



Ten entries, all very special visions of the Great Plains, are being awarded cash prizes totaling \$16,000 in the Great Plains Film Festival 2003 conferred by a panel of three distinguished judges: actor Gary Farmer and filmmakers Maureen Gosling and Jennifer Dworkin.

Matthew Testa's *The Buffalo War*, a chilling depiction of the fate of the last wild herd of bison that once blanketed the Great Plains, is selected for the Great Plains Film Festival 2003 Grand Prize.

*The Buffalo War* is the untold story of the current decimation of the last wild herd of buffalo outside Yellowstone National Park. The film interweaves the stories of radical environmentalists, protesting Native Americans, and a ranch family.

The Rainbow Award, conferred on the entry that best explicates the ethnic heritage of the Great Plains, goes this year to John C. P. Goheen's *American Nizhoni*, the story of a unique beauty pageant on the Navajo Nation.

In *American Nizhoni*, storyteller John Goheen weaves a portrait of a pageant unlike no other, designed to help preserve the Navajo culture and share it with others within the Navajo Nation, as well as across America and even the world.

A separate panel selected the Nebraska Humanities Council Award, presented to an entry of superior artistic and technical quality that most effectively explores its subject utilizing the humanities, which this year goes to Christine Lesiak's *Monkey Trial*, a production of the Nebraska ETV Network for WGBH Television. *Monkey Trial* premiered on "American Experience" in February 2002.

*Monkey Trial* explores for the first time the surprising reasons behind William Jennings Bryan's opposition to the teaching of evolution in the famous Scopes Monkey trial that took place in Dayton, Tennessee. At the trial, Bryan faced Chicago attorney Clarence Darrow in a debate over evolution that has reverberated into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The award for Best Dramatic Feature goes to *The Slaughter Rule*, a tale of the loneliness of rural life in Montana and the promise of escape through the rough game of six-man football, starring David Morse and Ryan Gosling, created by twin brothers, Alex and Andrew Smith.

This year's Best Documentary Feature is *The Spirit of Annie Mae* directed by Catherine Anne Martin, a moving tribute to Annie Mae Pictou Aquash, a 30-

year-old Nova-Scotia born Mi'kmaw, shot dead, execution style, on a desolate road in South Dakota in 1975.

*The Great American Foot Race*, by Lily Shangreaux and Dan Bigbee, Jr., a fascinating film documenting the extraordinary cross-country foot race held in 1928 and won by Native American Andy Payne, is selected to receive the award for Best Public Television Entry.

Brett Bell's *Blueberry* and Chris Simon's *Down an old Road: The Poetic Life of Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel* win awards for Best in their respective categories: Dramatic Short and Documentary Short.

A dark comedy-drama with a pinch of absurdism, *Blueberry* is the story of a woman and the effect one man has had on her life, set in an out-of-time world.

Like Steinbeck, poet Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel has turned the experiences of the Okies into literature. Unlike Steinbeck, she lived it. *Down an Old Road* intertwines history and poetry to explore Wilma's life and vision.

Last but most certainly not at all the least are the Young Media Artists Awards: *Sinless*, a stab at the last morals in society, by Omaha filmmaker Nik Fackler; *Sterilization in America: Ignoring Rights or Upholding Responsibilities?*, a documentary exploring the darker side of eugenics that swept American in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by Megan Berg from Lincoln; and *Las Quinceañeras*, a documentary on the history and celebration of the *quinceañeras* in Lincoln, by the Park Middle School Latino Club.

The Great Plains Film Festival 2003 awards ceremony is scheduled for Friday, August 8 at 6 p.m. in the Joseph H. Cooper Theater at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center. The ceremony will be followed by a dinner in the UNL Van Brunt Visitors Center Great Hall. This year's Mary Riepma Ross Award, to be conferred during the awards ceremony, is being presented to Academy Award winning film editor Michael Hill (*Apollo 13*, *The Paper*). Master of Ceremonies is Frank Blythe, Executive Director, Native American Telecommunications, Inc. Entertainment provided by the Sangre Azteca Dancers. The awards ceremony is free and open to the public; however, the dinner, catered by La Mexicana, costs \$15 per person and reservations must be made in advance at the MRRMAC ticket counter or by calling 402.472.9100.

For more information, schedules, and synopses on the films and videos in the Great Plains Film Festival 2003, please visit our web site at [www.TheRoss.org](http://www.TheRoss.org).

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