

L' / The

ABENAKI

Peuple de l'Aube / People of the Dawn

D'après un conte de/
A story by Mike Burns

PRODUCTION
NOTES AND
RESEARCH
GUIDE



Children of the Dawn. Animation by G. Scott MacLeod.

We have been taught
To love Mother Earth and to respect her.
We are the Children of the Dawn,
The people of the East.
May the Great Spirit and the Great Creator
Bless us and smile upon us.

*Chief Edwin "Joe" Pero – Coos (Cowasuck) Abenaki Band,
Deer Clan Prayer*

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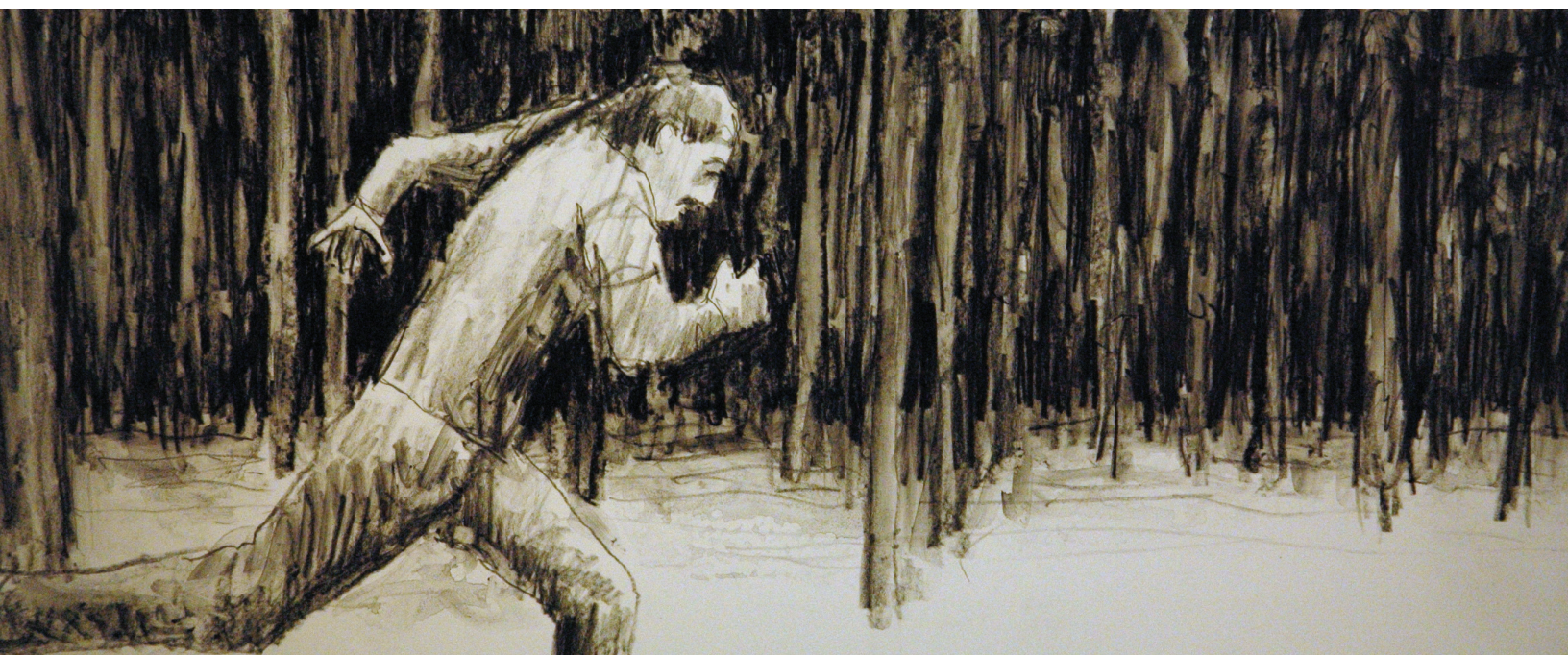


Joe Ombomsawin. Animation by G. Scott MacLeod.

INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn Production Notes and Research Guide*. This downloadable PDF is designed for educators, students and film lovers who are interested in animated films, storytelling and history. My aim with this educational tool is to share technical insights into the animation and production processes and to provide a database of historical and cultural information on the Abenaki people. I hope you will find this package useful and that it will enable and encourage further study and understanding of the animation process and the Abenaki people, culture and history.



Animation of Joe Obomsawin running by G. Scott MacLeod.

SYNOPSIS

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Identity is often revealed in the most perilous situations. In *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn*, the first film in G. Scott MacLeod's animated Canadian history series, it is Joe Obomsawin's intimate knowledge of the back roads and hidden trails on the frontiers of Quebec and New England that narrowly saves a group of bootleggers from capture. The escape also provides the impetus for his character's powerful and deeply personal retelling of the history of his people.

Huddled around a fire in a remote cabin, Obomsawin unfolds the tragic, improbable and inspiring story of the Abenaki nation, reduced from 50,000 to some 1,500 over a few hundred years of colonial settlement.

A collaboration between MacLeod and storyteller Mike Burns, from a story in Burns' series *The Water of Life*, *The Abenaki - People of the Dawn* fuses traditional pencil animation with new digital media to tell the harrowing tale of a people's epic struggle for survival.

G. SCOTT MACLEOD

DIRECTOR AND ANIMATOR



Photo by Alyson MacLeod

G. Scott MacLeod is a multimedia artist in the truest sense of the term. A critically acclaimed painter and photographer whose work is in many permanent collections, including that of the National Gallery of Canada, he is also a performing songwriter and recording artist.

Engaging his lifelong interest in history, with support from the National Film Board of Canada's Filmmaker Assistance Program and a Main Film Grant, in 2009 MacLeod added filmmaker to his list of endeavors with the release of *After the war with Hannelore - A Berliner War Child's Testimony from 1945 to 1989*. The 22-minute documentary had several high-profile screenings, including at Les Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois and Berlin's Arsenal 2 Institut für Film und Videokunst and One World Berlin Film Festival.

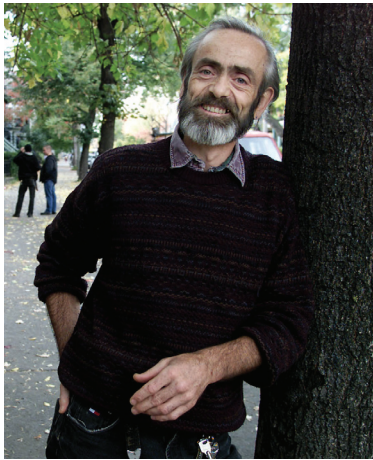
The Abenaki – People of the Dawn is the first of six planned collaborations on Canadian history with celebrated Montreal storyteller Mike Burns. It is MacLeod's fourth film.

Based in Montreal, MacLeod holds a BFA and a Masters in Art Education from Concordia University. His thesis project was the documentary film *Dans l'Griff-In Griffintown*, about the French community in Montreal's Griffintown neighborhood.

ARTIST'S PATH

"I have tried to define myself in my work through my personal 'myth' or what Joseph Campbell refers to as 'following one's bliss' (Campbell, 1990 p. 211). This is a metaphor for pursuing one's life path through the labyrinth, which for me has been a journey via my learning, art and teaching practices. This journey has given me courage to live, it has made me humble, it has fed and sheltered me, given me a voice and enabled me to do the same for others, through teaching, outreach and fundraisers. As a result of this work, I have better understood humanity's place on this planet and have tried to be a positive influence for political and social change."

