

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**34th ANNUAL AMERICAN INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL  
COMMEMORATES NATIONAL INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH WITH DIVERSIFIED  
PROGRAMMING INCLUDING 80 FILMS, IN-DEPTH MEDIA PANELS, SPECIAL  
SCREENINGS AND A STAR- STUDED AWARDS SHOWCASE**

**San Francisco, CA** - The American Indian Film Institute (AIFI), proudly announces the 34th annual American Indian Film Festival, **November 6-14, 2009**. The American Indian Film Festival will premiere over 80 innovative feature films, shorts, public service, music videos and documentaries of USA American Indian and Canada First Nation communities. Founded in 1975, AIFF has established itself as the premiere Native film festival in North America. This year's selection continues to celebrate the Festival's tradition for excellence and diversity with powerful performances and new cinematic expression by cutting-edge media makers.

Prominent Sponsors of the 2009 AIFI Festival are; **The Seminole Tribe of Florida; Yocha De-He Wintun Nation, CA; National Education Association; San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, CA; CBS Television , NY; Ak-Chin Indian Community, AZ; KQED TV9; and Grants for the Arts.**

Public screenings and events will be held for nine days, from **Nov. 6-11** at the Landmark Embarcadero Center Cinema, One Embarcadero Center, Promenade Level; and conclude **Nov. 12-14** at the Palace of Fine Arts, 3301 Lyon St. @ Bay Street.

"The film festival and awards show are the cornerstone of what we do — provide an opportunity and national venue for emerging and established filmmakers, entertainers and performing artists to convene, renew their artistic spirit and share their gifts." - Founder/ Director Michael Smith.

**Opening the Festival on Nov. 6**, is the feature documentary *People of the Seal* (72 min) – an in-depth exploration into the insight and understanding of the Unangan (People of the Seal) who reside in the world's harshest environment and whose culture is near extinction. *People of the Seal* is preceded by short film *Tungijjuq* (7 min), a story about Inuit seal hunting which stars Inuit singer-artist, Tanya Tagaq and produced by award winning filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk (*Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*). **Closing the American Indian Film Festival on Nov. 13**, is the dramatic feature film *Barking Water* (81 min) directed by award- winning director and AIFF favorite Sterlin Harjo (*Four Sheets to the Wind*). The film traces the impromptu journey taken by estranged couple Frankie and Irene as they visit the stations of their fractured relationship and learn the meaning of coming home and what it takes to get there. Actors **Casey Camp- Horinek** and **Richard Ray Whitman**, in attendance for Q&A.

**Other Noteworthy Film Selections:**

**Nov. 7:** \* *Pearl* (117) dir. King Hollis- The true story of Pearl Carter Scott, a daring young Chickasaw girl who became the youngest licensed pilot in U.S. history. Befriended by the famous aviator Wiley Post in the late 1920's, the adventurous twelve- year old Pearl was taught to fly. So trusting and close was her relationship with Post, she was one of the only two people to fly his well-known plane, the *Winnie Mae*. Pearl Carter Scott became one of the pioneering female aviators alongside Amelia Earhart. This film was funded by the Chickasaw Tribe of Oklahoma.

\*Special screening of Peter Bratt's (*Follow Me Home*) powerful second feature film ***La MISSION*** (117min) Set in the colorful, seedy streets of the San Francisco district that bears its name, ***La MISSION*** is a story of healing and transformation among father and son, in a multi-ethnic neighborhood struggling to break the chains of violence. This mesmerizing film is imbued with the curative power of Aztec tradition and stars Benjamin Bratt (*The Cleaner*). Preceding ***La MISSION*** is ***Given to Walk*** (35min) dir. Robert Guthrie, a gritty short film about domestic violence and the power to overcome abuse. \* **Peter Bratt ( *La MISSION*), Benjamin Bratt ( *La MISSION*) and Robert Guthrie( *Given to Walk*)** will be in attendance at the festival for a Q+A after their respective films and will be available for interviews.

