

# We Still Live Here Âs Nutayuneân

a film by Anne Makepeace

*"There is nothing I know of  
that's anything like the  
Wampanoag case."*

- Noam Chomsky



Produced, Written and Directed by ANNE MAKEPEACE  
Edited by MARY LAMPSON and ANNE MAKEPEACE  
Animation by RUTH LINGFORD Assistant Producer JENNIFER WESTON  
Cinematography by STEPHEN MCCARTHY and ALLIE HUMENUK  
Additional Photography by CRAIG MARSDEN BRIAN DOWLEY and AUSTIN de BESCHE  
Music by JOEL GOODMAN

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PRESS MATERIALS  
for  
**WE STILL LIVE HERE**  
*Âs Nutayuneân*

a film by  
ANNE MAKEPEACE

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50 words, 300 words, 1000 words

Boston Globe front page article about  
Jessie Little Doe Baird winning the MacArthur Prize  
September 2010

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## **We Still Live Here - *Âs Nutayuneân***

### **PRESS RELEASE**

We Still Live Here, a new documentary by award-winning filmmaker Anne Makepeace, tells the unprecedented story of the return of the Wampanoag language, a language that was silenced for more than a century. At the heart of the film is an engaging, passionate, often funny, always entertaining ‘character,’ Jessie Little Doe Baird. Indomitable, droll, resolute, earthy, brilliant, and humble, she is a marvel to watch as she finds her way from the tiny Indian enclave of Mashpee, Massachusetts, to becoming a celebrated linguist honored with a MacArthur ‘genius’ award in 2010 for her unprecedented work in bringing her own Wampanoag language back home.

The Wampanoag Indians live mainly on Cape Cod and Martha’s Vineyard. Their ancestors ensured the survival of the first English settlers in America, and lived to regret it. Celebrated every Thanksgiving as “the Indians” who saved the Pilgrims from starvation, and then largely forgotten, the Wampanoag are now saying loud and clear, in their Native tongue, “*Âs nutayuneân*,” – “We still live here.”

Like many Native American stories, We Still Live Here begins with a vision. In 1994, Jessie Little Doe, a young Wampanoag mother and social worker, began having recurring dreams: familiar-looking people from another time addressing her in an incomprehensible language. Jessie was perplexed and a little annoyed– why couldn’t they speak English? Later, she came to believe that they were speaking Wampanoag, a language no one had used for more than a century. These events sent her on an odyssey that would uncover hundreds old documents written in Wampanoag, lead her to a Masters in Linguistics at MIT with Noam Chomsky, despite the fact that she had never been to college, and result in her accomplishing something that had never been done before – bringing a language that had had no speakers for a century alive again in an American Indian community. Her now six-year-old daughter, Mae Alice, is the first Native speaker in a century.

We Still Live Here interweaves the present-day story of Jessie and other Wampanoags reclaiming their language with historical events that silenced the language and obliterated much of their culture – epidemics, missionary pressures, land loss, and the indenture of Native children. Ruth Lingford’s powerful animation illuminates and deepens the emotional impact of these devastating events, even as the contemporary story brings a new and surprising conclusion to the story and a hopeful vision of the future.

## A Brief History of the Film

By Anne Makepeace

I met Jessie Little Doe Baird in 2006 while producing the first of a five-part series for WGBH on Native Americans, called We Shall Remain. Part 1 focused on relations between the Wampanoag and English settlers, beginning with the arrival of the Pilgrims in 1620 through a devastating war that broke out fifty years later.

On first meeting Jessie, I was amazed by her story and by the unprecedented work she was doing with her people's forgotten language. When my project with WGBH came to an end (a long story in itself), I realized that the film I really wanted to make was the story of Jessie bringing back the language, and at the same time to reveal something of the dark history that had forced the language underground, and I wanted to tell this story as much as possible from the perspective of Jessie and other Wampanoags.

I began filming at the Aquinnah Pow Wow on Martha's Vineyard in September 2007, before I had raised any funds for the production. Fortunately the Sundance Documentary Fund awarded the project a development grant that Fall, and, and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities also awarded a development grant in the spring of 2008.

Over the next three years, I filmed with Jessie and other Wampanoag in their homes and their language classes, their Total Immersion language camp, and in many other situations. I also worked with Noam Chomsky, who had mentored Jessie at MIT, and with Norvin Richards, another MIT linguist who continues to work with Jessie to create teaching tools and a Wampanoag dictionary that now has 12,000 entries. I also filmed 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Wampanoag documents, including the Wampanoag Bible published at Harvard in 1662, the first Bible published in the Western Hemisphere. Unbeknownst to the missionary who created this Bible for the purpose of converting the Wampanoag to Christianity, his work would become the Rosetta Stone for bringing the Wampanoag language and culture back home.

