2016–2020
Mother Tongue
Film Festival
Five-Year Report
RECOVERING VOICES
Smithsonian
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View of the audience at the Last Whispers screening, Terrace Theater, Kennedy Center. Photo courtesy of Lena Herzog.
The Mother Tongue Film Festival is a collaborative venture at the Smithsonian and a public program of Recovering Voices, a pan-institutional program that partners with communities around the world to revitalize and sustain endangered languages and knowledge. The Recovering Voices partners are the National Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Through interdisciplinary research, community collaboration, and public outreach, we strive to develop effective responses to language and knowledge loss.

In 2015, NMNH curator and anthropologist Dr. Joshua Bell conceived of the Mother Tongue Film Festival as a way to highlight the work of language revitalization around the world through the most powerful medium now widely available to communities: the moving image. The first festival opened on February 21, 2016, which is the United Nations’ International Mother Language Day, and the festival continues to be presented around this date. Partnerships within and outside the Smithsonian have been core to the Festival’s success; over time, our partnerships have grown, involving more Smithsonian units and various consular and academic partners. When launched, it was the only festival of its kind, and it has since formed part of a small group of local and international festivals dedicated to films in Indigenous languages.

Over its five editions, the festival has grown, embracing a wide range of audiovisual genres and experiences, drawing audiences to enjoy screenings often at capacity at various venues around Washington, DC. We have screened at venues as far-reaching as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and as community-focused as the Mexican Cultural Institute. We have garnered support to welcome 74 filmmakers, producers, actors, and cultural leaders from 43 communities and nations, to present their films live and dialogue with diverse audiences. We have screened works with no dialogue, music videos in Indigenous languages, and works in the mother tongue of ASL. We have hosted behind-the-scenes tours of Smithsonian collections for our participants and offered local youth the chance to meet with guest artists and directors in informal sessions. We have opened the festival with drum and song and presented live cultural performances as part of our festival events.

We developed a dedicated, bilingual (English and Spanish) website for the festival in 2019, where we stream several works in full after the festival. And, given the changing reality of our world, we are exploring how to present the festival in a hybrid live/online model, or completely virtually, in years to come.

Our Mission

Honoring the United Nations’ International Mother Language Day on February 21, the Mother Tongue Film Festival celebrates language and cultural diversity by showcasing films and filmmakers from around the world. Through digital storytelling, the festival amplifies the work of diverse practitioners who explore the power of language to connect the past, present, and future.
By the Numbers

168 FILMS
142 LANGUAGES
55 REGIONS
16 VENUES

10,758 ATTENDEES
58 PARTICIPANTS
29 PARTNERS
5 GRANTS

An audience member at the Last Whispers screening, Terrace Theater, Kennedy Center. Photo courtesy of Lena Herzog.

Want to learn more? See the appendices on page 63.
2016
Year 1: The Beginning

- 19 languages
- 8 regions
- 31 films

*Burning Sun*, dir. Elle Márjá Eira
The first Mother Tongue Film Festival launched on International Mother Language Day, February 21, to celebrate mother tongues of communities around the world. The week-long festival showcased both short and feature-length films representing nineteen languages and eight regions, presented by various directors. The festival presented seven screening programs in five venues around Washington, DC: the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), the National Museum of American Indian (NMAI), the National Museum of the American History (NMAH), Landmark’s Atlantic Plumbing Cinema, and BloomBars, a community arts center. In addition to presenting varied film programming, each venue catered to different audiences, with several evening programs at capacity. The curatorial team consisted of Joshua Bell (NMNH), Melissa Bisagni (Media Initiatives, NMAI), Judith Andrews (Collections Program Assistant, NMNH), and Dr. Mary Linn (Curator of Language and Cultural Vitality, CFCH).

The festival opened on a Sunday at NMNH’s Baird Auditorium with a screening of five short films followed by a 2016 version of Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (1977; George Lucas) dubbed into Diné bizaad (Navajo) with English subtitles. The team behind the translation and dubbing, Manuelito and Jennifer Wheeler (Diné), were joined by filmmakers Zoe Leigh Hopkins (Heiltsuk/Mohawk) and Steven Paul Judd (Kiowa/Choc-taw) to discuss the making of Indigenous language films. The second program featured five short films followed by the premiere of the documentary Breath of Life: Revitalization of North America’s Native Languages (2015), which showcases the work and research by Native American community scholars involved in the National Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Language, hosted at the Smithsonian. Following the screening, National Breath of Life co-director and Curator of Linguistics Dr. Gabriela Pérez Báez (NMNH) and National Breath of Life Steering Committee member and Mary Linn discussed issues of language revitalization with director Gaston Lacombe.

Presented in partnership with the 2016 Smithsonian Folklife Festival’s Basque: Innovation by Culture program, Monday night’s screening of the documentary Loreak (2014; Jon Garaño and Jose Mari Goenaga) showcased the Euskara language. The DC Basque Club introduced the film in both Euskara and English at Landmark’s Atlantic Plumbing Cinema. The Tuesday evening program of nine dramatic shorts was co-hosted by BloomBars, a DC artist and non-profit incubator, performance space, and gallery. On Thursday, the festival featured films with an Arctic focus at NMAI’s Rasmuson Theater, with commentary by staff from NMNH’s Arctic Studies Center. On Friday night, NMAI hosted the DC premiere of the action-packed Māori drama The Dead Lands (2014; Toa Fraser). This program was presented with support from the Embassy of New Zealand, and we were pleased to have Tim Groser, Ambassador of New Zealand, offer introductory remarks. An in-depth discussion with one of the film’s producers, Tainui Stephens (Te Rarawa), followed the screening, and audiences were treated to outtakes from the film. The festival closed on Saturday with the screening of four films about music at the Wallace H. Coulter Performance Plaza in the NMAH.
Sunday, February 21

Opening
12 pm—Baird Auditorium, NMNH
Shhh!
Neil Discovers the Moon
both dir. Steven Paul Judd
Star Wars Trash Compactor
dir. Zoe Leigh Hopkins
Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope
dir. George Lucas; in Navajo

3 pm—Baird Auditorium, NMNH
Shhh!
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Clouds of Autumn
dir. Trevor Mack
Shimásání
dir. Blackhorse Lowe
Living Language: Menominee
Language Revitalization;
Language Apprentice
both dir. Finn Ryan
Breath of Life
dir. Gaston Lacombe

Monday, February 22

Basque Program
7 pm—Atlantic Plumbing Cinema
Shhh!
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Sikumi/On the Ice
dir. Andrew Okpeaha Maclean
Loreak
dir. Jan Garano and Jose Mari Goenaga

Tuesday, February 23

Narrative Shorts
7 pm—BloomBars
Shhh!
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Spelling Bee
dir. Zoe Leigh Hopkins
Little India
dir. Mahesh Pailoor
Search for the World’s Best Indian Taco
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Huyhuy (trade)
dir. Sky Hopinka
Neil Discovers the Moon
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Goldilocks and the Bears
dir. Zoe Leigh Hopkins
The Longest Sun
dir. Patrick Smith
Wapawekka
dir. Danis Goulet

Thursday, February 24

Arctic Focus
2 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Shhh!
dir. Steven Paul Judd
7 Sámi Stories
International Sámi Film Institute, Sámi Film Lab; dir. Elle Sofe Henriksen, Marja Bal Nagao, Per Josef Idijuoma, Elke Marja Eira, Ann Holmgren, Silja Somby, Egil and Peterse

Friday, February 26

Dinner and a Movie
5:30 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Shhh!
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Stones
dir. Ty Sanga
The Dead Lands
dir. Toa Fraser

Saturday, February 24

Music Program
12 pm—Coulter Performance Plaza,
NMAH
Shhh!
dir. Steven Paul Judd
Byron Nicholai of I Sing, You Dance
dir. Tara Young
The Ways: Prayers in a Song: Learning Language Through Hip-Hop
dir. Finn Ryan
One Voice… Our journey begins with song
dir. Lisette Marie Flanary

2016
At a Glance
~600
2016 Budget Snapshot

The festival was carried out thanks to the combined efforts of the Mother Tongue Film Festival committee members. Financial support was provided by the collaborating Smithsonian units NMNH, CFCH, and NMAI as well as funds from the Smithsonian Folklife Festival’s Basque program. Additional support was provided by the Embassy of New Zealand, the Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment, Landmark’s Atlantic Plumbing Theater, and BloomBars.