MIKE BURNS STORYTELLER



Irish-born, Montreal-based storyteller Mike Burns is a true keeper of the oral tradition. Known across Canada and Europe for his spellbinding performances, his hundreds of stories include tales and legends of his native Ireland and original history-based stories about his adopted home in Canada.

Fluent in Gaelic, English and French, Burns is regarded as pioneer in the revival of storytelling in Quebec. His works have been collected in numerous publications including, most recently, *The Water of Life/L'Eau de la vie* (Chemin des Cantons, 2009), which contains the story "The Abenaki – People of the Dawn."

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ARTIST'S PATH

"Born into a storytelling family in the South-West of Ireland, I am one of the few tellers in North America that continues the pure oral tradition. I tell hundreds of traditional stories in Gaelic, French and English. I have been telling for nigh 50 years and I have the feeling I may yet come good at it. I got a lazy start, not having to leave the fireplace in my father's house to hear stories and 'Seanchas'. A pioneer in the revival of storytelling in Quebec, I have recently begun the creation of original history-based stories, following my experience of telling the story of the first Scottish colonists of the Eastern Townships in Gould in 2003. My experience as member of the Loups Garous collective creation in 2005 -2006 was a further step in my exploration of new forms of storytelling."

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

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The consensus from the test screenings of *The Saga of Murdo Macleod and his first contact with the Abenaki* (2012) was that I should make films of the other stories in Mike Burns' series, *The Water of Life. The Abenaki – People of the Dawn*, which is actually the first in the series, was produced over an 11-month period in 2012-2013 with support from the Canada Council for the Arts and The National Film Board's ACIC (Aide au cinéma indépendant, Canada).

Directing, animating and composing music for my recent projects has helped me realize the range of my interests as a multimedia artist. I believe that fusing these multiple interests, which include animating as well as the various components of filmmaking, will contribute to this new phase of my artistic development from visual artist to filmmaker-animator. As I have with my other productions I will seek to distribute, exhibit, broadcast and sell this work.

I feel fortunate to be producing animations at a time when new forms of technology and media can provide artists with unlimited possibilities to innovate and create interesting work. I have found that the film and animation field has enabled me to expose my work to a broader audience, moreso than my 2D fine art mediums, which have been limited to the gallery and museum settings. This is an exciting change for me, to be without the bulk of material work that comes with large painting exhibitions, including framing, shipping, studio and storage costs. Due to new affordable technologies now available to artists and smaller production houses, I feel I can do world-class projects with less of this material burden and am also able to disseminate my work on web-based platforms more cost effectively.



Animation by G. Scott MacLeod.

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Through the creation of *The Abenaki - People of the Dawn*, my animation skills and techniques have improved considerably. With the aid of my team and the technical resources of the National Film Board of Canada, I have developed my individual style and expressive approach with my one cell "watercolour pencil on Mylar." This technique was inspired by South African animator William Kentridge.

This is one of many reasons for my wanting to continue to work in this format. My production team is another. I have enjoyed a great working relationship with them and I am looking forward to continuing working with them on the remaining films in the six part series *The Water of Life* by Mike Burns.



Animation by G. Scott MacLeod.

PRE-PRODUCTION

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FILM INFLUENCES

Over the years I have studied feature works from countries like Australia [*The Chant of Jimmy Black Smith* (1978) by Fred Schepisi], Ireland [*The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994) by John Sayles]; and New Zealand [*Whale Rider* (2002) by Niki Caro]. I've also studied animated works including *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1987) by Frédéric Back, *The Danish Poet* (2006) by Toril Kove, *Persepolis* (2007) by Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, *Valse with Bashir* (2008) by Ari Folman, and many of the animated works by William Kentridge. *The Abenaki - People of the Dawn* was influenced by these animations and films because they share cross-cultural and allegorical themes and it was my aim to produce a story of equal caliber. While doing my research, I experimented with Mike's story. I wanted to illustrate the differences as well as the strong symbolic similarities in the lore, history, language and music of the six cultural groups featured in the film: Abenaki, American, Scottish, Irish, English and French.