In the fall of 2008, I was very fortunate to receive fellowships from both the Guggenheim Foundation and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study in support of the film. These fellowships and a production grant from the Sundance Documentary Fund enabled me to complete 90% of production by the end of 2009. Funding from the National Science Foundation and from ITVS, the independent arm of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, released post-production funds in July 2010, enabling me to hire an editor and finish the film just before Thanksgiving 2010.

Interview for the Santa Barbara Independent  
with Anne Makepeace, Director

We Still Live Here – *Ás Nutayuneân*

**Q: How did you find out about this revival?**

I grew up in New England and, like most Americans, I had never heard of Wampanoag, did not know that they were “the Indians” who helped the Pilgrims to survive, and was completely unaware that any of these Indians still lived on their homelands in Massachusetts. Then, in 2006, I was hired by the American Experience series at WGBH to produce the first of a five part series about Native Americans called We Shall Remain. My part was about the Wampanoag and the first English settlers in New England – the Pilgrims (and later Puritans) in 17th Century Massachusetts. It was while working on this project that I got to know Jessie Little Doe Baird, her family, and other members of the Wampanoag Nation. Learning about their history was a complete revelation to me, and I was amazed by Jessie’s story and the work the community was doing to bring back their language. When things fell apart with WGBH, I decided that the film I really wanted to make was the unprecedented story of the resurrection of the Wampanoag language.

**Q: What drew you personally to the material?**

I have always been interested in Native Americans, and some of my films, notably Ishi the Last Yahi and Coming to Light, are on Native American subject. Jessie’s story of resurrection, especially after learning about their devastating and largely unknown history, drew me so powerfully, partly I think because of my own background - I am descended from those Puritan settlers who co-opted Wampanoag lands or worse - and partly because of the intensely passionate dedication and commitment that Jessie and others have for bringing their language home. I think I was also drawn by the almost Jungian shape of this story, with a hero(ine) inspired by a dream that sets her on a path of adventure and self-discovery, and it also follows the structure of all folklore in a Jungian archetypal narrative – a journey in search of truth, a descent into hell (MIT wasn’t exactly hell but academia was extremely difficult), the meeting of guides (Noam Chomsky and Jessie’s adviser Ken Hale) who help her overcome obstacles and find the sought-after key to knowledge, and the returning home with a deeper understanding and a desire to reveal to others new knowledge that will transform their world.

**Q: Why is bringing back dead languages an important trend in North America and, perhaps, elsewhere?**

Languages around the world are disappearing at an alarming rate. Here in the United States, half of the Native American languages still spoken could be lost within a decade. As Noam Chomsky says in We Still Live Here, “A language is not just words. It’s a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It’s all embodied in a language.” Fortunately, language revitalization programs are springing up in Native communities across the country in a dedicated effort to stave off the disappearance of their languages. Research has shown that language revitalization is a key empowerment tool for Native American

communities. Across the country, where Native American children know their language, they are more likely to use their education and talents to enrich their communities. This translates into better-off Native American communities that are determining their own futures. As one indigenous language teacher put it, “Our language is the number-one source of our soul, our pride, our being, our strength, and our identity.”

**Q: Can a lost language ever truly come back? Or is the process just as important?**

I think in the case of the Wampanoag language, the language truly is coming back. The great irony in their story, of course, is that the key to bringing it back, their Rosetta Stone, is a Bible that was translated into Wampanoag and published at Harvard in 1663 in order to convert New England Indians to Christianity and force them to give up their traditional ways, including their language. Without this translation, I don't think they could have succeeded in bringing back the language, despite the existence of hundreds of documents – letters, deeds, petitions, wills etc – written phonetically in Wampanoag in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Bible has provided the side-by-side translation from which Jessie and linguist Norvin Richards have created a dictionary that now has more than 11,000 words.

For tribes that don't have either Native speakers or this kind of resource, the task is daunting if not impossible.

Of course pronunciation is an issue when there are no speakers. The good news for the Wampanoag is that there are still speakers of related Algonquian dialects, notably Delaware, providing a basis for pronunciation. As Noam Chomsky, Jessie, and others have said, their pronunciation is as close or closer to 17th century Wampanoag as ours is to 17th century English.