### Budget Snapshot

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### Sponsors & Partners

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2017
Year 2: Growing Awareness

- 31 languages
- 12 regions
- 32 films

Before the Streets, dir. Chloé Leriche
A major goal of our second festival was to strengthen awareness of Mother Tongue across the Smithsonian Institution. Over the course of five days, more than 750 people gathered in various venues in Washington, DC, to watch 32 films in 31 languages from across six continents. Thanks to Smithsonian partnerships, internal pool awards, and external support, we were able to bring sixteen filmmakers and community cultural leaders from around the world to engage with audiences through discussions and panels, each showcasing a unique mother tongue. We were pleased to garner the support of the Smithsonian Latino Initiative Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center. The curatorial team consisted of Joshua Bell, Melissa Bisagni, Dr. Amalia Córdova (Latinx Digital Curator, CFCH), and Mary Linn.

The 2017 festival opened on Tuesday, February 21, at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, with a welcome and song from local Piscataway tribal member Sebi Medina-Tayac, followed by introductory remarks by Acting Provost and Under Secretary for Museums and Research at the Smithsonian Richard Kurin. Joshua Bell introduced the program, which began with the shorts Wiñoy Tañi Kewvn/Volvió Mi Lengua (2014; Gonzalo Luanko, Leonardo Ramirez, and Anthony Rauld) and Four Faces of the Moon (2016; Amanda Strong), followed by the visually powerful and poetic documentary Mele Murals (2016). A post-screening Q&A featured Mele Murals director Tadashi Nakamura and the star of the film, renowned graffiti artist John “Prime” Hina, moderated by Michael Mason, Director of CFCH.

Prior to the screening, and in partnership with the Hirshhorn, the festival organized an invitational session with the ARTLAB+ digital art studio for teens. Local youth from the DC metro region met with Nakamura and “Prime” to hear about film production techniques, career options, and how the artists found their voices.

The Wednesday evening screening was held at Landmark’s Atlantic Plumbing Cinema. This program showcased two Canadian films, Grandfather Drum (2015; Michelle Derosier), an animated short in English and Anishinaabe, and the dramatic feature Avant les Rues/Before the Streets (2016; Chloé Leriche), about the troubles faced by an Atikamekw youth. This film was cast almost entirely with non-professional Atikamekw actors performing in their own language and in their own village. Janice Ottawa, an Atikamekw language teacher from Quebec featured in the film, participated in a Q&A session. Our third day presented the “Next Gen” shorts program at NMAI, bringing together eight geographically and linguistically diverse shorts targeted to a younger audience. A notable film from this program was A Kid Under the Tree (2014; Detsaje) about a Tibetan boy who creates an outdoor classroom, teaching rocks as his imaginary students after having to abandon school to take on family herding duties.

The Thursday evening program hosted at a new partnering venue, NYU Washington, DC, focused on the power of music, with a specific emphasis on global hip-hop. The powerful documentary Sonita (2015; Rokhsareh Ghaemmaghami), about an undocumented Afghan immigrant living in the outskirts of Tehran and fighting to live as an artist, singer, and musician, was screened alongside music videos “Wall Building Song” (2016; Delek Norbu) and “Hablando” (2016; Viajeros del Tiempo). The Q&A featured panelists Mazi Mutafa, executive director of the local hip-hop nonprofit Words Beats & Life, and William Youmans, assistant professor at the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University. Our film festival program coordinator, Torell Taylor, facilitated an engaging discussion about hip-hop, identity, and film.

The festival garnered support to bring five directors who convened on our first Filmmaker Roundtable. On Friday, the festival screened an extended shorts program at NMAI, followed by a panel of filmmakers and language experts. This impressive panel included four groundbreaking filmmakers and cultural leaders, facilitated by curator Mary Linn and translated by Amalia Córdova. Panelists included Mexican director Ga-
Gabriela Badillo, creator of the 68 Voces/68 Voices project; Akosua Adoma Owusu, Ghanaian American director of the experimental short Kwaku Ananse; Alexandra Lazarowich (Cree), award-winning director of Cree Code Talker; Kayla Briet (Prairie Band Potawatomi/Neshnabe/Chinese/Dutch-Indonesian), director of Smoke that Travels; and traditional arts performer Gary Wiskigeamatyuk (Anishnaabe/Neshnabe/Prairie Band Potawatomi), featured in Smoke that Travels. A major takeaway from this panel was the fact that many films about language revitalization were spearheaded by women directors.

The Friday evening program hosted by the Mexican Cultural Institute of Washington, DC, showcased the dramatic feature El Sueño del Mara’akame (2016; Federico Cecchetti), a Wixárika (Huichol) and Spanish-language story of a young Wixáritari musician whose dream is to play with his rock band in Mexico City. Preceding the feature were four animated shorts in the Seri, Mayo, Náhuatl, and Wixárika (Huichol) languages produced as part of the 68 Voces/68 Voices project. Masha Kostiurina, producer of El Sueño del Mara’akame, participated in a Q&A moderated by Gabriela Pérez Báez. Both directors’ travel was supported by the Embassy of Mexico in Washington, DC, and the Mexican Cultural Institute.

On Saturday, NMAI screened the award-winning feature film from the Venezuelan Amazon, Dauna: Gone with the River (2015; Mario Crespo) in Warao and Spanish. Isabel Lorenz, the film’s co-producer and screenwriter, introduced the film and participated in a post-screening discussion with Amalia Córdova. That evening we closed with the documentary Poi E: The Story of Our Song (2016; Te Arepa Kahi), which was introduced by the Ambassador of New Zealand, Tim Groser. The film explores how a 1984 number-one hit song by the group Patea Māori Club set the stage for the revitalization of the Māori language. Tracy Maihi, Raiha Howard, and Lara Andrew, members of the Māori cultural group Tihei Mauri Ora, offered a song before the film, and participated in a discussion with Joshua Bell.
Tuesday, February 21

Opening
4 pm—Lerner Room, HMSG
Hirshhorn ARTLAB+ Program

7 pm—Ring Auditorium, HMSG
Four Faces of the Moon
dir. Amanda Strong
Wiñoy Taríi Kewvn/Volvió Mi Lengua
dir. Gonzalo Luango, Leonardo Ramirez, and Anthony Rauld
Mele Murals
dir. Tadashi Nakamura

Wednesday, February 22

Archival Screening
2:30 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH
To Live with Herds
dir. David MacDougall

7 pm—Atlantic Plumbing Cinema
Grandfather Drum
dir. Michelle Derosier
Avant les rues/Before the Streets
dir. Chloé Leriche

Thursday, February 23

Next Gen Shorts Program
11 am—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Kid Under A Tree
dir. Detsaje
Vowels and Consonants
dir. Tsering
Miwok Pride
dir. Melissa Leal
Chubby Bunny
dir. Te Ao Kawharu

Thursday, February 23 cont’d

Next Gen Shorts Program
11 am—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Respondan a Esta Videocarta de Chicahuaxtla
dir. Guillermo Monteforte
Hawai’i Aloha
dir. Ruben Carillo
Story At Priest Point
dir. Longhouse Media
Soeur Oyo
dir. Monique Mbeka Phoba

7 pm—Abramson Family Auditorium, NYU DC
“Wall Building Song”
dir. Delek Norbu
“Hablando”
dir. Viajeros del Tiempo
Sonita
dir. Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami

Friday, February 24

Shorts Program and Panel
2 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Osage Speaker
dir. Ryan RedCorn
Kwaku Ananse
dir. Akosua Adjoma Owusu
Juka Tájiita Ániat Yew Maachiako/
About the origin of fire
dir. Gabriela Badillo/68 Voices
Nulla Nulla
dir. Dylan River
El primer amanecer/
About the first sunrise
dir. Gabriela Badillo/68 Voices

7 pm—Mexican Cultural Institute
68 Voces/68 Voices Shorts
dir. Gabriela Badillo/68 Voices
El sueño del Mara’akame/
Mara’akame’s Dream
dir. Federico Cecchetti

Saturday, February 24

Next Gen Shorts Program
12 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH
Repeat Program

2 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Dauna: Gone with the River
dir. Mario Crespo

7 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Poi E: The Story of Our Song
dir. Tearepa Kahi

2017
At a Glance
~750

Attendance:
2017
Budget Snapshot

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The festival was carried out thanks to the combined efforts of the Mother Tongue Film Festival committee members and staff of Recovering Voices. Financial support was provided by the collaborating Smithsonian units NMNH, CFCH, and NMAI. This program received federal support from the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center. External supporters included NYU Washington, DC; the Embassy of Mexico; the Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment; the Mexican Cultural Institute; and the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation.
2018

Year 3: Opening the Call

- 29 languages
- 14 regions
- 28 films

Waru, dir. Briar Grace-Smith, Casey Kaa, Ainsley Gardiner, Katie Wolfe, Renee Maihi, Chelsea Cohen, Paula Jones, Awanui Simich-Pene
The 2018 Mother Tongue Film Festival attracted over 600 people to engage with 28 films in 29 Indigenous or endangered languages. Recovering Voices brought awareness to the importance of mother languages by holding screenings in three locations across the Smithsonian and hosting several filmmakers at each screening. For the first time, the festival made an open call for films and reviewed ninety-five films submitted from around the world. We also welcomed the addition of Dr. Kālewa Correa, Curator of Hawai‘i and the Pacific at the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, to the Mother Tongue selection team.

