

# The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release  
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## TRAVELING WITH THE ANCIENTS

Through December 11, 1994

An exhibition celebrating the uses of video by indigenous directors from around the world is on view at The Museum of Modern Art through December 11, 1994. **TRAVELING WITH THE ANCIENTS** comprises thirty videotapes by over forty artists that reflect the ways in which native languages and traditions revive and maintain cultures. The exhibition features recent work, mainly from the 1990s, which are dramatic and innovative in their visual styles and uses of sound.

Native American director Victor Masayesva, a coorganizer of the exhibition, states, "Through the expression of various tribal voices in this program of video voyages -- all guided by the trail markers left by the ancients -- we arrive at the indigenous aesthetic."

Highlights in the exhibition include videos that focus on traditional events and performances, such as *A Dancing People* (1987), by Alexie Isaac, which records traditional Yup'ik Eskimo singing and drumming contests; and *Quilliq (Whale Oil Lamp)*, 1992, by the Women's Video Workshop, Tariaqsuk Video Center, which presents early Inuit customs. "What sets these filmmakers apart from each other," according to Native American director Beverly Singer, also a coorganizer of the exhibition, "is how they interpret their identity as Hopi, Navajo, Yup'ik, and other tribal clans, which feeds their individual nuances as they move in and out of American mainstream thought and life."

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Additional works focus on the modern outgrowth of the traditional, such as Arlene Bowman's *Song Journey* (1994), which captures the contemporary custom of women singers from several Indian nations in the *pow-wow* circuit. Also included are Aboriginal Australian literacy television programs for children that tell traditional dreamtime stories in Warlpiri; public service announcements produced at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Alberta, which focus on issues of Native-Canadian self-government; and music videos from several cultures that show the continuing exchange of musical styles between generations. Videos by such artists as Tracey Moffatt, Alberto Muenala, and Sak Kunuk are presented as well.

**TRAVELING WITH THE ANCIENTS** is coorganized by Sally Berger, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Film and Video, and Native American directors Victor Masayesva and Beverly Singer.

The Video Program is supported by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Sony Corporation of America.

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### PROGRAM 3

Sundays at 4:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.

*Broken English*, Ned Lander and Rachel Perkins (Aboriginal). 55 min. 1993. A dramatic portrayal of the case of Max Stuart, a young Aboriginal man who is accused of raping a white girl. Current interviews with Stuart, shot in color, are juxtaposed against black-and-white dramatic reenactments to highlight the events that led to the original mistrial.

### PROGRAM 4

Mondays at 12:15 p.m.; Saturdays, 4:00 p.m.

*Quillig (Whale Oil Lamp)*, Womens' Video Workshop, Tariagsuk Video Center, Susan Avingaq (Inuit), Madeline Ivalu (Inuit), Mathilde Hanniliag (Inuit), and Marie H. Cousineau. 12 min. 1992. Inuktituk with English subtitles.

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For further information or film stills, contact Christine Dietlin, Film Press Representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.

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## Exhibition Schedule

### PROGRAM 1

Sundays at 12:15 p.m.; Fridays at 4:00 p.m.

*Nunavut (Our Home): Tugaliaq (Ice Blocks)*, Sak Kunuk (Inuit). 29 min. 1994.  
Inuktituk with English subtitles.

Set in the Northwest Territories of Canada in 1945, *Tugaliaq* centers around the interaction of several generations of Inuit families and the building of a sod house and ice porch. Traditional *ajaja* songs punctuate the story.

*A Dancing People*, Alexie Isaac (Yu'pik). 30 min. 1984.

This video features three days of dancing, gift-giving, and contests in the fall of 1982 by dancers and musicians from nine Yu'pik Eskimo villages.

### PROGRAM 2

Sundays at 2:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 12:15 p.m.

*Por la Tierra (For the Land)*, Alberto Muenala (Quechua). 47 min. 1992.  
Quechua with English subtitles.

A dramatic documentary portraying the march on Quito, Ecuador, of over 8,000 Indians in search of respect and recognition of their cultures and territories.

### PROGRAM 3

Sundays at 4:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.

*Broken English*, Ned Lander and Rachel Perkins (Aboriginal). 55 min. 1993.

A dramatic portrayal of the case of Max Stuart, a young Aboriginal man who is accused of raping a white girl. Current interviews with Stuart, shot in color, are juxtaposed against black-and-white dramatic reenactments to highlight the events that led to the original mistrial.

### PROGRAM 4

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*Quilliq (Whale Oil Lamp)*, Womens' Video Workshop, Tariagsuk Video Center; Susan Avingaq (Inuit), Madeline Ivalu (Inuit), Mathilde Hanniliaq (Inuit), Martha Maktar (Inuit), and Marie H. Cousineau. 12 min. 1992. Inuktituk with English subtitles.

