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Follow Nasheen Sleuth on
TikTok @ForwardLight and
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The Auntie Way

The Native social media star dishes out hard truths, good advice, and plenty of laughs.

BY UNGELBAH DÁVILA-SHIVERS

ENCHANTING IN A RUG-PRINT DRESS and Marco Arviso statement earrings, Nasheen Sleuth radiates warmth. When we meet, I immediately feel a pull of kinship to the Albuquerque actress and social media sensation. After a quick introduction of our Diné clans (she is Halts'ooí, born for Táchiinii, maternal grandfather Kinyáanii and paternal grandfather Ashii'hí), we realize that we are indeed related. Sleuth began acting in 2016, as Mercedes in the Blackhorse Lowe film *Chasing the Light*. But for the past year, she has perhaps become better known for her TikTok and Instagram persona, Auntie Mázazhí, who delivers blunt wisdom, dry hilarity, and her “You use it!” catchphrase to more than 180,000 followers. As a licensed mental health counselor who works with adolescents, Sleuth’s mission isn’t only to entertain but also to empower youth, to advocate for the LGBTQIA and two-spirit community, and to share cultural teachings.

ACTING IS A WAY

for me to get back in touch with the little girl I was—having fun and entertaining my family.

WHEN I WAS A KID,

we had evenings at home where we kids would reenact our favorite scenes from TV shows and movies in our living room.

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE OPPORTUNITIES

to be a part of the Native film and TV mainstream explosion that’s taking place right now.

SOCIAL MEDIA

IS PUSHING NATIVE ARTISTS and talent—people who have always been here—to the forefront. It’s really highlighting a lot of our Native creatives.

PLATFORMS LIKE TIKTOK

are an opportunity for us to use our voice and for us to be heard, seen, and celebrated.

IT’S AMAZING how social media can

allow us to connect to other cultures all across Turtle Island.

IT’S A PLATFORM, YOU USE IT!**MY CATCHPHRASE**

was an inside joke my immediate family shared with each other.

AUNTIE MÁYAZHÍ is

the culmination of a lifetime of connections with my older matriarchs. Having that guidance from our matriarchs is really what is within our roots as Diné.

I GET INSPIRED

by my family.

DINÉ CULTURE IS BASED ON MATRIARCHAL STRENGTH,

because our clans connect us together through our mothers and our grandmothers.

THOSE LEADERS that

we look up to and we connect with, we call them “Auntie.”

THE WOMEN IN MY

FAMILY have shared with me how much Auntie Mázazhí videos make them laugh and how they are so proud of what I’m creating. Some were not aware that it was even me and would ask if I’d seen those videos with the funny “you use it” lady.

MÁYAZHÍ MEANS

“SECOND MOM” or “little mom.” It’s like you’re having more than one person taking care of you and looking out for you, and that’s what Auntie Mázazhí is.

AUNTIE MÁYAZHÍ

has her own way of dressing. I wear a wig and glasses when I get into character. It’s a whole transformation.

ALL OF THE CHARACTERS

I play in my TikToks are me. I’m like the Native auntie Tyler Perry or Eddie Murphy.

EVEN IN OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES,

our Native comedians are mostly men.

IT’S TIME for Indig-

enous women to take the stage and reclaim the auntie character.

NATIVE YOUTH have

always been where my heart is and who I want to be a role model for.

SINCE MY BACKGROUND IS IN

HEALTH, I try to incorporate those aspects into my messaging. I participate in social justice, advocacy, and public health efforts.

I TRY TO INCORPORATE SOME TYPE

OF TEACHING in my TikToks, whether that is language or a cultural teaching, to help connect to the youth.

WHEN I WORKED WITH CHILDREN,

they would call me “auntie.” They saw me as that auntie they could go to and be safe with.

I’M LIKE THE AUNTIE

of the Southwest. **NM**