Opening night was held at NMAI on Wednesday, February 21. Guests were welcomed with a reception and music by the local drum circle Uptown Boyz. Opening remarks were offered by David Penney, Associate Director of Museum Scholarship at NMAI; Recovering Voices director Gwyneira Issac (NMNH); and Joshua Bell. The festival opened with two powerful films and a discussion with directors and participants. Gabriela Pérez Báez, facilitated a conversation with the director of the documentary Ka Duu, Yolanda Cruz (Chatina), and the film’s subject, master weaver Porfirio Gutiérrez (Zapotec), along with Karen Lynn Weinberg, director of the award-winning documentary Niugaa Yugaa/Keep Talking, which explores the experiences of participants in a Kodiak language nest. Sadie Cole, an eighteen-year-old Kodiak Alutiiq language nest participant, and Alisha Drabek, executive vice president of Afognak Native Corporation, also participated in the discussion. We are grateful to the Arctic Studies Center for their support of this screening.

Thursday began with a series of films from Kayapo communities in Brazil, followed by a conversation with filmmakers in conversation with scholars Richard Pace and Laura Zanotti in NMNH’s Q?rius Theater. The day concluded at NMNH with a screening of the award-winning documentary Out of State (2017) directed by Ciara Lacy (Native Hawaiian). The film follows the journey of two Native Hawaiians shipped thousands of miles away and incarcerated in the Arizona desert. Over time, they are introduced to their Indigenous traditions from a fellow inmate serving a life sentence. Out of State was preceded by several short films including The Wolf Dance with Ted Mayac, Sr., Aroha Bridge: Radical Bro by Jessica Hansell, and Shaagua/ The Wind, part of the 68 Voices project. Kālewa Correa moderated the discussion that followed.

Friday included the programs Truth to Power, which presented seven short films, an inspiring Women Directors Roundtable in NMAI’s Rasmuson Theater, and an evening program called This, For You. Along with providing our audience with an insightful conversation on the role of women in mother-tongue film, the roundtable highlighted the augmented role that technology played at this edition of the festival, as the discussion was webcast and later uploaded for streaming. On two occasions, directors connected via video conference to discuss their films with the audience after their screenings. Out of State producer Beau Bassett joined remotely on Thursday night from Hawai‘i, and Paula Whetu Jones (Te Aitanga a Mahaki, Whakatōhea, Ngāti Porou), one of the eight women directors involved in Waru (2017; Briar Grace-Smith, Ainsley Gardiner, Renae Maihi, Casey Kaa, Awanui Simich-Pene, Chelsea Cohen, Katie Wolfe, and Paula Jones), spoke to the Friday night audience from Aotearoa/New Zealand. The use of these technologies allowed filmmakers and audiences who could not travel to Washington, DC, to connect with the festival.

The festival concluded on Saturday with the programs Speaking the Land and In the Periphery, which screened in the Meyer Auditorium of the Freer Gallery of Art. The first program featured the animation Sicigorousawa un Cironnop/The Fox of Shicigorousawa (2014; Tune Sugihara) and the documentary Sailing a Sinking Sea (2015; Olivia Wyatt). Each film was centered on the varied relationships between Native peoples and their territories. The festival closed with the experimental feature Zerzura (2017) written, produced, and filmed entirely in Niger, followed by a Q&A with director Christopher Kirkley and moderated by festival advisor and film-
maker Mariano Bartolomeo. In partnership with the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation’s Capital, five Mother Tongue Film Festival shorts that dealt squarely with environmental issues screened at NMAI on two weekends, to standing-room-only audiences. The program presented on Saturday, March 17, began with a short film from Panama called Identidad (2017; Iván Jarripio), followed by the animation We Prayed in Water (2012; Joseph Erb), the Navajo-produced and directed documentary Shash Jaa’/Bears Ears (2016; Angelo Baca), and the documentary Then, Now, and Forever: Zuni in the Grand Canyon (2017; Daniel Byers). The screenings were followed by a discussion with directors Angelo Baca (Diné/Hopi), Daniel Byers, and special guest Octavius Seowtewa (Zuni), moderated by Melissa Bisagni.

On Saturday, March 24, we presented the feature documentary Los Ojos del Camino/The Eyes of the Journey (2017), followed by a Q&A with director Rodrigo Otero Heraud and producer Maja Tillmann Salas via Skype from Peru and facilitated by Amalia Córdova. This visual poem explores the fate of the Earth and her children through the journey of a paq’a (healer), Hipólito Peralta Ccama, through different parts of the Peruvian sierra, and narrated entirely in the Quechua language. These two programs added five Indigenous languages to the Mother Tongue Film Festival’s count and further broadened the reach of awareness of mother languages to new audiences.

About the Environmental Film Festival

The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation’s Capital (DCEFF) is the world’s premier showcase of environmentally themed films since 1993.

Mission

To advance understanding and stewardship of the environment through the power of film.
Wednesday, February 21
Opening Ceremony
5 pm—Potomac Atrium, NMAI

Keep Talking
7 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Ja b’ajlami sok ja chulchuli/
The Tiger and the Grasshopper
dir. 68 Voices
Ka Duu
dir. Yolanda Cruz
Niugaa, Yugaa/Keep Talking
dir. Karen Lynn Weinberg

Thursday, February 22
Kayapo Video Talkback
2:30 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH
Kwyrykango Metoro A’Ukre/
Manioc Festival A’Ukre
dir. Pat-i Kayapo
A Festa no Meio da Amazonas/
The Festival in the Middle of the Amazon
dir. Bpunu Mebêngôkre

Reclaiming Our Time
7 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH
The Wolf Dance with Ted Mayac, Sr.
dir. Anchorage Museum
Aroha Bridge: Radical Bro
dir. Jessica Hansell
Shaagua/The Wind
dir. 68 Voices
Out of State
dir. Ciara Lacy

Friday, February 23
Truth to Power
1 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Tarínakusun: Quechua in Seattle
dir. Chaska Rojas-Bottger
Karíthwanoron: Precious Things
dir. Karonhianaroqwos Roxann Whitebean
Avílaiq: Entwined
dir. Alethea Arnaquq-Baril
Listen
dir. Hamy Ramezan and Rungano Nyoni
Mother Tongue
dir. Pamela Yates
Tifa
dir. Jeftha Patikawa
Anyone Like Me
dir. Mimi d’Autremont

Women Directors Roundtable
4 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
This, For You
7 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Te binut’il ayin te k’aal sok te ue/
The Origin of the Sun and the Moon
dir. 68 Voices
Gwen ‘bii Yern/It Will Be Yours
dir. Natalie Grube
Waru
dir. Chelsea Cohen, Ainsley Gardiner, Casey Kao, Renae Maihi, Paula Jones, Katie Wolfe, Briar Grace-Smith, and Awanui Simich-Pene

Saturday, February 24
Speaking the Land
3 pm—Meyer Auditorium, FGA
Sicigorousawa un Cironnop/
The Fox of Shichigorosawa
dir. Tune Sugihara
Sailing a Sinking Sea
dir. Olivia Wyatt

In the Periphery
7 pm—Meyer Auditorium, FGA
Wire natzu/The Witch
dir. 68 Voices
Zerzura
dir. Christopher Kirkley

Presentations at the Environmental Film Festival
Saturday, March 17
12 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Identidad
dir. Iván Jaripio
We Prayed in Water
dir. Joseph Erb
Shash Jaa’/Bears Ears
dir. Angelo Baca
Then, Now, and Forever: Zuni in the Grand Canyon
dir. Daniel Byers

Saturday, March 24
2 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Los Ojos del Camino/
The Eyes of the Journey
dir. Rodrigo Oteró Heraud
2018 Budget Snapshot