The Abenaki - People of the Dawn is just one of many untold European-First Nations stories in Canada. I believe there is still more room for Canadian animators and filmmakers to explore this unique area of our history, as these stories are unknown to many Canadians and the world at large. I am interested in these cross-cultural stories from our history as a result of growing up in the culturally diverse city of Montreal, coming from Scottish lineage, and from working with members of the Mohawk, Squamish and Cree Nations over my 25 year career as an artist.

RESEARCH



Animation by G. Scott MacLeod.

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To begin research on *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn* I referenced period illustrations of Abenaki peoples from the mid 1800s in an effort to maintain continuity with their proper dress, regalia, tools, canoes and shelters. It was difficult to find literary sources for Abenaki traditional practices, however I did have the privilege of showing my drawings and discussing this project with award winning Abenaki stateswoman and filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin at the National Film Board of Canada. Her documentary work has been an inspiration and education. For many years, her films have been instrumental in giving the public insights into First Nations traditions and travails. I am grateful for her encouragement, support and work.

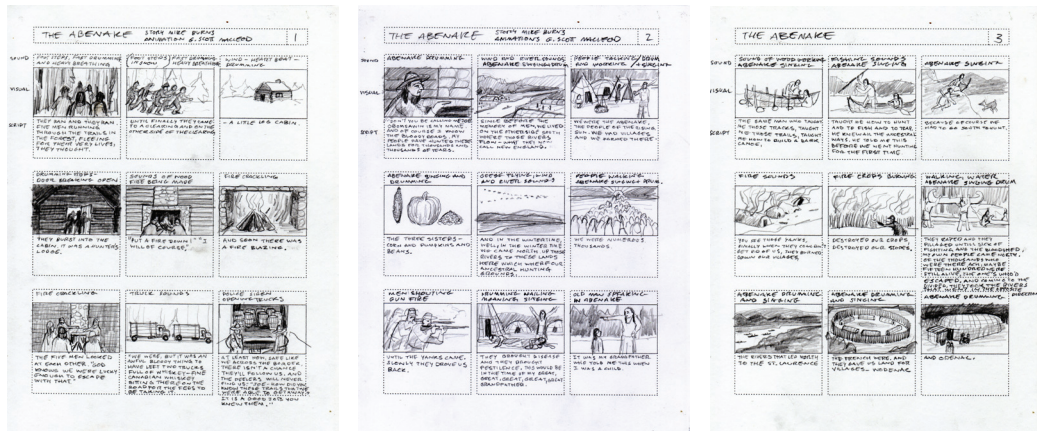
THE ORAL TRADITION

In the mid 1990s I was introduced to Mike Burns at Hurley's Irish Pub in Montreal, by our mutual and late friend, the musician Toby Kinsella. It was through Toby that I discovered the Irish Seanachie, which is a traditional Irish storyteller/historian. From that experience I realized the value of going beyond the literary side of my research and began to explore the oral traditions of cultures, which led me to Joseph Campbell's works on the great myths.

Mike Burns has maintained this tradition through the rigor of consistently performing over the years, the result being his commitment to memory of hundreds of stories. Incredibly, Mike was able to give us *The Abenaki - People of the Dawn* in one take, in both English and French. He flawlessly gave us the story with all of the appropriate verbal and emotional inflections, truly a remarkable achievement.

STORYBOARDING

The first step in producing this animation was to break the script down into a storyboard outlining the key points in the story.



Storyboards for *The Abenaki - People of the Dawn*.

THE ABENAKE

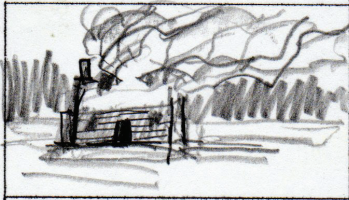
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FIRE NATIVE WAR CRY



AND WE WENT SOUTH TO RAID UPON THE YANKS AND WE SHOWED THEM NO MERCY. AT NIGHT WE WOULD BURST INTO THEIR VILLAGES.