**Q: What do you know of the Chumash people's effort to do the same thing? Is there any connection between the two?**

I know that the Chumash are working to bring back their language, and that they have launched a language immersion apprenticeship program that has been very effective. Fortunately, their language was very well documented by linguist/ ethnographer John P. Harrington in the early 1900s when there were still fluent speakers. More recently, a linguist named Dr. Richard Applegate worked with the Chumash on the Harrington materials to create a dictionary and grammar, and began teaching the language in 2003, inspiring Nakia Zavalía, the Cultural Director for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash, to launch an immersion-based language apprentice program that now has many students. I will learn more when I visit their language program on January 27th, and I hope that many from the tribe will come to the first screening of We Still Live Here at the Santa Barbara Art Museum on January 29th, and perhaps add their voices to the discussion.

**Q: The story is full of irony in that the help of a white man was critical to the success and that the old bibles are repositories of so much information. How are those facts accepted by the people? Did you have any further insight into those ironies?**

As Jessie says in the film, she and others in her community believe that “... those that were involved in the breaking of the circle of language have a part in closing that circle again.” By this she means that present generations have the possibility and the responsibility to heal what

has happened in the past. So it isn't ironic to her that descendants of those who took away the language are helping to bring it back, or that the Bible created to destroy Wampanoag culture has become a repository of it.

One thing that has always interested me about many Native American cultures is the perception of time as circular rather than linear, and the deeply held belief that one's ancestors are always present. Most Native Americans I have been around refer to their forebears as relatives rather than ancestors; for them, they are still with us.

***Q: It's also interesting how racially different the Wampanoag people look. Some look black, others Hispanic, others Arab, others white. Did that strike you too?***

Yes, of course. After 400 years of contact, there has been a lot of intermarriage, but the amazing thing is that the two Wampanoag communities that I worked with are still on their ancestral homelands, in Mashpee on Cape Cod and Aquinnah on Martha's Vineyard. All of the Wampanoag I met can trace their genealogy back to their 17th century ancestors.

An interesting historical fact is that in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Wampanoag's male population was depleted; in order to make a living after their lands had been co-opted, they became whalers or soldiers in colonial wars, often never to return. Conversely, the African American population in New England was mostly male. The Mashpee Wampanoag put out a proclamation after the Dred Scott Decision offering refuge to escaping slaves and freedmen, and there were many marriages between black men and Native women during that time.

Here are a few quotes from Wampanoags in my short piece about the racial issue:

Jessie Little Doe Baird: We're not racehorses, and we're not dogs with pedigrees, we're human beings with communities, and we define who we are, we define who we are

Eva Blake: We may not live the way that we lived 300 years ago but we do live, you know, and we may have intermarried and we may have mixed and that doesn't negate anything that has been passed on to us as Wampanoag people.

Tobias Vanderhoop: There are people who even ask me well are you Indian? You don't look like the Indians I know. Well ok, fine, I don't look like your stereotypical Indian who's riding on a horse with a bonnet in the plains, and I'm not from that anyway but I was raised with the culture and values that come from here. Yes, I have many different cultures that are in my blood, but I wasn't raised understanding or knowing about them. I was raised understanding and knowing that I come from Gay Head (aka Aquinnah on Martha's Vineyard) and I'm a Gay Head Indian and that who I am.

***Q: What do you hope viewers take away from your film?***

I hope viewers will be as awed by this heroic story as I am, as devastated by the historical revelations as I was when I learned them, and as moved by the resilience, generosity, fortitude, and humor of Wampanoag people as I continue to be. I also hope that seeing the film will lead to an understanding among non-Natives of why language preservation and revitalization are so important; and that it will inspire Native Americans who are struggling to learn their languages and keep them alive with renewed hope and determination.

## CREW BIOS

[ANNE MAKEPEACE](#), **WRITER, PRODUCER, DIRECTOR**, has been making award-winning independent films for twenty years. Her most recent film, I.M. PEI, BUILDING CHINA MODERN, aired nationally on PBS/American Masters last March. Her previous film, RAIN IN A DRY LAND, premiered at SBIFF, won [the Full Frame Working Films Award](#), and was broadcast as the lead show on the acclaimed PBS series POV [in 2007](#). Before that, ROBERT CAPA IN LOVE AND WAR, premiered at Sundance and was broadcast PBS' American Masters, the BBC, and many other foreign stations. The film won a national prime time Emmy and the Voice for Humanity Award at Telluride MountainFilm. COMING TO LIGHT, Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indians, was short-listed for an Academy Award, premiered at Sundance 2000, and was broadcast on American Masters/PBS in 2001 as well as on Arte and other foreign stations. The film won the O'Connor Award for Best Film from the American Historical Association, an Award of Excellence from the American Anthropological Association, a Gold Hugo award from Chicago, Best Documentary at Telluride, and many other awards. Her personal documentary, BABY IT'S YOU, premiered at Sundance 1998, screened at South by Southwest, was the lead show on POV's 1998 season, and was broadcast on Channel 4's True Stories series. Baby It's You also screened at the Whitney Biennial 2000. Makepeace has also written, produced, and/or directed many dramatic films. She has twice been a writer/director fellow at the Sundance Institute, and served on the Sundance 2001 Film Festival's documentary jury.