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Budget Snapshot

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Sponsors & Partners

The festival was carried out thanks to the combined efforts of the Mother Tongue Film Festival committee members. Financial support was provided by the collaborating Smithsonian units NMNH, CFCH, and NMAI. This program also received federal support from the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center, as well as the Smithsonian’s Asian Pacific American Center, Freer Gallery of Art, National Museum of African Art, and the NMNH Arctic Studies Center. Additional supporters included Indigenous Media Initiatives, the Mexican Cultural Institute, the Embassy of New Zealand, Dr. Richard Pace, Middle Tennessee State University, Dr. Laura Zanotti, Purdue University, and the Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment.
2019
Year 4: UN International Year of Indigenous Languages

- 66 languages
- 22 regions
- 60 films

To Wake Up in the Nakota Language
dir. Louise BigEagle
The 2019 Mother Tongue Film Festival proved to be a highly successful and well-attended event. The year 2019 was proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and the Mother Tongue Film Festival was proud to be an official event of this global endeavor. The festival also contributed to the first Smithsonian Year of Music, presenting numerous musical performances as part of the film festival, and presented two major stand-alone events across the year, nationally and internationally. Our fourth festival featured 60 films and audiovisual experiences from 22 regions in 66 languages, which doubled the number of languages in comparison to previous years. Through a carefully curated selection of films, and a new website developed at CFCH, the festival celebrated language revitalization around the world by exploring cultural relevance.

The festival opened Thursday, February 21, NMAI. The opening reception included remarks by Joshua Bell and Amalia Córdova, as well as Michael Mason and Denis Chouinard, public affairs counselor at the Canadian Embassy. The reception featured a buffet created by award-winning chef Freddie Bitsoie (Diné) of NMAI’s Mitsitam Café, and a performance by the Uptown Boyz. The evening’s film program, Renewal and Hope, included the first film to be made in the Haida language, S'Gagwayaay K’uuna/Edge of the Knife (2018; Gwaai Edenshaw and Helen Haig-Brown), preceded by the animation To’o Oozhrii Zhit Tsyaa Tsal Dhidii/Boy in the Moon (2018; Sam Osborn), a traditional Athabaskan story told in the Gwich’in language. The screening was followed by a Q&A with Edge of the Knife co-director Gwaai Edenshaw (Haida), Sherri Dick (Haida elder and actor), Jay Bellis (Haida artisan and member of the film’s art department), and Sam Osborn, moderated by Melissa Bisagni. The Uptown Boyz closed the evening by inviting the audience on stage to participate in a traditional song.

Friday began at the Freer Auditorium at the Freer Gallery of Art, opening with Pasts, Presents and Futures, a program focused on education, launching with the short films To Wake Up the Nakota Language (2018; Louise BigEagle) and episodes from the collaborative Zapotec learning project at Haverford University, Dízhso Nabani/Living Language, followed by the feature documentary from Zambia Colours of the Alphabet (2016; Alastair Coie). The program was followed by a panel focused on language pedagogy called Breaking from the Past, moderated by Mary Linn. The second program featured the international shorts Blackbird (2015; Amie Batlibasi), Imfura (2017; Samuel Ishimwe Karemangindo), and the stop-motion animation Biidaaban/The Dawn Comes (2019; Amanda Strong). The shorts were followed by a roundtable discussion moderated by Amalia Córdova with director Batlibasi (Australian–Solomon Islander), visiting filmmakers David Hernández Palmar (Wayuu) and Divino Tserewahu (Xavante) with translation and contextual support by Laura Graham of the University of Iowa.

The at-capacity evening program was held at NYU Washington DC’s Abramson Family Auditorium in coordination with NYU’s Stonewall 50 celebration. The theme of the program was Reclaiming Identities, featuring the short films Leitis in Waiting (2018; Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson). Leitis in Waiting follows a vibrant and resilient community of transgender women in Tonga known as leitis. The post-screening discussion was moderated by Jeanette Soon-Ludes, director of scholarships and programs at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarships Fund, in dialogue with co-director Joe Wilson, as well as one of the film’s protagonists, Joey “Joleen” Mataele, and story creator and producer Hinaleimoa Wong-Kalu, who both joined remotely.
Saturday featured a mix of screenings and performances across NMAI and NMNH, attracting audiences of over 1,000. The morning program, Family Stories, screened at NMAI’s Rasmuson Theater, featured two short films from Dizhsa Nabani, followed by The Girl Who Talks to the Moon (2018; Rebecca Campbell), and closing with the animated feature Maísa, the Chamorro Girl Who Saves Guåhan (2015; Michael Q. Ceballos). The first animated film to feature the Chamorro language, the animation follows young Maísa, who must find the courage to lead the women of Guåhan (Guam) into battle and stop a powerful creature from devouring their island home. The screenings were followed by a panel featuring director Michael Q. Ceballos and art director Mathew Kawika Ortiz, with Brook Lillehaugen of Haverford College and Felipe Lopez (Zapotec) of Dizhsa Nabani, and moderated by Joshua Bell. The event opened and closed with a riveting Chamoru performance from Håle’ Para Agupa’, a local Chamoru community organization.

The Migrations program featured Gue’ Bac/Tlacolula Market (2018; Dizhsa Nabani), a short exploring Zapotec identity, and the dramatic feature In Times of Rain (2018; Itan-dehui Jansen) depicting a Mixtec family caught between the rural and the urban. These films were followed by a roundtable discussion with Lillehaugen and Lopez of Dizhsa Nabani, joined by lead actor of In Times of Rain, Alejandra Herrera, and moderated by Amalia Córdova. This program was made possible thanks to the support of the Embassy of Mexico to the United States and the Mexican Cultural Institute of Washington, DC.

Concurrently, a pop-up performance with Bhutanese dancers and musicians Khando, Tashi Tsering, Leki, Wangchuk, Sherab Jamtsho, Yeshi Tangbi, Lhaki, Tsherbing Dema, Pema Yudon, and Tsherbing Choden took place at NMNH’s Rotunda. Some 500 visitors enjoyed a performance of Zhungdra (zhung meaning “center, mainstream,” and dra meaning “music”) and Drametse Nga Cham (mask dance of the drums from Drametse, nga meaning “drum” and cham means “mask dance”), a sacred dance that is inscribed in UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The performance was followed by a Q&A in the Q?rius Theater where museum visitors were invited to meet and speak with the performers. These performances were made possible through funding by the Smithsonian Year of Music.

The day closed at NMNH’s Baird Auditorium, featuring a second performance of Zhungdra and Drametse Nga Cham before filmmakers Doro-ttya Zurbó and Arun Bhattarai introduced their film The Next Guardian (2017). The immersive documentary follows the story of two siblings, Gyembo and Tashi, in a remote Himalayan village within the Kingdom of Bhutan, who must learn to navigate the expectations of their father and their own dreams. Following the screening, Zurbó and Bhattarai were joined on stage by Dawa Sherpa and Bruce Bunting of the Bhutan Foundation for a discussion of Bhutanese representation in a global setting, moderated by Nafisa Isa (APAC). Bhutanese performers then closed the evening with Tashi Labay, a collaborative song/dance traditionally performed at the end of an event. This dance is performed on important occasions to summon the gods of prosperity by glorifying a place, natural elements, and the ancestors.

The festival closed with the U.S. premiere of the multimedia experience Last Whispers (2019; Lena Herzog) at the Kennedy Center’s Terrace Theater. Last Whispers is an oratorio, a virtual reality experience, and sound installation featuring forty-one languages in any of our programs to date. Multimedia artist Herzog was joined by sound designers Marco Capalbo and Mark Mangini to introduce the cinematic experience, which was followed by the largest synced VR screening of a film to date. With close to 500 attendees, the venue was near capacity. The screening was followed by a discussion with Herzog, Capalbo, and Mangini, moderated by Mary Linn and Amalia Córdova.
Bhutanese dancers and musicians Khando, Tashi Tsering, Leki, Wangchuk, Sherab Jamtsho, Yeshi Tangbi, Lhaki, Tshering Dema, Pema Yudon, and Tshering Choden perform Drametse Nga Cham (mask dance of the drums from Drametse).

Photo by Joshua Bell
With funds from Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool, Kālewa Correa led a Mother Tongue Film Festival collaboration with the Pasifika Film Fest in Salt Lake City (January 31–February 3). Fifteen films focused on the Pacific were screened to 150 people over five days at the Gateway in downtown Salt Lake City. This collaboration featured a 48 Hour Film Challenge resulting in the winning film, *Voicemail*, screening at the main festival.

