



AMERICAN  
**PRAIRIE**  
RESERVE

Celebrating  
the Indomitable  
American Spirit

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**Dr. N. Scott Momaday awarded 2019 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize**

*Prize presented by American Prairie Reserve to celebrate the indomitable American spirit*

**NEW YORK, NY** — Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, poet, playwright, and professor **N. Scott Momaday, Ph.D.**, accepted the 2019 *Ken Burns American Heritage Prize* at an event held on May 1 at the American Museum of Natural History.

Meryl Streep, considered by many to be the greatest living actress, introduced Ken Burns by saying, “He burns with curiosity and he and Dr. Momaday were cut from the same cloth.” Ms. Streep added, “One has dedicated his life to teaching us the history of America through the medium of film. The other, a distinguished Native American, has inspired us through the lyrics of his poems and novels. Both have made us better.”

Ms. Streep commended Mr. Burns for, “inspiring an entirely new generation of documentary makers.” She went on to say, “He shows us time and time again that time and distance are not obstacles to understanding, they help.”

Named in honor of America’s most revered visual historian and documentary filmmaker, the *Ken Burns American Heritage Prize* recognizes an individual whose body of work has advanced our collective understanding of the indomitable American spirit.

Mr. Burns welcomed prize recipient Dr. Momaday by noting that, “his lifetime achievements command our attention and warrant our admiration.” The filmmaker went on to say, “He is especially qualified to receive this national tribute. It is, in part, a recognition of the courage and character of America’s Native Peoples who first knew this ‘remembered land,’ who loved it, cared for it, and lost it.”

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of Dr. Momaday's Pulitzer Prize-winning first novel, *House Made of Dawn*. Burns remarked, "Scott Momaday is a distinguished teacher, poet and author. The mission of American Prairie Reserve to preserve huge swaths of northern prairie must be accompanied by an honest reckoning with the complicated human history of that habitat we seek to restore. Professor Momaday is precisely the person to help us with that reckoning."

After receiving the Prize bronze, Dr. Momaday said, "I cannot tell you how honored I am to be the recipient of this wonderful Prize," and thanked Mr. Burns by saying, "I don't know anyone who has done more to identify and preserve our American heritage."

Dr. Momaday regaled the audience with his storytelling, but also spoke of the importance of protecting native grasslands and the environment.

"Unless we reverse this trend, I think we are doomed. The Earth is our home and we must protect this sacred land, love it and cherish it," said Dr. Momaday. "It is important that we realize where we are in relation to time, in relation to atmosphere and Earth and the universe. If we do not do that, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves."



L to R: Ken Burns, Dr. N. Scott Momaday, and George Matelich. Photo by Marta Skovro.

Dr. Momaday received the honor from Mr. Burns and others during the Prize presentation event on May 1, 2019, at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

The evening's festivities include remarks by Meryl Streep, Ken Burns, and Dr. Momaday, as well as American Prairie Reserve's CEO Alison Fox and Board of Directors Chair George Matelich, and *Ken Burns American Heritage Prize* National Jury Chair Dawn Arnall.

Read more on the [Ken Burns American Heritage Prize](http://www.kenburnsprize.com) website ([www.kenburnsprize.com](http://www.kenburnsprize.com)).

### **About American Prairie Reserve**

[American Prairie Reserve's](http://americanprairie.org) mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a spectacular refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America's heritage. When complete, the Reserve will be larger than Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks combined and will support all the animals that historically called the Great Plains home, including buffalo, wolves, bears, elk, deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, swift fox, upland birds including the greater sage grouse, birds of prey and all manner of reptiles, amphibians and insects. Already open to the public for recreation including camping, hunting, fishing and birding, the Reserve offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime, horizon-expanding opportunity to reconnect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at [americanprairie.org](http://americanprairie.org) and [kenburnsprize.com](http://kenburnsprize.com).

### **About Ken Burns**

[Ken Burns](http://kenburns.com) has been making documentary films for over forty years. Since the Academy Award nominated *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981, Ken has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The Civil War*; *Baseball*; *Jazz*; *The Statue of Liberty*; *Huey Long*; *Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*; *Frank Lloyd Wright*; *Mark Twain*; *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*; *The War*; *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*; *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*; *Jackie Robinson*; *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War*; *The Vietnam War*; and, most recently, *The Mayo Clinic: Faith - Hope - Science*. Future film projects include Country Music, Ernest Hemingway, Muhammad Ali, The Holocaust & the United States, Benjamin Franklin, Lyndon B. Johnson, The American Buffalo, Leonardo da Vinci, the American Revolution, the history of Crime and Punishment in America, the history of Reconstruction, and Winston Churchill, among others. Ken's films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including sixteen Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards and two Oscar nominations; and in September of 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Ken was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

**About N. Scott Momaday, Ph.D.**

N. Scott Momaday, Ph.D., is a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, poet, playwright, painter and photographer, storyteller, and professor of English and American literature. Born in Oklahoma, Dr. Momaday is a member of the Kiowa tribe and among his primary interests are Native American art and oral tradition. He received the National Medal of Arts “for his writings and his work that celebrate and preserve Native American art and oral tradition,” and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his first novel, *House Made of Dawn*.

Dr. Momaday has been a commentator of National Public Radio, the voice of the National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian Institution, the narrator of PBS documentaries including *Remembered Earth* and *Last Stand at Little Bighorn*, and a featured on-camera commentator on the PBS series *The West* produced by Ken Burns and directed by Stephen Ives.

A Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, the Premio Letterario Internazionale “Mondello,” Italy’s highest literary award, The Saint Louis Literary Award, the Premio Fronterizo, the highest award of the Border Book Festival, the 2008 Oklahoma Humanities Award, and the 2003 Autry Center for the American West Humanities Award are among the many honors bestowed upon Dr. Momaday. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds 21 honorary doctoral degrees from American and European colleges and universities. Dr. Momaday is a retired professor of English and American Literature and earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University.