FIRE HOUSE BURNING



IF WE FOUND FARMHOUSES THAT WERE ISOLATED, WE TOO, WE BURNED, WE TOO, WE KILLED, AND THEY TOO DEFEND THEMSELVES. CAME NORTH SOMETIMES.

DRUMMING



AND THE FRENCH USED TO COME WITH US AND GIVE US GUNS TO DEFEND OURSELVES UNTIL 1759,

FIRE + GUN FIRE



ROGERS WAS THE NAME OF THE YANKEE CAPTAIN. THEY BURNED AND THEY PILLAGED.

WALKING SOUNDS FIRE IN DISTANCE



WE FOLLOWED THEM. ROGERS WAS NEVER FOUND. SINCE THAT TIME, THERE HAVE NOT BEEN MANY OF US.

MARKET SOUNDS



NOW AS YOU FIND US, WE MAKE OUR LIVES FROM WEAVING BLANKETS AND BASKETS AND WE BRING THE BASKETS TO SELL.

CULTIVATING THE LAND WITH HOE



WE GO SOUTH INTO NEW ENGLAND IN THE SUMMERTIME, AND STILL WE FARM A BIT.

WIND ABENAKE SINGING AND DRUMMING



OF COURSE I KNOW THOSE TRAILS, SINCE TIME BEYOND, THOSE TRAILS HAVE BEEN OURS. WHEN ALL THIS LAND WAS COVERED WITH FOREST, THERE WERE NO FIELDS.

ABENAKE DRUMMING SINGING



AND THERE WERE NO FARMS. NO MILLS, NO FACTORIES, NO MAKING OF PAPER OR YARN - ALL OF THE THINGS THAT THE WHITE MAN HAS BROUGHT. MY PEOPLE, MY PEOPLE ARE THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND.



Mike Burns. Photos by G. Scott MacLeod.

PRODUCTION

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RECORDING NARRATION

Our storyteller Mike Burns is a third generation storyteller or what is known in Gaelic as a *Seanachie*. Mike has maintained his traditional practice by performing locally at Hurley's Irish Pub the last Sunday of every month and by touring extensively for over 30 years in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. We recorded Mike telling *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn*, one of the six stories from his 2009 book *Water of Life/Eau de la vie* (Chemin des Cantons). We recorded Mike telling the story (one he has been telling over the past few years) in both French and English as he is fluent in both languages. We did the recording with a vintage Neumann microphone in a comfortable home setting that was ideal for capturing the authentic emotions from his art form. He gave us a tremendous performance.

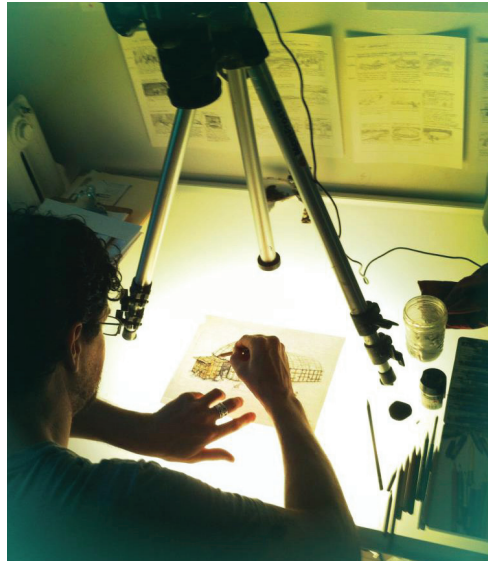
PRE-EDITING – ANIMATIONS

My aim in this project was to explore and experiment with various drawing, photo and collage media, essentially fusing my prior skill as a painter with new animation techniques. The animations were drawn in stages on the same sheet of Mylar to capture the phases of the drawing. The Mylar sheets were taped to my frosted glass animation table underneath my tripod and digital camera. The image was then backlit from underneath the table with a series of angled lamps. The jpegs from each drawing were later assembled in QuickTime sequences and then dragged into Final Cut Pro (a digital editing program) to be edited and assembled into the storyline.



