

Tommy Orange: Stories from the Urban Native Experience

Tommy Orange is a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. However, he grew up far from Oklahoma, in the large city of Oakland, California. As an author, Orange wants people to understand the often-overlooked experiences of Native Americans living in cities.



Orange's early life was marked by a mix of interests and activities.

From ages 14 to 24, he excelled in roller hockey at a national level. His love for music started at 18, showing his creative side. After earning a Bachelor of Science in sound arts and working at a bookstore, Orange's deep engagement with literature led him to pursue writing.

He studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts, where he earned his MFA, and now teaches there, helping to guide the next generation of Native writers. His first novel, *There There*, looks at the complex nature of modern Native American identity through a group of characters who come together at the Oakland Powwow. The novel won numerous prizes, including the PEN/Hemingway Award and the American Book Award.

Orange's next book, *Wandering Stars* (2024), explores generational trauma and legacy. His skill in combining personal and historical themes into engaging stories has made him a prominent figure in today's literature. Through his novels and essays, Orange shines a light on the urban Native experience, challenging stereotypes and expanding the range of Native American storytelling.