



# Turtle Island Productions

**James M. Fortier**

**Writer/Producer/Director/D.P./Editor/Dedicated Historian**

## BIO

James is an enrolled member of the [Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation](#) (formerly known as Ojibways of Pic River First Nation), located in Ontario, Canada. Born in Nipigon, Ontario and raised in the Chicago area, first at [Mooseheart](#), and then in Wheaton, James set out for California at the ripe age of 20 to complete film school at San Francisco State University and received his B.A. in Radio & Television with an emphasis on screenwriting and video production. His first documentary, [Alcatraz Is Not an Island](#), won best documentary feature at the 1999 American Indian Film Festival and later screened at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival, premiering nationally on PBS and APTN in Canada in the early 2000's. For over 35 years James has been a Director of Photography, live event Camera Operator, Gaffer and Grip on thousands of productions for Fortune 500 Companies, broadcast and cable television, PBS, and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in Canada. James has been editing since 2005. Since 1995, his documentaries have focused on Native American, First Nation and Métis issues and stories. He has won numerous awards, including three regional Emmys, and the DuPont Columbia Award for Broadcast Journalism as episode Producer/Director of [Bad Sugar](#) (of the national PBS series *Unnatural Causes: Is Society Making Us Sick?*).

James' 2013 documentary, [Gifts from the Elders](#) was a passion project focusing on the interruption of traditional knowledge transference from elders to youth due to loss of lands and culture on the Pic River Ojibway Reserve. It was the vision of Western University Assistant Professor, and my cousin [Chantelle Richmond](#), who initially brought James in as a consultant and mentor for two Cree film students in Thunder Bay, ON. James's role expanded significantly after returning to Pic River and the additional reserve community of Batchawana the following summer to film additional interviews, scenic and verité footage. After community premiere screenings at Confederation College in Thunder Bay in 2013, and for Pic River, Batchewana and Western University, the film screened at several film festivals and aired on PBS in Minnesota. James was the DP for 3 seasons of the APTN series [Tansi! Nehiyawetan \(Lorreta Todd\)](#).

Other documentary works include the six-hour PBS Ojibwe series [Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions](#), [Indian Country Diaries: Spiral of Fire](#), [Playing Pastime: American Indians, Softball, and Survival](#), [Green Green Water](#), and two documentaries for the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, [Pulling Together](#), and [Gathering Together](#), which chronicled the tribe's participation in the annual Northwest Tribal Canoe Journeys. In 2009, James was the [Artist in Residence at the University of Illinois](#), Urbana-Champaign, where he conducted a four-week video production lab for the American Indian Studies Department course, *American Indian Stereotypes in Film*, and presented several of his documentaries for students and faculty.

James' most recent national PBS documentary as Co-Writer/Producer/Director/DP/Editor, [Searching for Sequoyah](#), in partnership with [Vision Maker Media](#), was broadcast on nearly 90% of all PBS stations across the US in 2021 after screening at several film festivals, and premiering at the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco during the COVID Pandemic. He is currently working on a new, more personal documentary: *Mis-qui-Kiweninne- Red Face Man: The Hudson's Bay Company, Nicol Finlayson and his Scottish-Oji-Cree legacy in Northern Ontario*; the culmination of thirty years of research into James' Scottish/Anishinaabeg heritage.

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[Turtle-Island.com](#) [Searching for Sequoyah](#) [Gifts from the Elders](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Facebook](#) [Vimeo](#)