

***The Exiles: Native Survivance and Urban Space in Downtown Los Angeles***  
**[ABSTRACT]**

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The 1961 independent film *The Exiles* is remarkable for many reasons. Nonprofessional Native actors played themselves, created their own dialogue, and developed the storyline, for example, and the film positions itself as documentary and ethnography in ways that validate these Native interventions. Although *The Exiles* is fundamentally a portrait of American Indian life in Los Angeles, readings from film and urban studies primarily focus on filmmaking technique. As a result of this critical focus, the film's significance in regard to the cultural agency and urban history of Native peoples becomes secondary, and urban Natives are erroneously depicted as anomalous as well. Looking closely at Yvonne Williams, the female Native protagonist, I find that the film embodies Native American survivance through capturing an urban experience that was controlled by Native people more than any other filmic representation up to that point. This article argues for the tremendous import of *The Exiles* by highlighting the ways in which it challenges expectations of modern Indian people.

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