



# LOW POWER FM RADIO: A RESOURCE FOR NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES, ON AND OFF THE RESERVATION.

## How can LPFM be a resource for Native American communities?

Radio is cheap to produce, free to consume, and accessible to more people across the world than any other medium. Low Power FM Radio is economical in the way that it does not require expensive equipment, literacy, or a broadband connection. Radio and the airwaves are just as vital as natural resources; we have the right to the airwaves, just like the right to have clean water, clean air, and land. Low-power radio stations broadcast at a very low power and often times low cost, to a small community area. These stations tend to serve small towns or neighborhoods within large cities in the United States. Low Power FM (LPFM) stations are community-based, non-commercial radio stations that operate at 100 watts or less and reach a radius of 3 to 10 miles.

## What Issues are Native Communities trying to address through Radio?

LPFM creates a social outlet for communities to have access to independent media. Today, very few Native American nations own TV stations, radio stations or other forms of media outlets. Self interested conglomerates and profit driven corporations own the majority of media outlets, leaving a huge void for those desiring content responsive to their own communities.

LPFM stations provide local residents the opportunity to provide their communities with a variety of new voices and services. Through their broadcast, new alternatives of independent media, music, and content can be made a service to any communities needs.



"It's very important for us to keep our native culture, traditions, and language alive. How did we make it this far, if it wasn't for holding on to our traditions and learning from our elders." [KPYT] Hector Youtsey,

From interview to interview, Native American radio enthusiast and listeners say there is not enough local content on the airwaves. Promotion of localism or the community's interests can't be found on the corporate media dial. From The Reservation to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, important issues are not being dealt with. LPFM stations can address the interests of underserved groups and provide a forum for information and debate about issues of concern to these communities.

Another important factor is cultural preservation; tribes are in search of new ways to continue traditions and languages. Adapting to modern technology can help Native culture thrive and prosper in their communities. LPFM stations strengthen community identity in urban neighborhoods, rural towns and other areas currently too small to be taken into consideration by "mainstream," ratings-driven, corporate-owned media.

## Misrepresentation and Underrepresentation in Existing Media Outlets

Because media plays such a pivotal role in our lives, it can contribute positively or negatively to the progress of community building or any development of a person's being. You can build a nation by its people, but you can break a nation by its media. The simple fact that people are always being misrepresented shouldn't be hard to digest. But the desire to change, that can be harder than one spoonful; Regardless of one's nation, race, ethnicity, gender, and background. The important thing is communities everywhere have the power to change; it just takes the ingredients of hope and adaptation to make a difference in their lives and others. Just remember it won't change overnight. People need time, important changes take time, and life takes time. But always remember, that it helps to keep things in a balanced perspective, involving our emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual aspects in our decisions. Besides while thinking in these terms, we should not let the media control us, we control what we put out on the media.



The need for radio on the reservation is ultra local. Many people on the reservation have satellite TV and get state news, national news, even world news yet are left out of loop on local chapter politics and local Indian government policies. But everything else from traditional creation stories to news and music is a big question whether or not Native people want that kind of power over one another. The fact is though if we don't have that power someone else will gladly have it. Even the Indian nation governments could use this improperly; so the struggle is within.

"I think radio is one of the best resources . It helps preserve your culture, it is the common link that keeps the community together and lets everybody know what's going on. Radio is just absolutely vital, critical and very much alive in Native communities. It's about supporting the Native voice, you know, it's really about making sure that Native people have a voice." Peggy Berryhill, Director of Services and Planning, Native Public Media.

## Here are some radio enthusiasts supporting LPFM on Indian country:

They emphasize culture preservation and adaptation of new technologies for this end. Low Power FM stations can offer Native American communities the chance to get their voices out there and change their communities. It can also offer the opportunity to change the way we think, criticize, perceive and feel about both the local and national media.