**STEPHEN McCARTHY, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY** has shot many award-winning films. Among his credits are Anne Makepeace's film Rain in a Dry Land, Audubon, directed by Larry Hott for American Masters; Banished, for Marco Williams (Sundance 2007); African American Lives with Henry Louis Gates, and The Boy in the Bubble for American Experience. Stephen also shot verité footage for my most recent film, Rain in a Dry Land. He has the gift of winning immediate trust from the people he is filming, an extremely important quality for this project, and has already won the confidence of Jessie and others in the Language Reclamation Project. He is incredibly versatile - a terrific verité shooter, skilled at lighting and shooting interviews, and also known for his creative, artistic work as a director of photography of impressionistic dramatic scenes. All of these qualities make him perfect for this film, and the great news is that he is based in Boston and therefore local for this project.

**ALLIE HUMENUK, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**, is an award-winning filmmaker and Emmy nominated cinematographer whose short films have been seen nationally and internationally at museums, film festivals and on television. She is primarily known for her work as a cinematographer. Her clients include PBS, MTV, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Front Line, CBC and many independent producers. For several years she taught film and video production at Harvard University. Currently, she continues to freelance as a Cinematographer. She is also the Executive Producer at Vida Health Communications, Inc. where she makes public health videos about women's health and childhood development. "Shadow of the House" is her first feature length documentary.

**MARY LAMPSON, EDITOR**, is an award-winning independent documentary filmmaker and editor. Lampson co-edited the academy-award winning documentary "Harlan County, USA" and worked as an editor with Emile de Antonio, Ricky Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker, Barbara Kopple and, most recently, with Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar on Lion in the House, and with Anne Makepeace on Rain in a Dry Land. Lampson has also worked in the dramatic format. Her film "Until She Talks" was produced independently and aired on the PBS series American Playhouse. "Until She Talks" won Best Film Made for Television at the Mannheim Film Festival, a CINE Golden Eagle, a Blue Ribbon at the American Film Festival and Best Short Dramatic Film at the Athens Film Festival. She has produced over 25 short live action films for Sesame Street.

**JOEL GOODMAN** is an award-winning composer whose original composition credits include Rain in a Dry Land, "Sister Rose's Passion" (2005 Academy Award Nomination); "The Collector of Bedford Street" (2004 Academy Award Nomination) and "Children Underground" (2002 Academy Award Nomination) for such producers as HBO, Disney, GreenStreet Films, Good Machine, Anonymous Content, TriggerStreet Films, Double A Films, Maysles Films, PBS, Hybrid Films, Working Pictures and Cypress Films. He has also worked with an impressive array of distinguished directors and producers, including Wong Kar Wai, Kevin Spacey, Albert Maysles, Andrew Jarecki, John Penotti, Barbara Kopple, Susan Froemke, Stephen Ives and Fisher Stevens. Joel's original music for television has included "The Staircase" (ABC); "Brooklyn North Homicide" (Court TV); "Seabiscuit" (American Experience/PBS); and "Robert Capa: In Love and War (American Masters/PBS); as well as Emmy Award winning shows "Born Rich" (HBO) and "Reporting America At War (PBS).