From October 25–28 2019, the Mother Tongue Film Festival and Pasifika Film Festival collaborated at the Smithsonian/Auckland Museum Te Whāinga Culture Lab in Auckland, New Zealand, showcasing over twenty emerging Pacific Islander films from all corners of Oceania. This three-day intimate screening ran for ten hours a day, allowing for thirty hours of Pacific Island films to be presented to about 4,500 Culture Lab attendees.

This Pacific collaboration is a direct result of the Mother Tongue Film Festival breakout session in Salt Lake, which helped to decentralize and expand the reach of the festival to traditionally underserved communities. A complete list of the films screened at both events follows our 2019 schedule.

In partnership with the Environmental Film Festival, the Mother Tongue Film Festival screened *A House in the Fields* (2017; Tala Hadid) at NMNH on March 17. Following the screening was a discussion moderated by Joshua Bell with Georgetown University PhD student Mohamed Lamallam and Dr. Fatima Hadjji, Adjunct Professor in International Affairs at George Washington University, both of whom are members of the diasporic Amazigh community.

The last Mother Tongue event of 2019 was in partnership with the United Nations’ International Year of Indigenous Languages: Perspectives conference at Purdue University Fort Wayne. On November 1, the festival screened *Edge of the Knife* and *Boy in the Moon* at the historic Embassy Theater in downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana. The conference brought in 420 registered participants from six continents and presented over seventy-five languages. Mary Linn led a panel of language educators and storytellers from the Haida and Myaamia nations after the screening.
Thursday, February 21

Opening Ceremony
5 pm—Potomac Atrium, NMAI

Renewal and Hope
7 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Tooo Oozhrii Zhii Tsyaat Tsal Dhiidii/
Boy in the Moon
dir. Sam Osborn
SGaawaaq K’uuna/Edge of the Knife
dir. Gwoai Edenshaw, Helen Haig-Brown

Friday, February 22

Pasts, Presents, and Futures
11 am—Meyer Auditorium, FSG
My Heart Speaks Sauk
The Boarding School Experience
dir. Shawnee High School Students
To Wake Up the Nakota Language
dir. Louise BigEagle
Dizhsa Nabani: “Gal Ria’t Chuculat”/
Living Language: “Grinding Chocolate”
dir. Moisés García Guzmán and
Brook Lillehaugen
Colours of the Alphabet
dir. Alastair Cole
Education Panel: Breaking from the Past

Shorts Program and Panel
2 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Blackbird
dir. Amie Batalibasi
Imfura
dir. Samuel Ishimwe
Bidaaban (The Dawn Comes)
dir. Amanda Strong
Filmmaker Roundtable: Unbroken Lines

Friday, February 24 cont’d

Reclaiming Identities
7 pm—Abramson Family Auditorium, NYU DC
Voicemail
dir. Robert Poleki
Tama
dir. Jared Fitcroft and Jack O’Donnell
Korva
dir. Eualia Raine
Leitis in Waiting
dir. Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer
and Joe Wilson

Saturday, February 23

Family Stories
11 am—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Dizhsa Nabani: “Gal Ria’t Chuculat”/
Living Language: “Grinding Chocolate”
dir. Moisés García Guzmán and
Brook Lillehaugen
The Girl Who Talks to the Moon
dir. Neil Grahn
Maisa: The Chamoru Girl Who
Saves Guåhan
dir. Michael Q. Ceballos

Migrations
3 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
Dizhsa Nabani: “Gue’ Bac”
Living Language: “Tlacolula Market”
dir. Moisés García Guzmán and
Brook Lillehaugen
Tiempo de Lluvia/In Times of Rain
dir. Itandehui Jansen

Saturday, February 23 cont’d

Across Generations
6:30 pm—Baird Auditorium, NMNH
Performance: Bhutanese Cham
The Next Guardian
dir. Dorottya Zurbó and Arun Bhattarai

Sunday, February 24

Reconciliation
2 pm—Eaton Cinema, Eaton Hotel
Performance: Bhutanese Cham
Sameblod/Sami Blood
dir. Amanda Kernell
“Goaskinviellja”
dir. Ernesto Calderón Dondero

Closing Night
7 pm—Terrace Theater, Kennedy Center
Last Whispers: Oratorio for Vanishing
Voices, Collapsing Universes and
a Falling Tree
dir. Lena Herzog

Presentations at the
Environmental Film Festival

Saturday, March 17

12 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
A House in the Fields
dir. Tala Hadid
Mother Tongue X
Pasifika Film Festival

January 31–February 3, 2019
Pasifika First Fridays
The Gateway, Salt Lake City

Banabans of Rabi
dir. Blessen Tom and Hele Ikimotu

Koriva
dir. Euralia Paine

The Education of Grayson Toki
dir. Glenill Burua

I Hinanao-ťa
dir. Cara Flores

I Matai
dir. Mighty Island

Maisa: The Chamoru Girl Who Saves Guåhan
dir. Michael Q. Ceballos

Mou Piri
dir. Multinesia

Hae Hawai‘i
dir. Ty Sanga

‘Aho‘eitu
dir. Jeremiah Tauamiti

Forgotten Dawn Children
dir. Joshua Iosefo and Corey Sio

Salamasina’s Daughters
dir. Aruna Po Ching

My Friend Michael Jones
dir. Ian Leaupepe and Samson Rambo

Too Familia
dir. Marie Chanel

Panguna
dir. Carmen Smith

Blackbird
dir. Amie Batalibasi

Attendance
~150
October 25–28, 2019
Te Whāinga Culture Lab
Auckland Museum, Auckland

Mother Tongue X
Pasifika Film Festival

October 25–28, 2019
Te Whāinga Culture Lab
Auckland Museum, Auckland

All’s Wedding
dir. Jeffrey Walker

Crossing Spaces
dir. Lola Quan Bautista and Shirley Thompson

Culture Strong
dir. L-FRESH The LION & Erin Moy

Elders
dir. Tony Briggs

For My Father’s Kingdom
dir. Vea Maitie’o

Garage Barbershop
dir. Charles Lomu

Herbs - Songs of Freedom
dir. Te Arepa Kahi

In My Blood It Runs
dir. Maya Newell

Leitis in Waiting
dir. Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer, and Joe Wilson

Liliu
dir. Jeremiah Tauamiti

Making Good Men
dir. Fiona Apanui-Kupenga

Merata
dir. Heperi Mita

Milky Pop Kid
dir. Johanna Garvin

Mother, Child
dir. Tin Pang

Our Voices
dir. Dima Zeidan, Fahmi Seid, and Marah Zeidan

Slam
dir. Partho Sen-Gupta

The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open
dir. Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers and Kathleen Hepburn

The Final Quarter
dir. Ian Darling

Yesterday
dir. Danny Boyle and Richard Curtis

2040
dir. Damon Gameau

Attendance
~4,500

Audience members at the Te Whāinga Culture Lab sit in front of the screening space: a twenty-foot shipping container.
Photo courtesy of the Te Whāinga Culture Lab
2019 Budget Snapshot

### Budget Snapshot

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### Sponsors & Partners

The festival was carried out thanks to the combined efforts of the Mother Tongue Film Festival committee members, staff, interns, and volunteers. Financial support was provided by NMAI, NMNH, and CFCH. Additional support was provided by New York University DC/Stonewall 50, the Embassy of Australia to the United States, the Embassy of Canada to the United States, the Bhutan Foundation, MoMA’s Doc Fortnight, Eaton Workshop DC, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Embassy of Mexico to the United States, the Mexican Cultural Institute, Perdue University Fort Wayne, the Georgetown University Department of Anthropology, Dr. Laura Graham (University of Iowa), and the Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment.

This program has also received federal support from the Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center; the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center; as well as the NMNH Arctic Studies Center; the Smithsonian Year of Music; Freer Gallery of Art & Arthur M. Sackler Gallery; and Q?rius, The Coralyn W. Whitney Science Education Center.
2020

Year 5: Women in Filmmaking

- 28 languages
- 22 regions
- 21 films
The 2020 festival featured a diverse set of films from 22 regions of the world featuring 15 languages not previously screened. The festival also saw sustained growth as in previous years with an audience of 1,520 over four days of screenings, with added partnerships both within and beyond the Smithsonian. We were pleased to establish a new partnership with the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), expanding our One Smithsonian reach to a total of six units.