**Nov. 8: Jim Thorpe Spotlight – A cinematic look into 20<sup>th</sup> Century's Greatest Athlete**

\****Jim Thorpe, The World's Greatest Athlete*** (60min) dir. Tom Weidinger- Considered the finest athlete of the 20th century, Jim Thorpe was a US Olympic multiple gold medal winner as well as a star of professional football and baseball. He was man who used his amazing physical prowess as a way to affirm his American Indian identity in the face of unrelenting efforts to eradicate Native American culture. In this superb documentary—using old recordings, re-enactments, newsreels and animated photos—brings Thorpe's successful career alive. \* ***JARIN- a fable By Jim, Knute, and Red*** (27min) dir. Myrton Running Wolf - Short film about a present-day tale about legendary Native American athlete Jim Thorpe (Sac-N-Fox) coming back from the past to teach a boy from the reservation on how to play football. \* ***Bright Circle*** (90min) dir. Shawn Kakuk- At the turn of the 20th Century American Indian athletes from Carlisle, Haskell and the earlyNFL were at the forefront of the sporting world. This rich tradition, established in the past by athletes such as Jim Thorpe, is carried on today by the ancestors of those and other incredible athletes including interviewees Bret Favre (Choctaw) and Dan Hampton (Chickasaw) Chicago Bears Hall of Fame Inductee.

**Nov. 10:** \* ***Lost Sparrow***(78min) dir. Chris Billing - Three decades ago, two Crow Indian brothers ran away from home and no one knew why. Their sudden and mysterious deaths sent shockwaves through a tiny upstate New York community. This is their adoptive brother's journey to bring Bobby and Tyler home and confront a painful truth that shattered his family.

**Nov. 11:** \* ***Kissed by Lightning*** (90min)dir. Shelley Niro - Set on Canada's Six Nations Reserve, broken-hearted Mavis (Kateri Walker) tries to piece her life back together after the tragic death of her husband. In an attempt to hold on to a shred of her past, she invites her husband's ex-wife and son to live in her home, while she is relegated to the backyard trailer. Alienating herself from the outside world, Mavis desperately clings to her profession of painting in an effort to extinguish the memories that haunt her. But when an upcoming art exhibition requires Mavis to embark on a road trip, she finds herself faced with the difficult task of letting go. Costarring Eric Schweig (*The Big Eden*). **Co -Presented by the San Francisco Women's Film Festival.**

**Nov. 12:** \* ***The Only Good Indian*** ( 113min) dir. Kevin Willmott - Set in Kansas during the early 1900s, a teenaged Native American boy (Winter Fox) is taken from his family and forced to attend a distant Indian "training" school to assimilate into White society. When he escapes to return his family, Sam Franklin (Wes Studi), a bounty hunter of Cherokee descent, is hired to find and return him to the institution. Franklin, a former Indian scout for the U.S. Army, has renounced his Native heritage and has adopted the White Man's way of life, believing it's the only way for Indians to survive. Along the way, a tragic incident spurs Franklin's longtime nemesis, the famous "Indian Fighter" Sheriff Henry McCoy (J. Kenneth Campbell), to pursue both Franklin and the boy. **Director Kevin Willmott and actor Wes Studi, in attendance for Q&A.**

## Special Events:

### Nov.12– AIFI Panels @ Radisson Hotel, Fisherman’s Wharf

**\*10:00am – “Native American Women vs. Hollywood Stereotypes”.** This panel explores the stereotypes of Native women in Hollywood from the common portrayal of the “Indian Princess” to the modern Native woman today. Panelists include Shirley Cheechoo, Carole Nee-ta-key Marie, Larissa Fasthorse, Kateri Walker and Casey Camp-Horinek.

**\*1pm – CBS** will conduct an intensive actors workshop with CBS VP of Casting, Fern Orenstein. The workshop session will focus on analyzing actors' headshots and offer specific critiques on the principles of acting and casting auditions.

AIFI seminars will be bringing noted industry professionals to San Francisco to teach, inspire and share their knowledge with current and the next generation of media makers. **These programs are free and open to the public. Must Advance Register.**

### Nov. 13- Tribal Touring Program – Theatre 39@Pier39 (Beach St. and The Embarcadero)

The American Indian Film Institute (AIFI) is proud to celebrate its ninth year of youth film programs during this year’s Festival. AIFI is able to engage hundreds of Native youth each year, where aspiring student filmmakers participate in a ten- day long film workshop supported by AIFI’s tribal host partners. This year AIFI’s Tribal Touring Program will showcase youth films from **-Stop the Violence Coalition, Hoopa CA; Yocha –De- He Wintun Nation, Brooks, CA; and United Auburn Indian Community, Auburn CA.**

### Nov. 14 – American Indian Motion Picture Awards Show

AIFI’s American Indian Motion Picture Awards Show, honoring filmmakers and showcasing contemporary Native American talent, will be held on Saturday November 14, 2009 @ the Palace of Fine Arts beginning at 6:00pm. Fourteen awards will be presented including Best Film, Best Actor and Best Documentary. The awards show will include a mix of live entertainment by established and emerging Native artists and performers including:

**Hattie Kauffman (Co-Host):** is the National News correspondent for *The Early Show* based in Los Angeles. An Emmy Award-winning reporter, Kauffman has covered a variety of subjects from breaking news to features on newsmakers to stories on people and places that don't often make headlines. A Pacific Northwest Native, Kauffman became the first Native American journalist to report on a national broadcast in 1989.