## ANNE MAKEPEACE

### FILMOGRAPHY

- Writer/Director **WE STILL LIVE HERE - *Âs Nutayuneân*** completed November 2010.  
 Producer 2010 Funded by Sundance Documentary Fund, CPB/ITVS, NSF, LEF, MFH, et al. PBS broadcast November 2011. Recently chosen to represent the United States abroad in the American Documentary Showcase.
- Writer/Director **I. M. PEI, Building China Modern**, feature documentary about the premier architect of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, completed 2010, broadcast on PBS/American Masters on March 31, 2010.
- Writer/Director **RAIN IN A DRY LAND**, feature documentary about Somali Bantu refugees. Emmy nomination; lead show on PBS/POV 2007. CINE Golden Eagle and many festival awards, including the Full Frame Working Films Award for the film most likely to effect social change.  
 Producer 2006
- Writer/Director **ROBERT CAPA IN LOVE AND WAR**, American Masters Feature documentary about the legendary war photographer. Sundance premiere 2003, Lincoln Center March 2003. National Prime Time Emmy Award, 2003. Voice for Humanity Award, Telluride MountainFilm, 2003.  
 Producer 2003
- Writer/Director **COMING TO LIGHT, Edward S. Curtis and The North American Indians**, Sundance 2000 premiere. Theatrical release through 7<sup>th</sup> Art Releasing. Academy Award shortlist for best feature documentary 2001. Numerous awards (see next page) .Funded by the NEH, the NEA, WNET/ American Masters, and CPB. PBS broadcast April 2001.  
 Producer 2000
- Writer/Director **BABY, IT'S YOU**, personal documentary about the filmmaker's quest for a child. Funded by ITVS. Sundance Documentary Competition 1998. Lead show on P.O.V. 1998. 2000 Whitney Biennial.; Channel 4, U.K. 1999.  
 Producer 1998
- Screenwriter, **ISHI THE LAST YAH!**, feature documentary narrated by Linda Hunt. Best American Independent Film, Munich Film Festival; Emmy nomination, many awards (see next page) PBS broadcast 1995-1996.  
 1995
- Writer/Director, **NIGHT DRIVING**, 35mm film for Showtime Networks, Inc., starring William Sadler. Dramatic film about an Amerasian girl and a visionary drifter lost in America. Gold Award, Houston International Film Festival. CINE Golden Eagle. Showtime broadcast 1993.  
 1993
- Screenwriter, **THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD**, American Playhouse Theatrical Feature, released in theaters 1991, PBS broadcast 1992-97, highest American Playhouse's ratings. Many awards and festivals.  
 1991
- Writer/Director, **WHISTLE IN THE WIND** aired USA Network, Thames Television et al. CINE Golden Eagle  
 1987

Writer/Director, **MOONCHILD**, docudrama about the Moonies. Aired on HBO,  
 Producer Bravo, PBS, Channel 4 London, ZDF Germany, ABC Australia,  
 1985 Danish and Swedish TV. Many awards and festival screenings.

Anne Makepeace's films have been screened at festivals from Sundance to Munich, and have been broadcast on PBS, Showtime, Bravo, HBO, USA Network, Channel 4 (UK), ABC Australia, ZDF Germany, and Thames Television (UK) and screened at the Whitney Biennial, the Smithsonian, the Musée de l'Homme, the Museum of the American Indian, as well as many other museums, schools, colleges, and movie theaters around the country. Her work has been funded by the Pulitzer Foundation, the Sundance Documentary Fund, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS, the NEA, the NEH, American Masters, Showtime Networks, HBO, PBS, A&E, and the American Film Institute. She has twice been a writer/director fellow at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute. She has been a resident of the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio center, the MacDowell Colony, and Blue Mountain Center, and served on the Sundance 2001 Film Festival's documentary jury.

### **AWARDS**

National Prime Time Emmy Award (*Robert Capa in Love and War*)  
 Finalist, 2001 Academy Awards, (*Coming to Light*) (one of 12 on short list)  
 Full Frame Film Festival's Working Films Award (*Rain in a Dry Land*)  
 American Historical Association O'Connor Film Prize (*Coming to Light*)  
 2000 Whitney Biennial (*Baby It's You*)  
 Sundance Feature Documentary Competition (*Baby It's You, Coming to Light, Capa*)  
 Six CINE Golden Eagles (*Coming to Light, Baby It's You, Ishi, Night Driving, Moonchild, Capa*)  
 Two Gold Awards, Houston Film Festival (*Coming to Light, Night Driving*)  
 Two Gold Hugos, Chicago International Film Festival (*Moonchild, Ishi*)  
 Gold Hugo, Chicago International Television Festival (*Coming to Light*)  
 Gold Plaque, Chicago International Television Festival (*Baby It's You*)  
 Three Gold Awards, Cindy Competition (*Coming to Light, Baby It's You, Moonchild*)  
 Two Wrangler Awards, National Cowboy Hall of Fame (*Thousand Pieces of Gold, Ishi*)  
 Winner, SXSW Documentary Competition, 1998 (*Baby It's You*)  
 Best Documentary, Telluride Mountain Film Festival (*Coming to Light*)  
 Best American Independent Film, Munich Film Festival (*Ishi*)  
 Paramount Award for Best Feature, National Educational Film Festival (*Moonchild*)  
 Best Documentary, American Indian Film Festival (*Ishi*)

### **OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Author, Edward Curtis, Coming to Light, published by National Geographic 2001.

