

## Director's Note

I am currently a junior at the Orange County School of the Arts, where I am enrolled in the Acting Conservatory. As part of my Girl Scout Gold Award, I am completing a community service project focused on Native representation in the arts, or rather the lack thereof. This lack of representation goes beyond not seeing Native faces in the media, though, because our defining stories are also missing. The Native narrative is one that has long been pushed to the side and purposefully eroded in an attempt to erase our stories from history. Throughout this nation's history, attempts have been made to strip away our ancestral stories, traditions, and languages. I began my project by researching four traditional Cahuilla stories, one of which I will share with you today. Within these stories I found a unifying theme of the strength and resilience of the Cahuilla people, of all indigenous people. I identified these stories as also being applicable to the contemporary issue of the high rates of disappearances among Native women, an important glossed-over epidemic in the United States. Eighty-four percent of Native women experience violence in their lifetime, and in some tribal communities, Native women are murdered at 10 times the national average. However, 95 percent of these cases were never covered by the national media, and the circumstances surrounding many of these deaths and disappearances remain unknown. Almost everyone in Indian Country personally knows someone who has gone missing, or been murdered. The Savanna Act reintroduced legislation by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, that would boost coordination and data collection among tribal, local, state and federal law enforcement in cases involving missing and murdered Native women.

*Menil and Her Heart* is a story of disappearing Native women but it is also a story of taking. Not just our women but our culture. Colonization takes and takes from indigenous people, but it is time for push back, a war cry. I hope to showcase that the Native American experience is not solely one of suffering and defeat, but of strength and resilience, a way of life that can strengthen and protect all peoples. My play will be a culturally expanded view, a revitalization, that moves our peoples' stories away from just our beginning with the arrival of the Europeans to the view of our origins on Mother Earth and how our knowledge can help us today.

— Isabella Madrigal  
Cahuilla and Chippewa



Menil  
& Her  
Heart

A Play By Isabella Madrigal