



## TOMMY ORANGE

*Cheyenne and Arapaho*

1982- • AUTHOR

In 2018, Tommy Orange's debut novel *There There* made waves on the literary scene for its incredible storytelling and diverse range of Native representation. Set in the urban Indian community of Oakland, California, the novel follows a group of intertwined characters, representing many stories and facets of urban Native life. The story reflects both Tommy's own background and also what he wished to see in books.

Tommy grew up in Oakland, but his ties to his Cheyenne and Arapaho heritage were strengthened by visits to his father's family in Oklahoma. It wasn't until later in his life that he became involved in the local urban Native community, working for several organizations and undertaking a storytelling project where he collaborated with community members to share their personal stories. It was those stories that inspired him to write *There There*, while he was pursuing his master's degree in creative writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He says, "We're pretty invisible, Native people, in movies and TV shows and literature, so I was feeling like I wanted to try to tell a story that hadn't been told about a community that people know too little about." The book was a *New York Times* best seller and was one of the most decorated novels of 2018: it was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, won an American Book Award, was long-listed for a National Book Award, and was short-listed for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, among others.

Tommy now lives with his wife and son in Angels Camp, a small town in Northern California, where he continues to write and publish short stories, opinion pieces on Native representation, and other works. He is a mentor and instructor for the creative writing master's degree program at the Institute of American Indian Arts, where he is helping to shape the next generation of Native writers.