



AIATSIS

Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

MEDIA RELEASE

Worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present

Friday 3 April 2009

First Australian Screening of 'Firekeepers' at AIATSIS

Canberrans are invited to the inaugural Australian screening of 'Firekeepers', a documentary which explores the struggle for identity of the Indigenous peoples of Scandinavia's Sapmi region, on Wednesday 8 April 2009.

'Firekeepers' captures the renewed awareness of the 'Yoik', a musical and lyrical form sung by Saami people since time immemorial. This practice has been rejuvenated by the band 'Adjágas' – this name meaning 'the state between sleep and awakening'. The documentary follows young Adjágas yoikers Sara Marielle Gaup and Lawra Somby from the performance arena to their homes, revealing how music has been an important linking force to issues of colonization, identity, spirituality and their endangered language.

"The post-colonial traces of cultural assimilation inhabit the mind of several generations, to the extent of producing self-censorship, which is the most insidious way of silencing one's desires and difference," tells Director Rosella Ragazzi. "In this film we wanted to show how a dialogue among generations is possible, and what kind of untold stories can create new taboos. This film provoked much empathy among other First Nation people's around the world, in a way that we had not foreseen, for we made it mainly for an audience knowing Sápmi."

Since its first screening in Tromsø, North of Norway in September 2007, 'Firekeepers' has screened in more than 30 venues across the United States, Scandinavia, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific. The film's first screening in Australia will take place at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in partnership with Sonar Film and the Research School of Humanities, Australian National University. The screening is part of AIATSIS lunchtime seminar series, which is free and open to the public.

'Firekeepers' is directed by Rosella Ragazzi, in collaboration with Britt Kramvig, the protagonists and other visual anthropologists from Sapmi. Ms Ragazzi is a temporary visiting scholar at the Research School of Humanities and the Australian National University. She is a Research Fellow for the Department of Cultural Sciences and the Sami Ethnographic Unit at the University of Tromsø Museum, Norway.

Sapmi is the Indigenous name for the Sami (Lapp) imagined Nation. Sapmi is the result of a political Indigenous movement in the Scandinavian region where Sami people have dwelt for many thousands of years. Sapmi borders Norway, Finland, Sweden and up to the Kola peninsula in Northern Russia. Of the remaining seven Sami languages still spoken, some such as Southern Sami have only 200 speakers.

What: Introduction by Director, Rosella Ragazzi followed by screening of her documentary 'Firekeepers'

When: 12.20pm – 1.30pm Wednesday 8 April 2009

Where: Mabo Room, AIATSIS, Lawson Cres, Acton Peninsula, Canberra (next to the National Museum of Australia)

For more information on AIATSIS's Seminar Series contact Cressida Fforde on Ph: (02) 6261 6221 or email Cressida.Fforde@aiatsis.gov.au

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY: Rosella Ragazzi, director of 'Firekeepers' is available for interview. Please contact AIATSIS Media and Events, Anna Johnstone, on (02) 6261 4225 or email Anna.Johnstone@aiatsis.gov.au