**KCUW-LP FM Radio** is a project of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). The CTUIR sees KCUW-LP FM Radio as a new and creative means of reaching out to, and giving the Umatilla Reservation community a strong and active voice. KCUW-LP FM, broadcasting since 2004, strives to provide high quality local news, health and lifestyle information, music and entertainment, sports, community events, discussions on issues of local interest, and other programs of interest to the Umatilla Reservation community. A featured talk show program on Tuesday mornings, addresses the tribal programs and issues. They are currently working on a language program, which will feature mini lessons on how to speak Umatilla. KCUW-LP 104.3 FM Umatilla Reservation Community Radio. 541-966-2033. <http://www.kcuwradio.org/>

“Yes, for our tribe radio has been very positive. We help disseminate information about community events; we run native language lessons, promote discussion of community issues and provide opportunities for our listeners to experience a variety of music. People are beginning to rely on our radio station as an information source.” Debra Crowell, Station Manager. KCUW.

**KPYT-LP FM Radio** was created by the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. The radio station was built for the preservation of the Yaqui culture and to disseminate information to the community. They provide public service announcements, tribal legacy, and behavior health programs. KPYT-LP FM is certain to offer people the right information about Health Issues, Cultural Awareness, Current Events, and Elderly Services. KPYT-LP FM is a non-commercial radio station serving the Pascua Yaqui Reservation. KPYT presents their content in schedules, mixing various music genres with Yaqui traditional music. An example of the Yaqui traditional music schedule would correspond with certain times of the day, traditional morning songs and evening songs. The schedule also features a program that speaks only Yaqui language, called The Three Roads, referring to the three indigenous tribes in Mexico which the Yaqui tribe is decedents of. The show features nothing but Yaqui history and culture. KPYT-LP 100.3 FM Pascua Yaqui Tribe. 520-838-7111. <http://www.pascuayaquitribe.org/>

### What you can Do

Unfortunately, you can not currently apply for a LPFM station as there are very few channels that are available for LPFM stations. This is because of strict restrictions imposed by Congress on LPFM stations. We are currently knee deep in a campaign to pass a bill, The Local Community Radio Act, which would make hundreds to thousands of new channels open up for community radio. Let your Senators know that you support The Local Community Radio Act and want them to support it also. If you like you can Register your concern about the availability of low power FM radio licenses in your area.

Senate: The Local Community Radio Act of 2009 (S 592)

House: The Enhance and Protect Local Community Radio Act of 2009 (HR 1147)

Contact Prometheus about starting your own radio station. [stations@prometheusradio.org](mailto:stations@prometheusradio.org) (215) 727-9620 x506

Sign up on our website <http://www.prometheusradio.org> for our monthly email “Broadcast” to hear about new opportunities to apply for LPFM licenses as well as news about community radio conferences, and more. Also, remember getting a license is only one small part of starting a station, you will need training, a clear mission, station policies, fundraising, station organization and more. On our website you’ll find forums where you can connect to other community radio folks and resources for starting up.



Kirby King of Brave Nation Radio broadcasts online from St. Labre Indian School to the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana. The Brave Nation’s mission is to provide a service to their listeners through a Native American Variety listening Station including Native American music and interests but with an array of other “Americana” entertainment music. Brave Nation’s information consists of the broadcasting of area Spiritual, Cultural, Educational or Extra Curricular events by serving as a vital communications tool for the Native American and non-Native American communities within the station’s service area. The Brave Nation will provide programming that fulfills the cultural, educational, spiritual and entertainment needs of their listeners Brave Nations, St. Libre Indian School of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. 406-784-4534 <http://bravenation.stlabre.org/>

“As kids growing up in the 70s and 80s, we didn’t have video games and TV. We became rich in our imagination. The radio became another source for imagination and from there, dreams were born.” Kirby King, Station Manager Brave Nation.

## Resources



Native Public Media (NPM) promotes healthy, engaged, independent Native communities by strengthening and expanding Native American media capacity and by empowering a strong, proud Native American voice. Media has a vital role to play in supporting this economic and community development. The capacity of Native people to access, operate, produce, participate in and control our own media is critical to the future of Native America. 707- 884-9957 <http://www.nativepublicmedia.org>

Prometheus Radio Project, (PRP) is a non-profit organization founded by a small group of radio activists in 1998. Prometheus builds, supports, and advocates for community radio stations which empower participatory community voices and movements for social change. To that end, we demystify technologies, the political process that governs access to our media system, and the effects of media on our lives and our communities. 215.727.9620 <http://www.prometheusradio.org>

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- This resource guide was produced by Ryan Dennison, Technical and Station Support Intern Summer 2009.