Established partnerships with the Canadian Embassy to the United States and the Anthropology Department at Georgetown University were essential to the success of the festival. The 2020 festival saw improvements in several areas. The opening night reception was organized for 200 guests, twice the size of the previous year. Thanks to increased staff support from CFCH, we developed an evaluation plan, recruiting over twenty volunteers to conduct a comprehensive survey at every screening. Based on 501 responses, we found that the core objectives of the festival were met: to raise awareness of Indigenous and minority language in film, to establish an audience for those films in the DC metro area, and to amplify accurate representations of diverse communities.

Women writers, directors, and protagonists have always played a key role in the festival; the principal focus of 2020 was to highlight the accomplishments of women in filmmaking and the role they play in amplifying marginalized and Indigenous voices. Five of the seven feature films were either directed or co-directed by women, and a total of twenty women directors were featured. Notably, the feature film Vai was screened on February 21, in celebration of International Mother Language Day, in the Baird Auditorium of NMNH to an audience of nearly 400. The film portrays the lives of eight women from seven Pacific Island nations, by nine women directors. The film presents an uplifting look at the range of issues impacting women across the Pacific, allowing us to expand our theme of women’s empowerment through traditional and contemporary messages, reaching an intergenerational audience.

As is now customary, the 2020 festival began on Thursday, February 20, with a reception in NMAI’s Potomac Atrium and a performance by Uptown Boyz. The Associate Director of Museum Scholarship, Exhibitions, and Public Engagement at NMAI, David Penny, offered welcome remarks, followed by a land acknowledgment and words from Joshua Bell and Amalia Córdova, closing with comments by Denis Chouinard, Public Affairs Counselor of the Embassy of Canada to the United States. The reception included a tasting of wine from Nk’Mip Cellars, the first Indigenous winery in North America, generously donated by the Canadian Embassy. Thanks to ongoing mentorship initiatives, we welcomed stellar interns from near (The College of William and Mary, George Washington University, and the University of Maryland) and far (Auckland University of Technology).

The evening program began with “Pire” (2016; María Manzanares), a music video in the Mapuzungun language combining traditional instruments with contemporary influences. The feature was *Restless River* (2019; Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeleine Ivalú), a narrative film about a young Inuk woman who draws courage and strength from her rugged land to become a woman as independent as the river that cuts across it. Both films linked experiences of women and water, a theme prominent throughout the festival. A discussion following the screening featured Cousineau in person and producer Lucy Tulugarjuk (Inuk) participating virtually from her home in Nunavut, moderated by Melissa Bisagni. The Uptown Boyz closed the evening by inviting the audience onstage to participate in a traditional song wishing all safe travels home.

Friday began at NMNH with the program Moving Forward, Looking Back in the Q?rius Theater. This program focused on the lives of two distinct women in male-directed films. The program opened with the premiere of *Felicia: The Life of an Octopus Fisherman* (2020; José Carlos Pons), a documentary about a Malagasy fisherman of Madagascar whose life is increasingly threatened by political marginalization and climate...
change. It was followed by *N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980; John Marshall and Adrienne Miesmer), an intimate portrait that reflects the experience of Ju’/hoansi communities, which Marshall began documenting in 1950. This chronicle of the Ju’/hoansi is held in the Human Studies Film Archive and is recorded in UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register. A discussion followed with director Pons, and archivists Karma Foley, Director of Library & Archives, Smithsonian Channel; and Pam Wintle, Senior Film Archivist, NMNH, who shared their intimate knowledge of Marshall’s films with the public.

The program Cinemática Indígena was produced in partnership with the University of Edinburgh, which supported the English subtitling of four short films from Latin America: *Kiñe Rupa: Treng Kai Kai* (2018; Andrea Salazar, Lucía Pérez, and Marilén Llancaqueo), *Kat at Kêtxex/Where Are They?* (2017; Eduardo Mutzumá Say with Colectivo Cine en la Calle), *Puhi toprao/To be happy* (2018; Carol Cazares), and *Tata Jenaru Uajpa/ The Son of Tata Jenaro* (2019; Raúl Máximo Cortés). The screening was followed by the Cinemática Indígena Roundtable on Translation & Collaboration, moderated by Mary Linn, featuring directors Marilén Llancaqueo (Mapuche), Eduardo Mutzumá Say (Ixil), Raúl Máximo Cortés (Purepecha), and José Pons, and Charlotte Gleghorn, Latin American film scholar from the University of Edinburgh, with interpretation by Amalia Córdova.

The day culminated with the Women Directors Panel featuring one of the directors of *Vai*, Becs Arahanga (Kai Tahu/ Ngati Raukawa āku Iwi, Kati Mako te Hapū), Marie-Hélène Cousineau, Sidse Tortholm Larsen (director, *Winter’s Yearning*), and Naomi Mizoguchi, (director, *Ainu: Indigenous Peoples of Japan*), moderated by Amalia Córdova.

The evening program at NMNH’s Baird Auditorium honored the United Nations International Mother Language Day. The theme of the program was Sea of Islands, featuring the film *Vai*. Created by nine Pacific women directors, this portmanteau feature film was shot in seven dif-
fferent Pacific countries: Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kuki Airani (Cook Islands), Samoa, Niue, and Āotearoa (New Zealand). In each of these na-
tions, vai means water. The film rep-
resents a journey of empowerment
through culture over the lifetime of
one woman called Vai, played by a
different Indigenous actress in each
country. Guests were welcomed by
NMNH Director Kirk Johnson, followed
by NMNH intern Anahera Hare of the
University of Auckland who intro-
duced the film, giving a stirring wel-
coming and opening remarks in her
language (Te Reo) and in English. The
screening was followed by a Q&A with
director Becs Arahanga (Kai Tahu/
Ngati Raukawa ōku Iwi, Kati Mako te
Hapū), moderated by Joshua Bell.

The third day of the festival took
place at various venues throughout
the city. The morning program held at
NMNH’s Baird Auditorium featured a
short titled Grá & Eagla (2019; Caitrío-
ná Ní Chadhain), which in Gaeilge
(Irish) means “love and fear.” Spark-
ing thoughtful discussion and laugh-
ter, director Áine Gallagher explores
why so many Irish people feel pas-
sionate about their language but lack
the confidence to speak it. This was
followed by the premiere of a fea-
ture documentary, Ainu: Indigenous
Peoples of Japan (2019; Naomi Mizo-
guchi), which explores Ainu life in
Hokkaido through the stories of four
elders. Mizoguchi sheds light on Ainu
traditions, both past and present, and
the efforts to keep the culture and
language alive in Japan. Amalia Cór-
dova and Recovering Voices I2F Fel-
low Sydney Hamamoto moderated a
Q&A with Mizoguchi.

We then moved to the Nan Tucker
McEvoy Auditorium at SAAM for the
festival’s shorts program, Returning
Home. The documentary The Gringo
Mapuche: Carlos Catruleo (2012; An-
thony Rauld), established the theme
of return by following Chris Culbert-
sen, also known as Carlos Catruleo,
as he travels to southern Chile to find
his family. Uu?uu tah (2019; Chad
Charlie) tells a pre-contact story of a
young chief led by his grandmother
along the hard path of growth. Two
Diné-directed films followed, Mud/
Hasht’ishníi (2017; Shaandiin Tome),
a dark, experimental film about
struggles with addiction and fami-
ly, and Hooghan (2019; Blackhorse
Lowe) which documents a Diné family
as they build a traditional dwelling.
The program closed with the dramat-
ic short Beles (2019; Sam Gebremi-
che), starring a group of children col-
lecting fruit from the mountains, and
the playful fiction Mino Bimaadiziwin
(2017; Shane McSauby) in which a
transgender Anishinaabe man meets
a mysterious woman who only speaks
to him in their language. The shorts
program featured the Nuu-chah-
nulth, Diné/Navajo, Trgrinya, and An-
ishinaabe languages.

Our evening program at SAAM pre-
sented the feature documentary Win-
ter’s Yearning (2019; Sidse Thorsholm
Larsen and Strurla Pilskog), a portrait
of the Greenlandic town of Maniitsoq,
caught in a holding pattern after an
industrial project fails to materialize.
Sidse Larsen participated in a Q&A
with the audience, moderated by
Mary Linn, discussing issues of de-
pendency, survival, and the renewal
of hope.