Writer/Director, Chanticleer Films' Discovery Program (NIGHT DRIVING) 1992-1993

AFI Directing Workshop for Women, 1991, Directed Wildest Dreams with Rebecca Jenkins and William Petersen

**MEMBERSHIPS:** DGA, WGA, IDA, IFP, FAF, AFI

## SYNOPSIS OF VARYING LENGTHS

### One Liner – 50 Words

Celebrated every Thanksgiving as “the Indians” who saved the Pilgrims, then largely forgotten, the Wampanoag of Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard, spurred on by their intrepid Wampanoag linguist and MacArthur honoree Jessie Little Doe Baird, are saying loud and clear, in their Native tongue, “*Âs Nutayuneân*,” – “We still live here.”

### 300 Words

We Still Live Here - *Âs Nutayuneân* tells the amazing story of the return of the Wampanoag language, a language that was silenced for more than a century. The Wampanoag Indians’ forebears ensured the survival of the first English settlers in America – the ‘Pilgrims,’ and lived to regret it. A century ago, after nearly 300 years of contact, their language virtually disappeared. Now, spurred on by an indomitable Wampanoag woman named Jessie Little Doe Baird, recent winner of a MacArthur genius award for her unprecedented linguistic work, the Wampanoag are bringing their language and their culture back to life.

Like many Native American stories, this one begins with a vision. Years ago, Jessie Little Doe, a young Wampanoag social worker, began having recurring dreams: familiar-looking people from another time addressing her in an incomprehensible language. Jessie was perplexed and a little annoyed– why couldn’t they speak English? Later, she came to believe that they were speaking Wampanoag, a language no one had used for more than a century. These events sent her on an odyssey that would uncover hundreds old documents written in Wampanoag, lead her to a Masters in Linguistics at MIT with Noam Chomsky, and result in her accomplishing something that had never been done before – bringing a language with no Native speakers alive again. Her six-year-old daughter, Mae Alice, is the first Native speaker in a century.

The film interweaves contemporary verité scenes of language reclamation with commentary and expressionistic animation that reveal dark moments in New England history– epidemics, missionary pressures, land loss, and the indenture of Native children - that nearly obliterated Wampanoag culture Ruth Lingford’s devastatingly powerful animation provides powerful visuals as Wampanoags recount these horrific events.

The film ends on a hopeful note, with an image of Jessie’s youngest daughter, the first Native speaker in a century.

## 1000 Words

*We Still Live Here - Âs Nutayuneân* tells the amazing story of the return of the Wampanoag language, a language that was silenced for more than a century. The Wampanoag still live on their homelands in Southeastern Massachusetts. Their forebears ensured the survival of the first English settlers in America, the ‘Pilgrims,’ and lived to regret it. A century ago, their language virtually disappeared. Spurred on by an indomitable Wampanoag woman named Jessie Littledoe Baird, who just won a MacArthur genius award for her unprecedented work, the Wampanoag are bringing their language and their culture back to life.

Like many Native American stories, this one begins with a vision. Years ago, Jessie Littledoe, an intrepid Wampanoag social worker, describes having recurring dreams: familiar-looking people from another time speaking urgently in a language she couldn’t understand. Jessie was perplexed and a little annoyed— why couldn’t they speak English? Later, it dawned on her that they were speaking Wampanoag, a language no one had used for more than a century. These events sent her on a journey that would uncover hundreds of documents written in Wampanoag, led her to a Masters in Linguistics at MIT with Noam Chomsky, and resulted in her accomplishing something that had never been done before – bringing a language with no native speakers alive again in an American Indian community.

Jessie never intended to revive a dead language; she just wanted to understand the people in her dream. While driving home from the Martha’s Vineyard ferry one day, she passed a sign to Sippewissett and realized that the words in her dream sounded like place names she had seen all her life –Popponeset, Cotuit, Cataumet, Pocasset. Wampanoag words. When she told the Tribal Chairman about her conundrum, he showed her documents in the tribal archives written in Wampanoag. The sepia handwriting with its elegant curls and emphatic repetitions spoke volumes. Jessie had never known that her ancestors were literate in their language. She soon discovered that Wampanoag was the first American Indian language ever written down.

She shared her discoveries at community meetings, and soon there was a groundswell of enthusiasm as people searched their trunks and safes and local archives. Hundreds of documents surfaced. The Wampanoag wanted to bring the language back, but they had no way to do it. Jessie had no idea that the key lay in, of all places, a King James Bible.

