

LOCAL FILMS, FESTIVALS, AND FACES

Wampanoag words and Salem-honored documentaries

By Loren King | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JUNE 03, 2012



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Anne Makepeace (second from left) filming the Wampanoags in “We Still Live Here.”

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Filmmaker Anne Makepeace says that because of her name and the fact that she has made a film about Native Americans people assume she is Native American herself. She isn't, but Makepeace has been drawn to stories about Native Americans for as long

as she can remember. “When I watched cowboy movies as a kid, I always rooted for the Indians,” she says.

For her 2010 documentary, “**We Still Live Here**,” Makepeace explored the efforts by the Wampanoag of Southeastern Massachusetts, led by Jessie Little Doe Baird, a 30-something Wampanoag social worker, to reclaim their native language which had not been spoken for more than a century. “It is a story about the resurrection of a language and of a culture that’s quite unprecedented,” says Makepeace of her film, which won awards at numerous film festivals in 2011. “It’s the first time a language with no living speakers has been revived as a living, spoken language in a Native American community.”

“We Still Live Here,” named best documentary at the Arlington International Film Festival’s inaugural event last year, will have several screenings at the Museum of Fine Arts, starting Thursday (7:30 p.m.) and running through June 13. Makepeace will attend the Thursday screening and participate in a panel discussion moderated by Jared Bowen, of the WGBH-TV show “Greater Boston.” The panel will include a representative from the Wampanoag Reclamation Project.

“The discussions are always lively,” says Makepeace, who lives in Lakeville, Conn. “Some are interested in how the film was constructed; others are interested in the story itself. I shot it in 2009, so there have been a lot of developments since.” Most notably, Baird, who went on to earn a master’s degree in linguistics at MIT, recently won a MacArthur “genius” grant for her work in bringing back her people’s language.

Makepeace, whose many documentaries includes “I.M. Pei: Building China Modern,” broadcast on PBS’s “American Masters,” in 2010 and “Robert Capa: In Love and War,” which earned her an Emmy Award, says she is proud that “We Still Live Here” has been able to show New Englanders that Native Americans have not “vanished” from the region but are still part of vibrant communities. “We celebrate them at Thanksgiving but so many people have no idea that the Wampanoag still live here, hence the film’s title.” *Go to www.mfa.org.*

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