

MEDIA RELEASE**Thursday 9 March 2023**

Father and son's environmental film delights global audiences

SAE Creative Media Institute graduate, Mivon Prince-Leyva's student film *We Are Our Totem: A Native American Tale*, has received worldwide acclaim. The documentary stars Mivon's father, Bobby Runningfox, a Medicine Man who is the spiritual healer of his tribe. The film, which Mivon directed, touches on one of the oldest Indigenous cultures in the world, and shares a deeper environmental message that continues to be ignored.

The film has been selected at 27 film festivals around the world to date, and won best documentary at the 2022 Australia Independent Film Festival. Award-winning filmmaker, Damon Gameau, made famous for *2040* has been in touch with Mivon about the film featuring in Gameau's upcoming *Regenerating Australia* documentary which looks at what Australia would look like in 2030 if it listened to the needs of its people.

"It's very exciting, but still in the very early stages of development with Damon. As *We Are Our Totem* is not just a story about culture and spirituality, but a focus on the environmental factors associated with our actions."

The film was created as part of Mivon's studies at SAE and takes a look at the physical and spiritual relationship, and how it impacts our environment.

"My father shares why the communion with animals and humans is such a priority to Native American culture, and how it continues to have wider relevance in today's society" Mivon said.

"I love the boiling frog analogy for explaining the environment," Mivon added. "We as mankind are like frogs in a pond, and as the pond gets hotter and hotter, we'll continue to sit there. However, if you throw a frog into a boiling pot of water, it will jump straight out."

"We, as humans, are too slow to react to gradual changes and learn from what nature and animals are telling us, and that's what my father discusses in the documentary."

Mivon explained why the story means so much to him personally: "My father is a Native American Medicine Man and I have been in training since I was eight years old, learning from him and absorbing his wisdom of the world."

SAE National Chair of Film, Simon Temple explained how SAE supports students like Mivon. "We always tell students to find strong stories, and the impactful message of that will follow," Simon said. "Which is exactly what Mivon has been successful in doing."



Simon added the complexity of interviewing family on film: “From my own perspective in the industry, it can sometimes be easier to have no emotional connection to the person you’re interviewing, which makes Mivon’s achievements even more impressive.”

Looking to the future, Mivon is passionate about telling the stories of further Indigenous cultures through film. “When I first started thinking about a documentary as part of my studies at SAE, I wanted to cover First Nations’ Peoples from Australia, New Zealand and North America,” Mivon said.

“I thought it would be fascinating to look at their different perspectives of the world, and how they intertwine in different ways. I would love to explore a series of films on those cultures down the track!”

SAE Creative Media Institute provides students with the experience, skills, equipment and connections to succeed in the industry. Find out more at sae.edu.au.

-ENDS-

About We Are Our Totem: A Native American Tale

The short won Best Documentary at the Australia Independent Film Festival and has been selected at 27 film festivals to date:

- San Diego International Film Festival
- Byron Bay Underground Film Festival
- Byron Bay International Film Festival
- Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival
- Australia Independent Film Festival
- Angeles Documentaries
- Afin International Film Festival
- Short To The Point
- Melbourne Lift-Off Film Festival
- Sydfest Independent Film Festival
- Valencia Indie Film Festival
- Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival
- International Short Film Festival Detmold
- Lift-Off Filmmaker Sessions @ Pinewood Studios
- Los Angeles Indie Film Festival
- Manchester Lift-Off Film Festival
- Alvsbyn Film Festival
- Madrid Indie Film Festival
- Latino & Native American Film Festival
- Sevilla Indie Film Festival
- Santa Monica Film Awards
- Biff - Boden International Film Festival
- Nashville Independent Filmmakers Festival
- Screen It International Film Festival - Brisbane
- Chicago Indie Film Awards
- Sydney Indie Short Festival
- Vancouver Independent Film Festival



ANIMATION



AUDIO

CREATIVE
INDUSTRIESCREATIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

DESIGN



FILM



GAMES



MUSIC

About SAE

SAE Creative Media Institute is the place for creatives and innovators. Since 1976 we've been the leaders in creative media education across animation, audio, creative industries, creative technologies, design, film, games, and music. Every year, we support students globally to develop the skills and experience needed to carve successful careers. Students enjoy access to the latest technology and are taught by industry-experienced faculty, while putting their skills to the test in small class environments. Our graduates become part of a highly-respected global community of creatives that's been around for over 40 years. We pride ourselves on being technically explorative, transformative and brave through our range of creative media programs, from short courses and professional training through to bachelor and postgraduate degrees. In Australia, our programs are delivered at campuses in Sydney, Brisbane, Byron Bay, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide. SAE is a part of Navitas Pty Ltd. More information about SAE is available at sae.edu.au.

For more information:

Barry de Silva, National Communications Manager

Phone: 0498 004 023

Email: barry.desilva@sae.edu.au