**\*Michael Spears (Co-Host):** Michael is a multi-talented actor, hand drum player and singer. Michael's film credits include an earlier role as the child character Otter, in the 1990 Academy-Award-winning film *Dances with Wolves*; a major role in 2005 as "Dog Star" in Steven Spielberg's *Into the West*; and the 2007 Michael Linn film *Imprint* for which he was a Best Actor nominee at the 2007 American Indian Motion Picture Awards. His most recent credit is the feature film *Shadowheart*.

**\*Joanne Shenandoah:** A Grammy Award and 11 time Native American Music award winning artist, Joanne Shenandoah has become one of the most critically acclaimed Native American singers, finding crossover success with her ethereal voice and blend of traditional melodies and contemporary styles.

\***Jana Mashonee:** Lumbee by heritage, contemporary artist through hard work, destiny and the spirits, Jana brings a fresh outlook and exotic style to today's music. Jana refers to her cultural anomaly as "Urban Indian". Her powerful voice, coupled with the sensibilities of pop, R&B, world and gospel music create a compelling new mix. She has received 5 Native American Music Awards.

\* **The Sampson Brothers:** Samsоче and Lumhe Micco Sampson are the youngest of the late Will Sampson (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). They have always been connected to their Native roots through dance. "The Sampson Boys," as many call them, are known for their hoop dance which they perform in unison to create original formations. They will be performing alongside singer Jana Mashonee.

\* **The Plateros:** Hailing from the Navajo Nation, The Plateros merge blues, rock, gospel, and funk with a positive message. Featuring 16-year-old Levi Platero—whose hard-driving exuberance on guitar is nothing short of extraordinary—his father, Murphy, on bass, and cousin, Doug, on drums, they have already earned comparisons to such groups as *Los Lonely Boys* and *Indigenous*.

\***Swil Kanim:** A world - class virtuoso violinist who advocates self-expression to create stronger community. He intertwines his music with storytelling, poetry, and audience interaction. His original compositions are mesmerizing and inspiring to all ages.

\***Star Nayea:** Native American Music Award recipient, singer-song writer Star Nayea is described as "The little lady with the big voice." Raised in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, Star delivers powerful soul with a voice rooted in "Motor City" rock 'n roll. She has recorded and performed with many Native artists, including Robbie Robertson, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Keith Secola, Robert Mirabal, Indigenous, and many others.

\***Laura Ortman:** Classically trained on violin, self taught on guitar in 2006, Laura Ortman is a multi-talented musician that continues to be trailblazer across Indian Country today. She is a member of bands like *Dust Dive Flash*, *Silver Summit*, *Stars Like Fleas* and in 2008 founded *The Coast Orchestra*, the first All-Native American Orchestra.

A complete schedule is available on our website [www.aifisf.com](http://www.aifisf.com). All programs are open to the general public and will require tickets for admission. **Advance Tickets available thru AIFI: 415-554-0525 Visa & Mastercard. On-site tickets available at the following theater venues (on day of show.)** \* Photos available upon request as well as interviews can be arranged\*

**Landmark Embarcadero Center Cinema**  
One Embarcadero Center, Promenade Level  
San Francisco, CA

**Showtimes: Nov. 6- 11**

Matinees begin @ noon (\$5)

\*Box Office matinee tickets are available at 11:00am

Evenings begin @ 7:00pm

\*Box Office evening tickets are available at 5:00pm

(Opening Night \$10)

Evenings (\$7 students & seniors /\$8 general)

**Palace of Fine Arts**

3301 Lyon St. @ Bay St.

San Francisco, CA

**Showtimes: Nov. 12-13**

Evenings begin @ 7:00pm (\$10/8)

**Nov. 14 : Motion Picture Awards**

Show begin @6:00pm

Awards Show tickets are available

@ Box Office

(\$20door/\$15adv./\$15 students & seniors)