



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA®
The Department of English

September 6, 2023

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write to you in enthusiastic support of James Fortier's application for a position with your organization. I worked closely with Mr. Fortier for five years as part of the creative team on the PBS documentary *Searching for Sequoyah*, which enjoyed great success in national broadcast on public television, as well as a robust run at film festivals and university screenings across the US, Canada, Mexico, and Europe. I witnessed firsthand his effective attention to organization, saw the incredible range of technical skills he brings to bear, discovered the inexhaustible energy he devotes to his projects, and recognized his investment in telling stories of Indigenous people with respect and deep cultural competence. I assure you that he will bring passion, dedication, integrity, and outstanding ability to your institution.


Mr. Fortier's expertise runs both wide and deep, helping him navigate a variety of situations and institutions, which I saw particularly as he worked flexibly with non-profit media organizations, tribal cultural offices, museums, and educational institutions. In addition to his awareness of how to work with the administrative arms of universities, he demonstrated a solid educational dimension in mentoring graduate students whom we brought on set. He offered them hands-on training and explanation, gave them high-profile, additional responsibilities when they were ready and willing, and saw to it that they were compensated and recognized for their work. He can handle all the technical aspects of video production, from running professional-grade camera, lighting, and audio equipment to all post-production requirements as well. With only a minimum of contributions from others, he took charge of the shooting, recording, lighting, editing, sound design, color correction, titling and more for the *Sequoyah* film, all of which met PBS's detailed and exhaustive requirements for national broadcast. He furthermore took the lead for matters related to the film's promotion and distribution. More important even than his commanding technological competence is his ability to see and realize the larger picture of complex and multifaceted projects. He communicates clearly and concisely with team members, as he listens to and values their contributions. In essence, he's the one who keeps the train on the tracks.

The organization it took to carry this out in the case of the *Sequoyah* film was no small affair, as it involved, for instance, shooting at multiple sites, permissions management for new and archival materials, travel arrangements, aligning workflows among many crew members, and took us from North Carolina to Oklahoma and down to Mexico. Coordinating our four week-long shoots required Mr. Fortier to strike a balance between assertiveness and cooperation in his leadership role as he helped LeAnne Howe (the executive producer and co-writer) and me crystallize what we all envisioned for the story within the contexts of what was possible—all while literally doing the heavy lifting of filmmaking. That he was able to bring the film across the finish line in the midst of the COVID pandemic is especially remarkable. His passion for telling Native stories, his awareness of cultural protocols in Native communities, and his sense of humor are all major contributors to his success in the field. The many prestigious awards he has

racked up over many years for his work on important subjects like the American Indian Movement with his highly regarded documentary *Alcatraz Is Not an Island* testify not only to his proficiency but also to his outstanding reputation in the field of American Indian film and media.

If I haven't put it plainly enough: James Fortier is an outstanding filmmaker with comprehensive skills and a holistic approach who would prove an invaluable asset to any organization in need of representing themselves through media. He's a do-er, this guy: he's knowledgeable, proficient, professional, and active. I lend his application my entire support and strongest recommendation, and I hope you will give him every consideration. If I may answer any questions or address any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joshua B. Nelson".

Joshua B. Nelson, Ph.D.

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