In 1655, a missionary named John Eliot brought two young Wampanoags from Martha’s Vineyard to Harvard’s new Indian College to translate the Bible into their language, which he called

Massachusetts. Trading on Native people's very real fears of losing their land, falling under attack, or succumbing to rampant epidemics, Eliot convinced hundreds of Indians throughout Massachusetts to move into 'Praying Towns' where they were expected to renounce their Native ways, wear English clothes, castigate their children, go to church, and subscribe to the Puritan work ethic. He could not have imagined that centuries later, his Indian Bible would become a key to Wampanoag cultural revival.

As Jessie searched for clues, she remembered dusty pages of an 'Indian Bible' in the Mashpee Museum. Digging deeper, she discovered that there were eleven copies of Eliot's Bible still in existence, all in archives accessible only to scholars. Then in 1995 a mysterious letter arrived at tribal headquarters: an invitation to apply for a research fellowship at MIT. Despite the fact that she had never been to college, Jessie applied. In her inimitable style, she describes her interview with the admissions panel in Cambridge: "So there they are, sitting there staring at me, and they ask me what I'm most afraid of. I told them, I've never been on a bus and I have no idea how to get around Boston. One of them said, 'This isn't Boston.' And I thought oh, so it's like that is it? OK. I mean, for me anything north of Plymouth is just one big Boston."

They gave her the fellowship. Shortly after she registered, she found a copy of Eliot's Bible in the linguistics library on the floor above her office at MIT. This was a watershed moment; having access to such a document written in both English and Wampanoag enabled her to put sentences side by side, and to decipher the meanings of words and how the language worked. As she immersed herself in this daunting task, she discovered the 17<sup>th</sup> century Wampanoag translators' surprising yet familiar ways of thinking revealed in their interpretations of alien concepts like sin and redemption.

Halfway through her research fellowship, Noam Chomsky recognized the importance of Jessie's work and invited her to join the department. That was ten years ago. Jessie received her Masters in Linguistics in 2000, and has been teaching Wampanoag to her communities ever since. Last year she instituted total immersion classes at, of all places, Otis Airforce base. She and her husband are raising their youngest daughter, Mae Alice, with Wampanoag as her first language.

In telling the story of Jessie and this unprecedented feat, the documentary will raise issues of race and class, language and culture, Native history and human rights, while shedding new light on the past and revealing the richness and complexity of the Native cultures in our midst. Jessie's story can serve as an inspiration for cultural revitalization, and a model of what a person with limited means can accomplish in the larger world.

In the film, Jessie's journey and her work with her community unfolds in contemporary verité scenes, while experimental animation exposes the dark history of New England and how the language was lost. These scenes include epidemics that decimated Native communities, extreme pressures by Puritan missionaries and their henchmen, land loss, and the indenture of Native children. Ruth Lingford's powerful animation provides devastatingly beautiful images as Wampanoags recount these horrific events.

We Still Live Here ends on a hopeful note, with an image of Jessie's little daughter racing around a pow wow on Martha's Vineyard. Mae is the first Native speaker of Wampanoag in a century.

# The Boston Globe

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MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

Jessie Little Doe Baird has been awarded \$500,000.

## 'Genius grant' a boost to linguist as she revives a native language

By Laura Collins-Hughes  
GLOBE STAFF

First she cried. Then she found out about the money and nearly fainted.

Jessie Little Doe Baird was overcome at the news that her 17 years of linguistic work — resurrecting the language the Wampanoag people spoke and wrote until at least the mid-1800s — had landed her a MacArthur Fellows "genius grant" of \$500,000. The 23 recipients of this year's John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation grants, including five others from New England, were announced this morning.

When the foundation notified Baird, 46, a Mashpee linguist and the program director of

the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, two weeks ago of the fellowship, the honor brought her to tears. As far as she knows, her 6-year-old daughter is the only child since the 19th century raised from birth to speak Wampanoag (or, in that language, Wôpanâak).

The 2010 MacArthur Fellows from New England are an eclectic mix: typeface designer Matthew Carter, 72, of Cambridge; Harvard Law School historian Annette Gordon-Reed, 51, of Cambridge; stone carver Nicholas Benson, 46, of Newport, R.I.; Massachusetts Institute of Technology quantum astrophysicist Nergis Mavalvala, 42, of

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### COMMON WORDS DERIVED FROM THE WAMPANOAG LANGUAGE

**Pumpkin** Pôhpukun (*pronounced ponh-pu-kun*):  
Grows forth round

**Moccasin** Mahkus (*mah-kus*): Covers the whole foot

SOURCE: Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project

**Skunk** Sukôk (*su-konk*): Ejects body fluid

**Moose** M8s (*moos*): Moose

**Powwow** Pawâw (*pa-waaw*): Is healing/heals someone

# Linguist is awarded 'genius grant'

► **MACARTHUR**  
Continued from Page A1

Cambridge; musician and music educator Sebastian Ruth, 35, of Providence; and Baird.

