

## **WORKING TITLE: WHY DO NAVAJO MEN HAVE LONG HAIR?**

**FILMMAKER:** Cherylee Francis, (520) 975-2565 | Email: filmmaker@whydonavajomenhavelonghair.com

**LOGLINE:** A short documentary addressing the cruel treatment of two Navajo (Diné) youth who choose to carry on their Navajo (Diné) traditional hairstyle and find support from an elder who explains why Navajo (Diné) men have the right to have long hair.

**SUMMARY:** It's shocking how Indigenous boys and men are still shamed for having long hair in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This long history stems back to when Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and sent to Indian Boarding Schools in the United States (1869-1960s), where their hair was often cut short in an attempt to assimilate them.

MAKAIUS & MAKAIRYN MARKS are two Navajo (Diné) brothers ridiculed for keeping their long hair as they choose to carry on the Navajo traditional hairstyle, the Navajo (Diné) bun, called a *tsiyééł*. Aware of the treatment of his sons', DARRELL MARKS (father), travels with his children to visit Navajo (Diné) Cultural Expert, STEVE DARDEN, to gain valuable traditional teachings on why Navajo (Diné) men have the right to have long hair.

Steve opens by saying, *"We are still a proud Diné peoples who, sadly to this day, still suffer discrimination, racism and prejudice. So, a lot of our young people today, they have a desire to continue on what their forebears [lived by] ... what they believe and what we call our values or mores, our belief systems."* Steve learns from Makaius how he is treated by his peers.

*Makaius: "At the high school, the people there view me different, especially with long hair. They often mistake me as a woman or call me names, right? Being "savage" is one of them. A lot of people make comments like, "He's bringing his savage ways here."*

Throughout the film, Steve and Darrell share their traditional knowledge with the next generation of Navajo (Diné) men. In a profound statement, Steve provides the audience with a wise perspective, with pictures of the Navajo (Diné) imprisonment at Bosque Redondo (1864-1868), the Navajo language was used to defend this country (USA). Steve's final ask of the audience is: *"If you see and look at my hair, you have something to say about it. Come ask me about it. Come ask my nephews about it, don't ridicule them. Ask simply. That's a wonderful way to open the door to bridge that gap, cultural gap in a way you can see that we are still here."*

### **MAIN CAST:**

STEVE DARDEN, Navajo Cultural Expert

MAKAIUS MARKS, Navajo Youth

MAKAIRYN MARKS, Navajo Youth

DARRELL MARKS, Navajo father