 5th-12th grade classrooms or out of school program. No film or media experience is necessary for teachers to participate.