Baird, one of the principal authors of a developing 10,000-word Wampanoag-English dictionary, does not view her personal role in reviving the language as critical. Instead, she talks about the benefits of being able to speak the language of her ancestors. "The opportunity to hear what my fifth great-grandfather had to say, even though he's gone, because he wrote it down, really is a powerful motivation," she said.

She hopes to spend some of the money to hire an artist to illustrate some of the children's books she has written in Wampanoag.

"I think that the work would've happened with or without me," Baird said over the weekend, between sessions of certifying volunteer instructors

to teach Wampanoag in community classes at all levels around the state. "We have a prophecy about a time when language would go away from the people and a time when language would come back home to the people." As she sees it, she is merely "along for this ride."

The ride began in 1993, when Baird had a series of dreams in which people spoke to her in a tongue she could not understand. At the time, she was working in human services on Cape Cod. But the dreams, which she grew convinced were of her ancestors speaking Wampanoag, pulled her toward a new interest in language. That's when she founded the Wópanáak Language Reclamation Project.

In 1996, determined to acquire some training in order to work on the dictionary, Baird left her job at the Community Action Committee of Hyannis to begin a one-year research fellowship at MIT. She did not have an undergraduate degree, but she did have a lifelong fascination with patterns, which, she said, are what linguistics is all about.

She fell in love with the science. Soon, however, she realized that in order for the language project — a collaborative effort of the Assonet, Mashpee, Aquinnah, and Herring Pond Wampanoag communities — to get funding, it would need someone with a credential in linguistics, specifically in the Algonquian family of languages, to which about 40 Native American languages belong.

"So then the question becomes, where do you find an Al-

gonquian linguist that's going to stay in your community for many, many years?" said Baird, who is the project's program director. "You have to make your own."

She applied to MIT's graduate program in linguistics, using her fellowship research as part of her application, and was admitted. She studied there with the late scholar Kenneth Hale, collaborated with him on the dictionary, and received her master's degree in 2000.

Born and raised in Mashpee, Baird views it as "every Wampanoag person's birthright to have their language of heritage," a language that she said has "been spoken here for at least 10,000 years."

According to Baird, her ancestors were "the first American Indian people to use an alphabetic writing system," and the first Bible published on this continent — a key document in her research — was printed in 1663 in Wampanoag.

After English missionaries arrived on this continent, the Wampanoag people were quick to realize the power of the written word, Baird said, especially to resolve land disputes with the Europeans. "And so Wampanoag people started to record land transfers, wills, personal letters," she said. The result is what she called "the largest collection of native written documents on the continent."

But there are no documents from the second half of the 19th century, which to Baird suggests that Wampanoag disappeared then. Much of her task in reconstructing it as a written and spo-

ken language is a kind of detective work.

"There was no standardized spelling for English, and there was no such thing as a dictionary," she said. "So the rule of the day was spell a word any way you like. And Wampanoag people started the same tradition."

**Jessie Little Doe Baird wanted to speak the language of her ancestors.**

Other Algonquian languages that are still spoken, such as Cree and Passamaquoddy, are especially useful for figuring out pronunciation. "If I'm not sure of my vowel in a particular syllable, or my consonant even, then I can appeal to Passamaquoddy and see what's going on with that word," she said. "I can say, 'Yes, I was right. That's the vowel we want in this spot' or 'Oh, no, I missed the boat. It's actually a long A instead of a short A.'"

How the MacArthur fellowship will aid her work is a new question for Baird to ponder. The grant money is paid out over five years, and the fellows may do with it what they wish.

So far, Baird has a long list of possible uses, including giving some of it to the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe's language department, buying audio equipment, and getting help with interactive software to produce a distance-

learning curriculum.

The money planning and Wampanoag language said.

"Your one person," she said, "lay on your back and left something that wasn't and I left my better place to."

The others: Fellow school physiotherapist Abo-Shaer, 33, a marine biologist Bird, 34, of Cape Cod medical clinic 40, of Melrose; geneticist Carl 35, of Stanford; and physicist David C. York, biophysicist 30, of Pasadena; and biologist Sha 43, of Chicago.

Also, fiction writer Michael Ica, N.Y.; jazz pianist Jason M. York; sign language interpreter Padden, 55, of Los Angeles; author Emmanuel Sa. Calif.; author, producer David Baltimore; and specialist De Berkeley, Cal. Marla Spivak, sculptor Eliza Atlanta.

*Collins-Hughes, collins-hughes*