Animation sequence of *Abenaki Portage* by G. Scott MacLeod.

For this project I have broken with conventional animation and explored new directions, such as those used by South African artist William Kentridge. Like Kentridge, I use the same surface for each animation. Rather than using charcoal on paper like Kentridge, however, I have used water-based graphite and colour pencils on Mylar (a material once used by architects) as my primary medium, as in my previous animations *After the War with Hannelore* (2009), *Empress Blue* (2010) and *The Saga of Murdo MacLeod* (2012). In *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn* I used water-based graphite and coloured pencils on the Mylar and added water and collage to the drawings to create more washes and layers, and to emulate such things as fire, smoke and water in the drawings. I also used *découpage* to give the impression of geese moving in the sky and canoes over the water. These animations were later reworked by animator Jo Meuris in a program called *After Effects*. I provided Jo with high-resolution scans of the individual elements. She then cropped and integrated the boats and geese in an effort to activate the animation, making the *découpage* move smoothly across the surface of the drawing.



G. Scott MacLeod at his animating stand. Photo by Maria Ezcurra.



Online Editor Yannick Carrier at the National Film Board of Canada. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod.

OFFLINE EDITING

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Rebecca Arsenault edited *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn*. Rebecca first established a chronology with the recording of Mike's story and it was then transferred into Final Cut Pro (digital editing software). This enabled Rebecca to create a timeline and estimate the length of the animation. Jo Meuris stabilized the jpegs for each animation and then made QuickTimes of each sequence. Rebecca then placed the QuickTimes in the timeline. Once the assembly and storyline were secured, we decided upon a series of camera moves. This involved moving the focal point right or left or pulling in and or out. These movements were necessary as many of my images are one-cell animations and often very static images if left full frame. In other words, once the drawing unfolded and became static it was important to have the focal point change to maintain a visual flow in the image. Once I felt that the edit served the story, Rebecca locked the picture for the online phase of the editing.

ONLINE EDITING

I submitted the offline version of the film to the National Film Board of Canada's ACIC (Aide au cinéma indépendant, Canada) program in order to get access to high-quality post-production facilities and experienced technicians. This was extremely helpful to me in the online edit and sound mix phases of the animation. The online edit was done by editor Yannick Carrier over the period of one week. Yannick worked in HD using an AVID editing system. At this phase we added the animation sequences that were reworked in After Effects by special effects animator Jo Meuris. Once Yannick cropped the images according to the 16 X 9 widescreen aspect ratio, we finalized all the camera moves and did the colour correction and contrast adjustments.



Robert Seven Crows playing Native Drum. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod.



Sound Designer Stacy Le Gallee and Sound Mixer Jean-Paul Vialard at National Film Board of Canada. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod.

MUSIC

For the soundtrack we worked with traditional First Nations musicians Robert Seven Crows and Nathalie Picard. Stacy Le Gallee recorded a variety of Robert's percussion work as well as him singing along with his drumming. We chose a haunting song entitled "L'Appel du Nordet" from Nathalie Picard's album *Listening Through the Wind* for the beginning and end of the animation. For the Roger's Rangers animation sequence we chose a fife and drum piece from the 78th Fraser Highlanders.

SOUND DESIGN

During the sound design process Stacy Le Gallee selected sound effects from online banks of sounds to contextualize my animations. We selected environmental sounds such as water, wind, birds, fire, footsteps in the snow and so forth. The challenge when selecting these sound effects was to marry both music soundtrack, found sounds and sound effects together. Successful sound designs are ironically the ones that do not jump out but rather serve the story and the images that make up the film.