For the first time, Mother Tongue pre-
sented a horror film, Jeff Barnaby’s
Blood Quantum (2019), at NYU DC.
To honor the film, the Quebec Gov-
ernment Office in Washington, DC,
sponsored a pre-screening “Zombie
Happy Hour” with Canadian beer and
snacks for guests over twenty-one.
NYU PhD student and filmmaker An-
gelo Baca (Diné/Hopi) offered open-
ning remarks on the colonial history of
zombies and how Indigenous per-
spectives are making their mark on
the genre. The music video “Uts taj
wich/Te gusta” (2019), featuring Yu-
catec Maya hip-hop artist Pat Boy,
opened the screening. Musician Jesús
Pat Chablé, aka Pat Boy, forms part of
ADN Maya, a collective of artists from
the Yucatec Peninsula who all sing in
Maya, carrying a message of Indige-
nous pride.

The U.S. premiere of Blood Quan-
tum screened to a sold-out crowd.
The dead come back to life outside
the isolated Mi’gmaq reserve of Red
Crow, except for its Indigenous inhab-
itants, who are strangely immune to
the zombie plague. It falls to the local
tribal law enforcement to protect Red
Crow. Following the screening, we
connected with Barnaby (Mi’gmaq) via video conference for a discussion with Baca before taking questions from the audience.

The festival closed with a screening of One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk (2020; Zacharias Kunuk) at Georgetown University ICC Auditorium, co-presented with the GU Anthropology Department. The film is set in the Canadian Arctic and takes place over a single day in 1961. In Kajuivik, north Baffin Island, Noah Piugattuk’s nomadic Inuit band lives and hunts by dog team as his ancestors did. When an agent of the Canadian government arrives, what appears as a chance encounter soon opens up the prospect of momentous change, revealing Inuit-settler relationships humorously and tragically lost in translation. Our screening was followed by a discussion with Colleen Strawhacker, the program director of the Arctic Sciences Section, Office of Polar Programs at the National Science Foundation, in conversation with Joshua Bell.

The festival continued online, streaming eleven shorts available to audiences internationally.

Vai director Becs Arangha sits with Joshua Bell after Sea of Islands.

Photo by Eduardo Mutzumá
Thursday, February 20

Opening Ceremony
6 pm—Potomac Atrium, NMAI

7 pm—Rasmuson Theater, NMAI
“Pire”
dir. María Manzanares

Restless River
dir. Marie Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu

Friday, February 21

Moving Forward, Looking Back
11 am—Q?rius Theater, NMNH
Felicia: The Life of an Octopus Fisherwoman
dir. José Carlos Pons

Ni’ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman
dir. John Marshall and Adrienne Miesmer

Cinemática Indígena
1:30 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH
Kiñe Rupa: Treng Treng Kai Kai
dir. Andrea Salazar, Lucía Pérez, and Marien Llancaqueo

Puhi toprao/To Be Happy
dir. Carol Cazares

Kat At Kat’ex/Where Are They?
dir. Eduardo Mutzumá Say, and Colectivo Cine en la Calle

Tata Jenaru Uajpa/
The Son of Don Jenaru
dir. Raúl Máximo Cortés

Translation & Collaboration
2:30 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH

Friday, February 21 cont’d

Directors Panel
4 pm—Q?rius Theater, NMNH

Sea of Islands
7 pm—Baird Auditorium, NMNH
Vai
dir. Becs Arahanga, Amberley Jo Aumua, Matasila Freshwater, Dianna Fuemana, Miria George, ‘Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Marina Alofagia McCartney, and Nicole Whippy

Saturday, February 22

Resurgence
12 pm—Baird Auditorium, NMNH
Grá & Eagla
dir. Caitríona Ní Chadhain

Ainu
dir. Naomi Mizoguchi

Returning Home
3 pm—Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, SAAM
The Gringo Mapuche: Carlos Catrileo
dir. Anthony Rauld

Uu’puu’-tah
dir. Chad Charlie

Mud/Hashtł’ishnii
dir. Shandii Tome

Hooghan
dir. Blackhorse Lowe

Beles
dir. Sam Gebremiche

Mino Bimaadiziwin
dir. Shane McSauby

Saturday, February 22 cont’d

Seizing the Future
3 pm—Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, SAAM
Winter’s Yearning
dir. Sidse Torstholm Larsen and Strurla Pilskog

Beyond Dispossession
8 pm—Abramson Family Auditorium, NYU DC
“Te gusta (uts taj wich)”
dir. ADN Maya Films with Jaime Magaña

Blood Quantum
dir. Jeff Barnaby

Sunday, February 23

In Real Time
3 pm—ICC Auditorium, GU
One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk
dir. Zacharias Kunuk

2020 At a Glance

Attendance: ~1,520
2020
Budget Summary

Financial support was provided by NMAI, NMNH, and CFCH. This program received federal support from the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Q?rius, The Coralyn W. Whitney Science Education Center. Additional support was provided by the Embassy of Canada to the United States, the University of Edinburgh, New York University at Washington DC, the Québec Government Office in Washington DC, Eaton Workshop DC, the Georgetown University Department of Anthropology, the Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment, and Ferring Pharmaceuticals, as well as anonymous donors.

Budget Snapshot

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Screening Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location Fees</td>
<td>$6,397</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Expenses</td>
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<td>Other Expenses</td>
<td>$8,526</td>
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<td>Total Budget</td>
<td>$32,844</td>
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</table>

Sponsors & Partners

Financial support was provided by NMAI, NMNH, and CFCH. This program received federal support from the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Q?rius, The Coralyn W. Whitney Science Education Center. Additional support was provided by the Embassy of Canada to the United States, the University of Edinburgh, New York University at Washington DC, the Québec Government Office in Washington DC, Eaton Workshop DC, the Georgetown University Department of Anthropology, the Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment, and Ferring Pharmaceuticals, as well as anonymous donors.
Looking Ahead

We wish to thank the Smithsonian units, staff, interns, volunteers, and advisors who have generously contributed to making the Mother Tongue Film Festival a successful annual event. We are proud of the efforts that we’ve made over the past five years to advance our mission and the goals of Recovering Voices, and to play an active role in the United Nations and UNESCO International Year of Indigenous Languages.

We are committed to continuing our work in raising awareness of language diversity through our growing network of filmmakers, scholars, and partners, and to expanding audiences for these extraordinary films.

The sixth Mother Tongue Film Festival will be presented as a virtual event in 2021.

Languages and cultures are essential to the flourishing and well-being of Indigenous peoples in the United States and around the world. Looking to the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), Mother Tongue will continue to amplify the work of storytellers who explore the power of language to connect the past, present, and future.
## Regions Represented

1. Āotearoa (New Zealand)  
2. Argentina  
3. Australia  
4. Belgium  
5. Bhutan  
6. Brazil  
7. Canada  
8. Chile  
9. China  
10. Colombia  
11. Cook Islands  
12. Democratic Republic of the Congo  
13. Denmark  
14. Eritrea  
15. Fiji  
16. Finland  
17. Germany  
18. Ghana  
19. Greenland  
20. Guam  
21. Guatemala  
22. Hungary  
23. Iran  
24. Ireland  
25. Japan  
26. Kuki Airani (Cook Islands)  
27. Madagascar  
28. Micronesia  
29. Mexico  
30. Morocco  
31. Myanmar (Burma)  
32. Netherlands  
33. Niger  
34. Niue  
35. Norfolk Island  
36. Norway  
37. Palestine  
38. Panama  
39. Papua New Guinea  
40. Peru  
41. Republic of Namibia  
42. Rwanda  
43. Samoa  
44. Sámpi (Sweden/Norway)  
45. Solomon Islands  
46. Spain  
47. Switzerland  
48. Thailand  
49. Tibetan Plateau  
50. Tonga  
51. Uganda  
52. United Kingdom  
53. United States  
54. Venezuela  
55. Zambia
Appendix 1

