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FROM: Delivery from Earth Unit Publicist Gregory Pleshaw

Michael Becker's short-film "Delivery from Earth" unfolds the next stage in human space history – with a unique New Mexico twist.

"We are all one child, spinning through Mother Sky."

- Shawnee proverb

Few human events have captured the imagination of humanity in quite the same way as space travel. So when Lockheed Martin and the New Mexico Film Foundation teamed up to co-sponsor a short film contest about the excitement of space travel, many New Mexico filmmakers entered. The contest offered a $5,000 grant to help produce a short film that best answered the questions of "What is the excitement of Human Space Exploration? And where do we go now?"

Santa Fe filmmaker Michael Becker's screenplay "Delivery from Earth" won the contest, and in combining the $5K grant with a lot of hard work, Becker has delivered an enduring short film about space exploration and New Mexico. The film portrays a young Navajo boy who eagerly turns to television to watch the latest event in our legacy with space – the birth of a human child on planet Mars.

The film opens with a young boy holding a model of NASA's Orion spacecraft, piloting it through the air with his hands against a backdrop that could be Mars – but which is really just the Four Corners of New Mexico. The boy stops and walks across a mesa towards a makeshift "space station" crafted from a plastic tarp, a 50-gallon drum and a tent, before heading off home to catch the action on television in a house set in the not-too-distant future. As he settles into watch, the television goes on the blink and the boy implores his grandfather to help him fix it so he can "see the Martian" being born. Quoting a Shawnee proverb, the grandfather reminds him, "We are all one child, spinning under Mother Sky."

For Becker, a self-described "space nut" since his early teens, one of the most memorable images of the Space Age has been that of people gathered around their television screens worldwide viewing the latest triumphs of NASA, from the Apollo missions to the moon and back, to the Space Shuttle and the Mars rover landings.

"Space was once the great equalizer," said Becker. "The world stopped when there was a rocket or shuttle launch, and in crafting this film, I tried to consider what is the moment that would create that kind of interest in space exploration again?"

While the prospect of a child born in space would certainly be a seminal moment in the development of the human species, as a fictional idea it is not entirely without precedent. But "Delivery from Earth" localizes the story, taking it a step further by presenting most of the characters as members of the Navajo Nation, with many of them originating from Gallup, New Mexico.

Becker, who is not Native American, is quick to point out that as an outsider to that community, he found it important to partner with those who had better insight into the Native American world. Shortly after he had fleshed out the idea, he was soon introduced to George Burdeau, the first Native American to be elected to the Director's Guild of America. Becker later showed him the script and Burdeau agreed to be a consultant and producer on the show.

"Things began to snowball after that," said Becker. "Between Burdeau's knowledge of local talent and connections with the Native American community, we found ourselves getting a lot of people who were willing to work on the film, often donating their time and equipment based on the strength of the ideas in the screenplay."

Becker certainly had connections of his own to make a film, however. A twenty-five year veteran of film and television production, he grew up in New Mexico but left soon after college to spend twenty years working in Hollywood and Europe on movies, television shows, and commercials before returning to Santa Fe a few years ago with his wife, Laurie. In 1995, Becker wrote, directed and produced "Cityscrapes," a feature film starring Ione Skye, Adam Scott and Timothy Leary, which aired on the Sundance channel and appeared at a number of film festivals. But "Delivery from Earth" marks Becker's first film made in New Mexico since his return, and he has plans to continue to make movies in his home state.

"Hollywood comes here and uses many people in "below-the-line" positions, but there are many creative talents here who can work "above-the-line" jobs as well. I think the time is right for New Mexico to be making her own movies

The film was shot primarily in Santa Fe, Gallup and the Navajo Nation with an almost entirely Native American cast. Working with Native people onscreen and off, Becker learned more about Native world-views, which he hopes will be visible to the viewer.

"Few films do anything to challenge the stereotypes of Native Americans," said Becker. "While a child born beyond the boundaries of the Earth is a big idea, an even bigger one is about who that child will be – from what race or what nation? The film gives Native Americans relevance in the future, as they struggle now for relevance in the present."

It will eventually be distributed via NASA's formidable social media presence on the World Wide Web, and chances are that it will be widely viewed by space enthusiasts around the globe.

"Great films are about ideas," said Becker. "Short or long, a film that touches someone out there is worth every effort put into it."