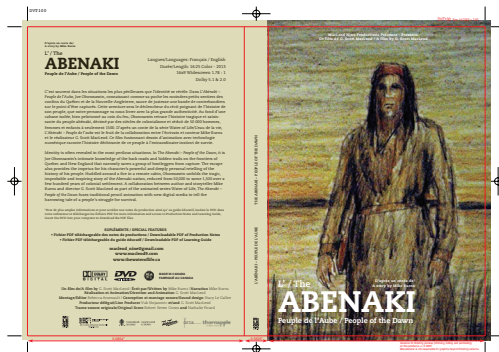
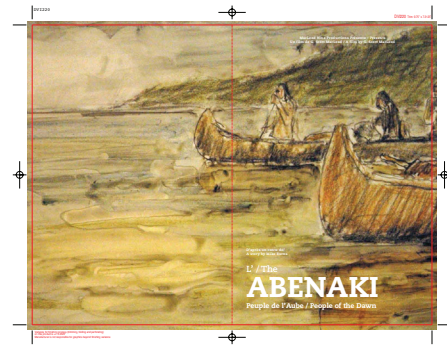
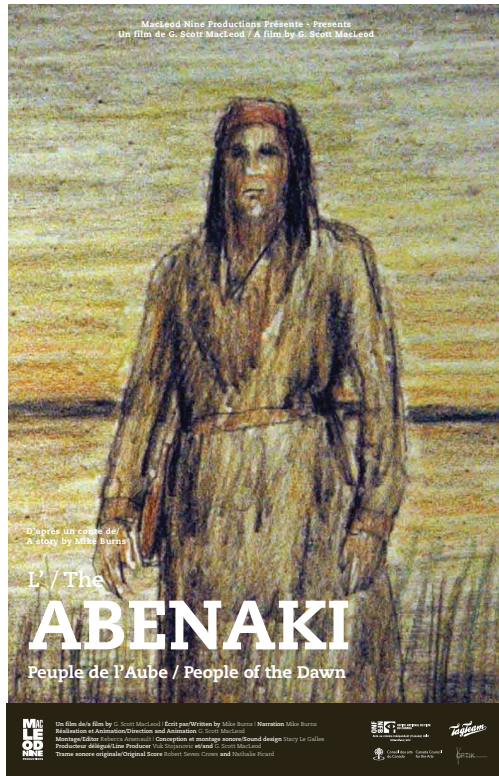
FINAL MIX

Stacy and I worked with sound engineer Jean-Paul Vialard at the National Film Board of Canada to do our final stereo and 5.1 Surround Sound mixes. This was done in Theatre 3, which is a full-size cinema with a mixing console in front of the film screen. During the four day session we adjusted the levels of the music tracks and sound effect tracks and added some light reverb to some of the music passages to create larger spaces in the soundtrack. Jean-Paul also created a wide 5.1 stereo mix to suggest the vast open space of Quebec. He played with the positioning of individual tracks in the five speakers to reflect what was happening in the film, such as the geese traveling from left to right across the screen.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

The final stage of this project was to create the DVD box graphics and a promotional poster for our screenings. I once again worked with Jess and Elisabeth Charbonneau at TagTeamStudio.ca. They have done great work on my former projects. They designed all the elements of this DVD from the box layout to the education package and learning guide. What I have looked for in this type of design is a theme or message clearly conveyed, content that is easy to read and a key image that reflects the story. After all the work we put into a production, I believe it's crucial to make a well-designed and aesthetically pleasing package, especially if it is going to be marketed to the educational sector.

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TagTeam Studio graphic design package.

