

Waters Wisdoms: Honoring and Reclaiming Indigenous and Ancestral Practices in the Face of Climate Disaster

Ann Mazzocca Bellecci
Christopher Newport University

Waters Wisdoms: Honoring and Reclaiming Indigenous and Ancestral Practices in the Face of Climate Disaster is a film that centers Indigenous American and African embodied epistemologies as a response to the global climate crisis, in particular sea level rise. These wisdoms are practiced and passed on through communal worship, ancestral and intergenerational knowledges, traditions and love, honors, and respect. These wisdoms engage with care for the earth, its inhabitants, and oneself. They are placed within and in relation to the colonially significant location of the Chesapeake Bay and James/Powhatan River. Settler colonialism and its ensuing ethnocentric, exploitative, and racist practices have led not only to violence against people but abuse of our lands/seas. While adherents of global Indigenous embodied practices have been historically persecuted and policed due to colonial and accompanying white supremacist imperialist ideologies, these knowledge systems and practices contain and enact power and resistance to oppressive forces in addition to offering deep healing – for self, community, and the earth. While the damaging effects of a global colonialist legacy and its resulting social and ecological precarities take the lives of and displace so many, this film intends to honor global Indigenous embodied knowledges, the process of reclaiming ancestral heritages, and recognition of/reconnection to the harmony of the earth and our place not just within but as nature – toward viable futurity together.

Director: Ann Mazzocca Bellecci

Director of Photography: Henry Engelmeyer

Editors: Ann Mazzocca Bellecci & Henry Engelmeyer

Performances: Kayla Oosaseun Jewette & Krystal Hurr

with Jen, Nima, and Pia

Batá recording: Chief Awosanmi Sekou Alaje

Yoruba vocals: Kayla Oosaseun Jewette

Recording and mixing of batá and vocals at Respect the Cool Studios, Queens, NY.

"Mni Wiconi" ("Water is Life" in Lakotiyapi) Composition: Jeru Brinkley (Joobie)

Waters Wisdoms was commissioned by the Art(S)science Festival, Christopher Newport University, Denise Gillman, Artistic Director, and supported by The Panhellenic Council and Office of Research and Creative Activity.

Ann Mazzocca Bellecci, MA, MFA, is a choreographer, dance educator, and scholar currently living in the Hampton Roads region of coastal Virginia, U.S.A., the ancestral territory of the Kikotan, an Eastern Algonkian Indigenous American people and village of Tsenacomoco, Powhatan's chiefdom. An associate professor of Dance at Christopher Newport University, Mazzocca Bellecci performs, collaborates, and presents her choreography nationally (New Orleans, NYC) and internationally (Haiti, South Africa). She incorporates Haitian and Cuban folkloric and spiritual embodied epistemologies, place-based considerations of local and global histories, and collaborative approaches to dance-making. Her writing focuses on Haitian ritual choreography, sacred landscapes, African diasporic folkloric performance, and co-authored collaborative performance praxis. www.annmazzocca.com.
