

HONORARY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2022



Press Release: International Uranium Film Festival 2022 honors Elsie Mae Begay from the Navajo Nation

Every year the International Uranium Film Festival (IUFF) honors special personalities of the „atomic age“ with its Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award. This year, 2022, **Elsie Mae Begay**, the great-great Navajo grandmother from Monument Valley featured in the documentary *The Return of Navajo Boy* by Jeff Spitz receives the festival's Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award 2022.



Since the 1940s the Navajo Nation suffers because of uranium mining to fuel the nuclear arms arsenal of the United States of America. Like no other film before it, "The Return of Navajo Boy" brought this fact to the public and mobilized people in the US and around the world.

Grandmother Elsie was not only the main character of this unique documentary film. With her enduring commitment she greatly helped her Navajo Nation spread the truth about the horrific effects of uranium mining on her people. With Navajo leaders she lobbied the US congress to clean up abandoned uranium mines and radioactive homes and provide safe drinking water for Navajo families in affected communities. Credited by the Associated Press with prompting the first clean up of an abandoned uranium mine, Grandmother Elsie, now 82 years old, continues to advocate for environmental justice.

International Uranium Film Festival director Norbert G. Suchanek says: „We honor Elsie Mae Begay for her leadership and creative contributions in the documentary film, The Return of Navajo Boy and for her courage in traveling thousands of miles to meet educators, students, journalists, and government officials all across the United States, especially in Washington DC. Through 15 **webisodes** showing what happened after the documentary, through her statements at public screenings and through her interviews with reporters who write about Elsie’s life experiences in Monument Valley her gentle voice continues to touch people’s hearts all around the world.”

„Together with film director Jeff Spitz and the Groundswell team you have succeeded in telling a powerful story that shows the importance of documentary filmmaking, Navajo culture, family history and above all the dangers of uranium contamination. For all these reasons, the 11th International Uranium Film Festival honors Great-Great-Grandmother Elsie with our Lifetime Achievement Award.”



The world can meet Elsie online on Monday, May 23 at 4 pm Rio de Janeiro Time. Be part of it on: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MAMRio>

This exceptional online event of the International Uranium Film Festival brings together Elsie Begay, John Wayne Cly, filmmaker Jeff Spitz and representatives of indigenous peoples from the Brazilian northeast: Elvis Tabajara, Teka Potyguara, Jardel Potyguara and Toinho Gavião. English/Portuguese moderation by Brazilian filmmaker Miguel Silveira. This online event is a cooperation of International Uranium Film Festival with the **Cinemateca do MAM Rio** and **Groundswell Educational Films** in Chicago. Beside of the online meeting the festival streams for free from May 19 - 29 dozens of films about nuclear power and uranium risks.

Festival program: <https://uraniumfilmfestival.org/en/rio-2022>

Past recipients of the Uranium Film Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award include:

Sérgio Duarte, former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs who served Brazil as Ambassador in several countries and has dedicated his life to end the nuclear threat.

Emmy Award-Winning producer and director Robert Frye from New York City who created "The Nuclear World Project" and directed two important documentaries on Nuclear Disarmament.

The atomic bomb survivors Takashi Morita and Kunihiro Bonkohara. For decades, 95 years old Takashi Morita and 78 years old Kunihiro Bonkohara are working tirelessly in Brazil for a world without nuclear weapons and since the Fukushima accident also for a world without nuclear power.

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