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

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ABENAKI-RELATED WEBSITES

www.elnuabenakitribe.org

www.nedoba.org

www.canadiana.ca/citm/themes/aboriginals/aboriginals8_e.html

northernwoodlands.org/outside_story/article/hunting-with-the-abenaki

www.bethelhistorical.org/A_River%27s_Journey.html

freedomandunity.org/first_people/abenaki.html

www.cowasuckabenaki.com/timeline.html

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abenaki_people

www.bartletthistory.org/bartletthistory/beginnings.html

academics.smcvt.edu/winooskimills/Abenaki/Abenakiframe.htm

www.learner.org/interactives/historymap/indians5.html

www.museedesabenakis.ca/

cowasuckabenaki.com/blog/?p=34

www.regimental.com/music/the-pipes-and-drums-of-the-78th-highlanders.html

PEOPLE

www.nfb.ca/explore-all-directors/alanis-obomsawin

www.pbs.org/art21/artists/william-kentridge

MUSIC

www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8H_s_2aAL0

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vOjjKlcGyk&playnext=1&list=PL8D4E7D8DAACE1FF2

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DTTCYupRTw

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XLBhn2LZ5I

allthingsquebec.wordpress.com/2010/01/24/sylvain-rivards-traditional-drum-abenaki-algonquin-quebec-first-nations/

HISTORY

www.manataka.org/page380.html

www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/abenaki/abenakihist2.htm

faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/encyclopedia/abenaki.htm

www.bigorrin.org/abenaki_kids.htm

www.tolatsga.org/aben.html

BOOKS

The Voice of the Dawn: An Auto-history of the Abenaki Nation. Frederick Wiseman, Univ. Press of New England, 2001.

The Identity of the Saint Francis Indians, Gordon Day, National Museum of Canada, 1981.

NFB FILMS

Survival in the Bush, 1954, 30 min. Directed by Bernard Devlin.

Mother of Many Children, 1977, 58 min. Directed by Alanis Obomsawin.

Is the Crown at war with us? 2002, 96 min. Directed by Alanis Obomsawin.

Our Nationhood, 2003, 97 min. Directed by Alanis Obomsawin.

César's Bark Canoe, 1971, 58 min. Directed by Bernard Gosselin.

Waban-aki: People from Where the Sun Rises, 2006, 104 min. Directed by Alanis Obomsawin.

CREDITS

Produced by
MacLeod Nine Productions

Story
Mike Burns
From The Water of Life
Chemin des Cantons 2009

Narration
Mike Burns

Direction and Animation
G. Scott MacLeod

Editor
Rebecca Arsenault

Sound Design
Stacy Le Gallee

Line Producers
Vuk Stojanovic
G. Scott MacLeod

Special Effects Animations
Jo Meuris

Image Stabilization
Jo Meuris

Sound Mix (NFB)
Jean-Paul Vialard
Shelley Craig

Sound Technician (NFB)
Pierre St-Germain

Producer Studio Animation et Jeunesse (NFB)
Julie Roy

Technical Coordinators (NFB)
Julie Laperrière and **Daniel Claveau**

Online Editor (NFB)
Yannick Carrier

Titles and Credits (NFB)
Mélanie Bouchard

Soundtrack Producers
Stacy Le Gallee and **G. Scott MacLeod**
Soundtrack Engineering, Mixing and Mastering
Stacy Le Gallee

Music
Tawegan – Native Drum and Percussion
by **Robert Seven-Crows**

L'appel du Nordet from Listening Through the Wind
by **Nathalie Picard**
All Rights Reserved © Nathalie Picard SOCAN 1999

Historic Period Research
Wayne Mee-Mee's Militia
Re-enactment Actor in Roger's Ranger Regimental
Raphael Swann
Translation
Laure Péré
Press Kit Editor
Rob Lutes
Graphic Design
TagTeam Studio
Web Design
Thornapple Productions
Accounting
Ted Christeas

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Thank You
**Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Lorrie Blair, Lindsay Eberts,
Stéphanie Pascal, Alanis Obomsawin and Paul Thinel.**

In Memory of
Jake Eberts

Produced with the financial participation of



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Canada Council
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