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A poignant demonstration and *ajaja* song (by Avingaq and Ivalu) about the significance of the *quilliq* in a time when Inuit families depended on the light, warmth, and comfort of the lamp for survival in the harsh winter of the north.

*Boda Tradicional (Traditional Wedding)*, Crisanto Manzano Avella (Zapotec). 35 min. 1993. Zapotec with Spanish subtitles.

A visual narrative of a traditional Zapotec wedding in Mexico. Created to preserve the customs of the region of Tanetze de Zaragoza, Oaxaca, this videotape reveals all the details of the three to four-day event: the exchange of marriage vows, signing the marriage certificate, the gifts of food and drink, a ceremonial parade, and a traditional *banda* of brass horns and percussion instruments playing a song from a popular *telenovela*.

#### PROGRAM 5

Mondays at 2:00 p.m.

*Eu Já Fui Seu Irma (We Gather as a Family)*, Vincent Carelli. 32 min. 1993. Portuguese with English subtitles.

Two tribes of the Brazilian Amazon, the Parakatêjê of Pará and their relatives, the Krahô of Tocantins, meet to compare their traditional dances, ceremonies, and sports competitions. They find similarities: their common language; and differences: the varying ways they have maintained and interpreted their customs.

*Reaffirmation and Discovery: The First Pow-wow on Hawaii*, Kat High (Hupa). 28 min. 1993.

The story of the first *pow-wow* on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1993. Native Hawaiians and American Indians, who share ceremonial traditions and feasting, pass their cultural traditions onto younger generations.

#### PROGRAM 6

Mondays at 4:00 p.m.; Fridays at 7:00 p.m.

*Song Journey*, Arlene Bowman (Navaho) and Jeanine Moret. 57 min. 1994.

The director travels the *pow-wow* circuit to join with other dancers and singers in the new traditions being created. This road journey leads her to her grandmother's old home on a Navaho reservation.

#### PROGRAM 7

Tuesday at 12:15 p.m.

*Gathering Up Again: Fiesta in Santa Fe*, Jeanette DeBouzek and Diane Reyna (Taos/San Juan Pueblo). 47 min. 1992.

A documentary focusing on the formation of ethnic identity in the Spanish American and Native American city of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

## PROGRAM 8

Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m.; Thursdays at 6:00 p.m.

*Blackout Music Special: Yorta Yorta Man* by Jimmie Little and *Don't Breathe Easy* by John Lacy of Bush Dokta. Aboriginal Programs Unit of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Paul Fenech and Michael Riley (Aboriginal). 9 min. 1986.

Jimmie Little, the most popular Aboriginal writer and singer in Australia for over thirty years, uses a country Western style to talk about his Aboriginal roots. John Lacy of Bush Dokta incorporates traditional instruments to play "Ozzie rock"/reggae and sings songs that comment on contemporary paradoxes.

*Cholo Soy (I am Indian)*, Cesar Galindo. 5 min. 1992.

A protest song describing the plight and strength of the Quechua Indians of Peru.

*Quechua Folk Music Video*, Tarpuy (Quechua). 1:25 min. 1989.

A music video depicting traditional Bolivian Quechua dating customs.

*Women and Men are Good Dancers*, Arlene Bowman (Navaho). 5:36 min. 1994.

A video featuring drumming and dancing in traditional Navaho dress.

*Mekaron*, Tiur  (Potiguara). 5 min. 1993.

From Brazil to Canada, First Nations peoples face racism and change. In this video, a collage of images of native people is followed by a litany of names of First Nations tribes indigenous to Brazil and Canada -- Parakat  , Potiguara, Txukraman, Surui, Kaipao, Xingu, Kubenfran, Bororo, Innu, Cree, Mohawk.

*I Want to Know Why*, Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa). 11:30 min. 1994.

Director Dana Claxton is a mixed-blood Hunkpapa of Lakota Sioux descent who was born in Yorktown, Saskatchewan. In this video, Claxton questions why the women in her family were vulnerable to racism and poverty.

*Self Government: Talk About It*, Aboriginal Film Video Art Alliance in collaboration with Banff Centre for the Arts. Compilation Reel. 10 min. 1994. *Hip Hop*, Ruby-Marie Dennis; *Future Child*, Angie Campbell (Cree and English versions); *Too Many Chiefs-Not Enough Indians*, Ruby Marie Dennis; *Time Line*, Gary Farmer and Angie Campbell; *Turtle Island: Take 'em All*, Joane Cardinal-Schubert; *Indian Life with TV*, Gary Farmer.

