Sandy Osawa (Makah) broke media barriers in the 1970s by launching the first ten-part national television series to be entirely produced, acted, and written by Native Americans. Seventeen of Osawa’s documentaries have been broadcast on both PBS and commercial television stations and over sixty non-broadcast works have been created for non-profit organizations. Osawa was the first Native American filmmaker to produce a one-hour documentary for network television, called The Eighth Fire, which aired on NBC stations in 1992. Lighting the 7th Fire (1994) aired nationally on PBS, on a series called P.O.V. and was the first Indian-produced program for that major series. The film also captured top documentary honors at the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco.

Osawa’s film on Maria Tallchief, America’s first prima ballerina, was broadcast on PBS from 2007-2010. The film swept Fargo’s 2009 International Film Festival for “Best Documentary” and “Best of Show” categories. Maria Tallchief is currently being extended to include additional footage of key dances including her innovative role as the first sugar plum fairy in “Nutcracker.” Such an extension will enable the film to play in theaters and will target a new audience.

A growing number of colleges use her work in the classroom including UC Berkeley, Wesleyan University, UIC Riverside, University of Arizona, University of Utah, The Evergreen State College, University of Oregon, University of Indiana, Harvard University, and others. Osawa holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon and has done graduate work at UCLA and the University of Washington. She is the recipient of grants and awards from The Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the American Film Institute, Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT), Washington State Arts Commission, J. Roderick McArthur, the Muckleshoot Tribe, the George Soros Foundation, the King County Arts Commission, 4 Culture, and the Independent Television Service (ITVS).

This event is free of charge and open to the public.

The Simon Ortiz and Labriola Center Lecture on Indigenous Land, Culture, and Community at Arizona State University brings notable scholars and speakers to Arizona for public lectures twice per year. These speakers address topics and issues across disciplines in the arts, humanities, sciences, and politics. Underlining Indigenous American experiences and perspectives, this series seeks to create and celebrate knowledge that evolves from an inclusive Indigenous worldview that is applicable to all walks of life.