

# INDIGENOUS FUTURITY

WALKING INTO THE NEAR FUTURE | ZIZI LI

YEAR: 2059

You just finished dining at the Nickel Diner and desperately need a fresh breath of air after the full meal. You decide to walk over to the last surviving bookstore and record store in town, aka the Last Bookstore. Your GPS devices weirdly malfunction. You decide to just go for it since it is only 5-min walking distance away. Of course, you get lost. Instead of turning left on the 5th St, you turn right and then left on Werdin Pl. A multi-layered sound is coming from just around the corner. It sounds like a mixture of throat singing, ghost dancing, hip hop beats with Indigenous rhymes, electronic music rhythms with powwow drumming. Indeed, you wander to the Indian Valley.



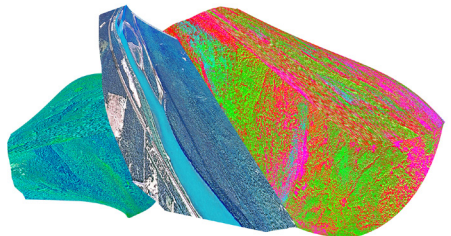
You see a group of ghost dancers with clothing from different tribes are dancing around an electronic band. You are fascinated and intrigued.



You join the crowd dancing to the band, whom fuses hip hop, reggae, dubstep, Indigenous music elements from various regions such as nasal vocal and throat singing, and pan-Indian music forms like powwows and peyote songs.



Suddenly, you collapse. Your flesh is unified with the earth yet your soul is in the Fourth World. You enter a space of void lit up by this shining and colorful stone. “Welcome onboard to a tour of the ghostly DTLA in the Halluci Nation. We prepare three screens of cinema for you to walk into, each correspond to a section of the stone.”



Exclusion Zone Radioactivity by Dion Smith-Dokkie (West Moberly First Nations)

SCREEN 1: THE DEMILLE INDIANS @ the Cameo theater

You see the turquoise section rise up into the void and turn into a screen. The image is poster-like, with a black and white photograph in the background and a colorful imagery of an American Indian with the name “Red Wing” on the top. You try to figure out the who, where, and why. “Could it be the long abandoned Cameo theater in DTLA we learnt in the American film history class?” While thinking, you follow a force, unconsciously walk toward the screen, reach your arm out, and immediately enter a simulacrum with deep screen and deep time.



You walk into the Tongva Nation, the Mission San Gabriel, the Wounded Knee Massacre, hundreds of actualities in Nickelodeons and Westerns that render Native Americans hypervisible and invisible. You walk into early Hollywood sets with Indigenous Americans from different tribes working above and below the line with (un)credited roles, including James Young Deer (Ho-Chunk), Red Wing (Ho-Chunk), Luther Standing Bear (Sioux), Will Rogers (Cherokee), Tatzumbie Dupea (Paiute), Edwin Carewe (Chickasaw), and more.

You walk into scenes where Young Deer and Red Wing subtly resisted/ repaired Hollywood by creating films that presented more nuanced views of Native Americans. You walk into scenes of Standing Bear as a consultant to Director Thomas Ince, of Red Wing starring in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Squaw Man* (1914). You walk into the formation of the “DeMille Indians” in the 1940s, a transnational/intertribal Hollywood Indian community based on shared professions on virtual reservation.

The blue stone is calling for you. You are presented with a fully black and white screen with a night view of Broadway featuring the Roxie Theatre, right next to the Cameo Theatre from the previous screen. A deep, complicated, somber, yet determined looking lady is overlaid on the right side of the image. You walk into Bunker Hills in the late 1950s and early 1960s, walk into one Friday night in Yvonne Williams' 20s, and walk into Yvonne's version of off-the-reservation story in the relocation era. It is an untypical edition in that her night does not



revolve around alcoholic and gambling addictions, which were both stereotypes and realities. Instead, you walk into the movies with Yvonne while her partner Homer was spending the night carousing at Indian bars drinking, dancing, and gambling before ending up on "Hill X" for an after-hours gathering. You walk into a forming urban Indian narrative beyond mere despair and dislocation; one that presents and exposes tensions and conflicts, one that keeps strong ties with ancestral lands while (re)forming intertribal collectivity and a trans-national decolonizing consciousness. You walk with Yvonne by the ascent of Angels Flight, by window displays, by theatres.

You walk with the exiled whom wander, the exiled whom left their home reservations "by choice," relocating "by choice" due to the direct result of settler colonialism. You walk with the exiled whom, albeit difficult situations, withhold agency and continue claiming and reclaiming space and mobility. You walk into Indian Valley via Kent Mckenzie's *The Exiles* (1961). You walk into the original site of the United American Indian Involvement Center and the pan-Indian community it has (re) created since 1974 to recover from the dark history of the Indian Alley, a sort of urban Wounded Knee.

### SCREEN 3: THE LIVING INDIANS @ the Arcade theater

There is the bright green and pink one left. It turns into a huge screen with black and white imagery of the Arcade Theatre, right next to the Roxie and the Cameo, in the background. You see reparative addition with numerous colorful images, including photos of a new generation of young Indigenous actors taken by documentarian Pamela J. Peters (Navajo): talented actor and musician Noah Watts (Crow/Blackfeet), JaNae Collins (Dakota) and Brian Ballie (Crow) whom evoke Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty in *Bonnie & Clyde*. You see mural



street arts at the Indian Alley, including “Chief Plenty Coups” (2015) by Votan (Mayan), “Keep Calm and Decolonize” (2015) by Jaque Fragua (Jemez Pueblo), a Tongva territory map on mural (2018) by River Tikwi Garza (Tongva), and “We are still here” (2013) by famous non-Native artist Shepard Fairey. You walk into the late 2010s and early 2020s art scenes in DTLA. You walk into Indigenous futuristic artworks, including “aandjinaagowihidizo” (2017) by Connor Pion (Cree/Atikamekw/metis/Irish/British) and “Through to the Sun” (2019) by Kristina Maldonado Bad Hand (Sicangu Lakota/Cherokee). You walk into comic arts by Weshoyot Alvitre (Tongva/Scots-Gaelic),

into the story of Toypurina: the Tongva medicine woman, mother, and leader of the 1785 revolt against San Gabriel Mission and settler colonization. You walk with the exiled whom continue to thrive despite daily encounters of oppressions. You walk into this cinema that resists against the settler colonial mindset of ancestralizing Native people and expelling them to the past. Instead, it foregrounds the tran-national urban Indigenous communities that are living in LA.

You wake up feeling inspired and share with everyone there.