Six public service announcements by indigenous directors that look at issues of self-government from historical, present, and future viewpoints.

*Cowtipping: The Militant Indian Waiter*, Randy Redroad. 10 min. 1992.

A young waiter is fed up with all the questions his customers ask him about being Native American and the stereotypical images they have of his culture.



**PROGRAM 9**

Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m.; Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

*Moodeitj-Yorgas (Solid Women)*, Tracey Moffatt (Aboriginal). 24 min. 1990.

A documentary using asynchronous sound, experimental visuals, and interviews to celebrate the achievements, diversity, and culture of Aboriginal women in Western Australia.

*Warrior Chiefs in a New Age*, Dean Curtis Bear Claw (Crow). 27 min. 1991.

A documentary portrait of Chiefs Plenty Coups and Medicine Crow and their prophetic visions for the future of the Crow people. The video reveals the foresight of these Native American visionaries.

**PROGRAM 10**

Thursdays at 12:15 p.m.

*Nu Ho Ni Yeh (Our Story)*, Allan and Mary Code (Dene). 54 min. 1992.

The story of the relocation of the Sayisi Dene people by the Canadian government. Forced in 1956 to leave their land and resources of caribou, fishing lakes, and traplines, the Sayisi Dene were driven to the outskirts of the northern town, Churchill. Once there, the culture deteriorated until today when the people have found a renewed sense of well-being.

**PROGRAM 11**

Thursdays at 2:00 p.m.; Fridays at 6:00 p.m.

*I Turn My Head*, Melanie Printup Hope (Tuscarora). 3 min. 1993.

A poem and visual essay describing the dualities of a Native American-German-Italian woman living in two worlds and how language can cross that border.

*A 1994 Video Book*, Beverly Singer (Tewa). 1994. 10 min.

A video book using turn-of-the-century family photographs superimposed with contemporary images in a reflection on Native American ancestral gifts.

*Transitions: Destruction of a Mother Tongue*, Darrell Kipp and Joe Fisher (Blackfeet). 30 min. 1991. Produced by Native Voices Public Television Workshop. English, Blackfoot and Ursuline with English subtitles.

A documentary about the Blackfeet that examines the value of language and its relationship to culture. The video examines how school, church, and government all contributed to the damage suffered by the Blackfeet in the 1890s when mission schools were established.

*And the Word Was God*, Ruby Truly. 9:27 min. 1987.

Japanese-American performance artist Ruby Truly, now based in Vancouver, gives a dramatic reading of a manuscript written in 1954 to aid missionaries working among the Cree-speaking natives of northern Saskatchewan.

## PROGRAM 12

Thursdays at 4:00 p.m.

*Itam Hakim Hopiit (We, Someone, the Hopi People)*, Victor Masayesva (Hopi). 58 min. 1984.

Ross Macaya, the oldest member of the storytelling clan, Tobacco, until his death in 1984, relates the creation story and the journeys of the Hopi.

## Program 13

Fridays at 12:15 p.m.

*As Long as the Rivers Flow: Starting Fire with Gunpowder*, David Poisey (Inuit) and William Hansen. 60 min. 1991.

This video focuses on the creation of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. Believing that television is "as old as it is new" to an orally-based culture, the IBC's mandate is "to preserve the Inuktituk language and culture." Featured are interviews with segment producers and clips from their shows.

## PROGRAM 14

Fridays at 2:00 p.m.

*Desert Pictures: Manyu-Wana (Just for Fun)*. 3 min. excerpt. 1989. David Batty/Desert Pictures in collaboration with Warlpiri Media Association, Yuendumu.

An excerpt featuring a community elder using clap sticks to become the character of a boy, Gordon. Gordon is the protagonist of a television series designed by Warlpiri-speaking Aboriginal people at Yuendumu, a remote Aboriginal community in Australia's Central Desert. The series teaches Aboriginal children literacy and counting skills in their own language.

*Kapi Tjukula (Rockholes)*. 13 min. 1991. Ernabella Video and TV Reel. Produced by Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Pitjantjatjara Council.

A program featuring Aboriginal elders who work with the Australian government as park rangers, focusing on the Pitjantjatjara people of South Australia. Their territory includes Uluru, the lands around Ayers Rock. The elders have sustained their extraordinary understanding of the region, combining sacred, legal, and biological knowledge.

*Nganampa-Anwernekenhe (Ours): Uluru.* 27 min. 1991. Aboriginal Television Unit CAAMA, in Alice Springs (Warlpiri and English).

A segment of a weekly Aboriginal television program about culture and current affairs produced in four of the major Aboriginal languages (with English subtitles) spoken in the Alice Springs area. This segment documents the historic October 1985 handback of Uluru to its traditional Pitjantjatjara owners.

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