**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***Reel Injun* Questions**

Consider the following guiding questions:

* Why are representations of First Peoples in popular culture so often biased, misleading, or simply wrong?
* How can creating an authentic text help foster justice?
* How can First Peoples films help break stereotypes and foster justice?

As you view the NFB documentary *Reel Injun* produced by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond, ask yourself:

* How has media shaped the images of First Nations people?
* Whose agenda is served by the construction of these images?

Remember, media images are constructed; that is to say that people have created them for a purpose.

An essential skill for citizens, especially citizens in this digital age where we are constantly bombarded by images, information, and ideologies, is the ability to deconstruct the images by analyzing them and putting them in their historical and social context. The documentary *Reel Injun* attempts to do this by studying the Hollywood portrayal of “Indians” (be aware that this is not the preferred term, although it is frequently used in the film).

Use the following questions to guide your thinking. It is is important to understand that this documentary has a carefully planned structure. The filmmaker interviews experts and eyewitnesses while superimposing images from movies over the years. He is attempting to connect pictures with ideas. This technique is used constantly in filmmaking. This technique is powerful in that human memory is stronger when ideas are connected to images or stories. Perhaps ironically, it is exactly this filmmaking technique that Hollywood filmmakers have used to perpetuate stereotypes about First Nations – constructing powerful images that have burned themselves into the collective psyche of people of past generations.

Your task is to actively view the film and make connections: watch with focus and record what you see, hear, feel, and think.

**Watch the documentary carefully and answer each of the questions below.**

1. What is the connotation of the word “Injun” in the title of the film? Is this an appropriate title for the film? Explain.
2. What are the consequences of distorted representations of First Peoples with regard to their identity, self-esteem and social and cultural development? That is, what negative impact has been created by Hollywood stereotypes of First Nations people? List some examples from the film.
3. One hundred years of cinema have shaped the folkloric images of First Peoples. What are some of the misconceptions? Does the anyone in the film suggest what it means to be First Nations in the 21st century? If so, what does it mean?

**Native Americans from Hollywood to Wounded Knee: Birth of the Hollywood Injun**

1. In the movies, all Native Americans are supreme horseman, at one with their horses, but this a clear stereotype. How was such a myth created?

**The Good Indian – The Noble Injun**

1. According to Hollywood’s criteria, what does it take to be a good or “noble Indian”?

**Tonto Speech and Stereotypes – The Savage Injun**

1. Robbing nations of their identity is an act of colonialism, but why did the Plains “Indians” attract more attention than the Pawnees or the Mohawks?
2. What are some of the misguided notions surrounding Pocahontas?

**A Violent and Racist Icon: The Cowboy**

1. What influence have John Wayne characters had on First Nations stereotypes in film. What misconceptions have been created by “Cowboy movies”? Why do you think these stereotypes have been reinforced?
2. What about the use of First Nations languages in the movies: what are the benefits and drawbacks to this use?

**Indians or Human Beings? A Good Injun… is it a Dead Injun?**

1. General Philip Sheridan: “A Good Injun… is a Dead Injun.” Why would Hollywood use such neo-colonialist propaganda to confuse the feelings of young First Nations people?
2. Regarding the notion of human beings, why does John Trudell place so much emphasis on language as an instrument of war?

**The American Indian Movement (AIM): The Groovy Injun**

1. What is meant by the stereotype of the “Groovy Injun”? Is this still a harmful depiction of First Nations people?

**No More Stereotypes and Stoic Indians: The Renaissance**

1. Director Neil Diamond mentioned that he found the answers he was looking for in the North. What exactly was the object of his quest?
2. On what basis does he say that *Atanajuat* is the “most Native” movie ever made?
3. How would you describe “nativeness” in the 21st century? List some examples from the film, and include your own ideas as well (based on your own knowledge, beliefs, and values).
4. Were there any things that surprised you when watching this film?
5. In your own words, discuss your thinking on the following questions now that you have watched the film:
   1. Why are representations of First Peoples in popular culture so often biased, misleading, or simply wrong?
   2. How can creating an authentic text help foster justice?
   3. How can First Peoples films help break stereotypes and foster justice?