Regions & Languages

Languages Represented

1. Åarjelsaemien gïele (South Sami)
2. Ahom
3. Ainu
4. American Sign Language
5. Anishinaabemowin
6. Arabic
7. Atikamekw
8. Ayoreo
9. Bathari
10. Bemba
11. Bodawadiminwen (Potawatomi)
12. Burmese
13. Bwanaba
14. Central Balsas Nahuatl
15. Chamacco (Ishir Ibitoso)
16. Chamorro
17. Cherokee
18. Chichewa
19. Chinuk Wawa
20. Choctaw
21. Cook Island Māori
22. Cree
23. Dalabon
24. Danish
25. Diné (Navajo)
26. Dinjú Zhuh K’yuu (Gwich’in)
27. Duaxu
28. Dutch
29. Dzongkha
30. Embera
31. English
32. Enxlet Norte
33. Euskara (Basque)
34. Fijian
35. French
36. Gaelige (Irish)
37. Great Andamanese
38. Greenlandic
39. Haida
40. HoÇak (Ho-cunk)
41. Ikaan
42. Ingrian
43. Inuktitut
44. Ihupiaq
45. Ixchecuk
46. Ixil
47. Japanese
48. jie-Karamonjong
49. Jul’hoan
50. Kanien’kéha/Mowhawk
51. Kannada
52. Kayapó (Mebêngökre)
53. Kikongo
54. Kinyarwanda
55. Kiowa
56. Kodiak Alutiiq
57. Kotiria (Wanano)
58. Koyukon
59. Laklánó Xokleng
60. Light Warlpiri
61. Lingala
62. Los Capomos Mayo
63. Lushootseed
64. Malagasy (Vezo Dialect)
65. Mani Manx
66. Māori
67. Mapudungun
68. Maya Ixil
69. Mayo
70. Mbya Guarani
71. Menominee
72. Mi’gmaq
73. Michif
74. Miwok
75. Mixtec
76. Mōhiks (Mohgehan)
77. Moken
78. Motu
79. Ning
80. Náhuatl
81. Nakota
82. Niuean
83. Nivkh
84. Norf’k
85. Nuu-chah-nulth
86. Nyama
87. Ojibwe
88. Olekha
89. Ōlelo Hawai’i (Hawaiian)
90. Ongota
91. Paunaka
92. Persian
93. Pite Saami
94. Purhépecha
95. Qaqat
96. Quechua
97. Roviana (Solomon Islands)
98. Sadu
99. Sami
100. Samoan
101. Saqat
102. Selk’nam (Ona)
103. Selkup
104. Seri
105. Soli
106. Solomon Islands Pijin
107. Southern Thai
108. Spanish
109. Sumtu (Sone Tu)
110. Sùrel
111. Swedish
112. Tama’alit
113. Tamesheq
114. Te reo Māori (Māori)
115. Tehuelche
116. Tewe
117. Thai
118. Tibetan
119. Tigrinya
120. Tluhuica
121. Tojolabal (Chiapas)
122. Tok Pisin
123. Tongan
124. Triqui
125. Trung (Dulong)
126. Tsetal
127. Tuareg
128. Twi
129. Warao
130. Warlpiri
131. Wawhalhe (Osage)
132. Wixarika (Huichol)
133. Xung (Kung)
134. Yanonki
135. Yanomami
136. Yauyos Quechua
137. Yokota Mixtec
138. Yucatec Mayan
139. Yupik
140. Zapotec
141. Zoque-Ayapaneco (Tabasco)
142. Zuni
Appendix 2

Venues

Auckland Museum—2019
The Auckland Domain Parnell, Auckland, New Zealand

BloomBars—2016
3222 Eleventh St. NW, Washington, DC

Eaton House Cinema—2019, 2020
1201 K St. NW, Washington, DC

Embassy Theatre—2019
125 West Jefferson Boulevard
Fort Wayne, IN

The Gateway—2019
400 W 200 S, Salt Lake City, UT

Georgetown University—2020
ICC Auditorium
37th & O Street NW, Washington, DC

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (HMSG)—2017
Ring Auditorium
Independence Avenue & Seventh Street SW, Washington, DC

John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts—2019
Terrace Theater
2700 F St. NW, Washington, DC

Landmark’s Atlantic Plumbing Cinema—2016, 2017
807 V St. NW, Washington, DC

Mexican Cultural Institute—2017–2019
2829 Sixteenth St. NW, Washington, DC

National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA)—2018, 2019
Freer Gallery of Art, Meyer Auditorium
1050 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC

National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)—2016–2020
Potomac Atrium & Rasmuson Theater
Fourth Street and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC

Coulter Performance Plaza
1300 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC

National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)—2016–2020
Baird Auditorium & Q?rius Theater
Tenth Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC

New York University, Washington DC (NYU-DC)—2017–2020
Abramson Family Auditorium
1307 L St. NW, Washington, DC

Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM)—2020
Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium
F and Eighth Street NW, Washington, DC
Curatorial & Organizing Team

Joshua A. Bell
Co-Director and Founding Committee Member, Mother Tongue, Curator of Globalization, NMNH

Amalia Córdova
Co-Director, Mother Tongue, Latinx Digital Curator, CFCH

Mary S. Linn
Founding Committee Member, Mother Tongue, Curator of Language and Cultural Vitality, CFCH

Melissa Bisagni
Founding Committee Member, Mother Tongue, Media Initiatives Manager, NMAI

Kālewa Correa
Curator of Hawai‘i and the Pacific, APAC

Elisa Hough
Web Developer and Editor, CFCH

Laura Sharp
Founding Committee Member, Mother Tongue, Program Manager, Recovering Voices, NMNH

2016

Judith Andrews
Founding Committee Member, Mother Tongue, Program Assistant, Recovering Voices, NMNH

2017

Mariano Bartolomeu
Filmmaker, Advisor

Torell Taylor
Program Assistant, Recovering Voices, NMNH

2018

Sarah Baburi
Program Assistant, Recovering Voices, NMNH

Haley Bryant
Festival Project Manager, Recovering Voices, NMNH

2019

Emily Cain
Festival Project Manager, Recovering Voices, NMNH

2020

Ethan Karnes
Festival Project Manager, Recovering Voices, NMNH

Nafisa Isa
Curatorial Committee Member, Program Manager, APAC
Fellows and Interns

2016

Timothy Thurston
Postdoctoral Fellow, CFCH

2017

Zene Finch
Mother Tongue Extern, CFCH

2018

Vanessa Quintero
Latino Center Intern, CFCH

Nat Grube
Mother Tongue Intern, NMNH

2019

Cristián Castro-Brizendine
Mother Tongue Extern, CFCH

Sarah Sues
Mother Tongue Intern, CFCH

Mariángel Villalobos
Mother Tongue Intern, CFCH

Jamey Bailey
Recovering Voices Intern, NMNH

2020

Sydney Hamamoto
Recovering Voices I2F Fellow (2019–2020), NMNH and CFCH

Cecelia Halle
Indigenous Media Hub Intern
CFCH

Anahera Hare
Recovering Voices Intern, NMNH

Emily Johnson
Recovering Voices Intern, NMNH

Avery Rodriguez
Recovering Voices Intern, NMNH

Additionally, we are grateful to our volunteers who help each year with the festival.
### Partners

<table>
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<th>Smithsonian Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (2016-2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Museum of Natural History (2016-2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arctic Studies Center</td>
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<td>Asian Pacific American Center (2016-2020)</td>
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<td>National Museum of the American Indian (2016-2020)</td>
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<td>Smithsonian American Art Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smithsonian Latino Center (2017-2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smithsonian American Art Museum</td>
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<td>Smithsonian Art Museum (2017)</td>
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<td>Freer Gallery of Art (2016-2018)</td>
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<td>Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (2017)</td>
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### Embassies and NGOs

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<td>DC Basque Club (2016)</td>
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<td>Embassy of Mexico to the United States (2017-2019)</td>
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<td>Embassy of New Zealand to the United States (2016-2018)</td>
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<td>Mexican Cultural Institute (2018-2019)</td>
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<td>Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>MoMA DOC FORTNIGHT (2019)</td>
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### Universities

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<th>Smithsonian Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland Technical University</td>
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<tr>
<td>BloomBars (2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan Endowment (2016-2020)</td>
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<td>Ferring Pharmaceuticals (2020)</td>
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<td>John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2017)</td>
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<td>MoMA DOC FORTNIGHT (2019)</td>
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<td>New York University-Washington DC (2017-2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purdue University-Fort Wayne (2019)</td>
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<td>University of Edinburgh (2020)</td>
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<td>University of Washington DC (2020)</td>
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**Note:** The list above represents a selection of partners and institutions involved in the specified periods. The complete list may extend beyond the visible content.
Appendix 5
Selected Press Coverage

2016

“The Mother Tongue Film Festival, Playbackthetape’s latest event, and where to see the movies you missed in 2016,” Washington Post, February 16, 2017.

2017

“Osage directed film about the Osage language to be shown at NMAI Film Festival,” Osage News, January 6, 2017.

2018


2019


“See Movies From Around The World At The Mother Tongue Film Festival,” DCist, February 20, 2019.


“Mother Tongue Film Festival,” The Georgetowner, February 20, 2019.

2020


“Things to Do in DC This Weekend (February 20–23): Native Women Artists, Overwatch, and The Mother Tongue Film Festival” Washingtonian, February 20, 2020.
