

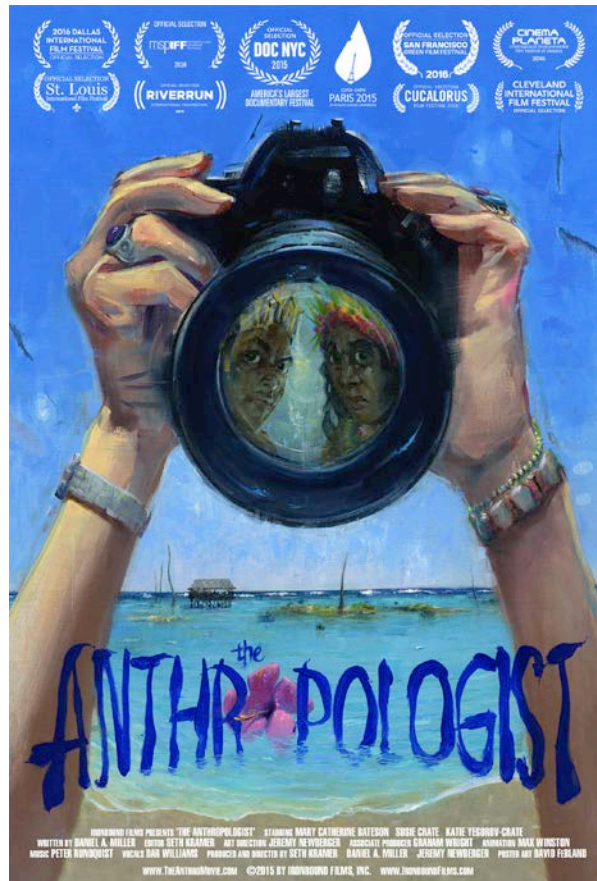


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Ironbound Films
 presents

The Anthropologist

Directed by Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger



OFFICIAL SELECTION

World Premiere 2015 DOC NYC Film Festival
 A co-presentation with the American Museum of Natural History
 80 minutes

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The Anthropologist

A Documentary by Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger

Synopsis

“Climate change forces us to have to learn the family business,” says Mary Catherine Bateson, the daughter of famed anthropologist Margaret Mead.

And so begins the story of Katie Yegorov-Crate, a thirteen-year-old girl from Fairfax, Virginia. She is carted around the globe by her mother, noted environmental anthropologist Susie Crate. Susie studies the effects of climate change on centuries-old indigenous communities.

Margaret Mead also analyzed how communities confront change, but that which results from war and modernity. Her daughter Mary Catherine Bateson, now 76 and a cultural anthropologist in her own right, provides extraordinary insight into what Susie and Katie discover.

Filmed over the course of five years, *THE ANTHROPOLOGIST* is a meditation on change, both individual and societal. Susie and Katie work with people in Siberia, the South Pacific, the Andes, and the nearby Chesapeake Bay, who struggle to reconfigure how and where they live.

In Siberia, where Susie met Katie’s father while doing research, Katie’s relatives can no longer farm on land they’ve occupied for generations. Katie’s roots are also threatened by the inhospitable soil.

“I don’t think we can change the world,” counsels Susie. “I think that we change, and that changes the world.” Katie’s plan as she sets out on her own will test her mother’s theory.

THE ANTHROPOLOGIST is directed by Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger of Ironbound Films. It is a follow-up to their Sundance hit and Emmy Award nominee *THE LINGUISTS*.

Directors' Statement

For the three directors of *THE ANTHROPOLOGIST*—Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger—*THE LINGUISTS* was our breakout hit. We followed two young, hip scientists around the world documenting languages on the verge of extinction. The film premiered at Sundance and played at hundreds of film festivals. It aired on PBS and was nominated for an Emmy.

A follow-up seemed like a no-brainer. We checked in with the National Science Foundation about funding another documentary with a similar formula: Make real-life social scientists seem like Indiana Joneses. NSF bit, but with apprehension.

The catch was that we wanted to make this film about climate change. We thought that the many documentaries on the subject were too often birds-eye views of environmental and political trends. We wanted to give climate change a *LINGUISTS* treatment: Find a couple of down-to-earth characters using their scientific knowhow to make sense of a crisis. The fact that they too are learning and occasionally stumble make them great proxies for the rest of us.

NSF was right to worry about *THE ANTHROPOLOGIST*. NSF is under constant scrutiny by the Republican-controlled Congress for funding what it considers frivolous or low-priority projects, particularly involving the social sciences. Imagine how Congress felt about a film about both the social sciences and climate change. When learning of our grant, Representative Lamar Smith (R-Texas), a prominent climate change skeptic, demanded “every e-mail, letter, memorandum, record, note [and] text message” regarding its approval.

Mr. Smith was the least of our problems. The world’s foremost expert on the anthropology of climate change is Susie Crate, a professor at George Mason University. Unlike either of *THE LINGUISTS*, Susie didn’t do fieldwork with a rapier-witted colleague with whom she was in perfect sync; more like a petulant, unpredictable teenage daughter. Their dynamic—like that of almost all mothers and teenage daughters, we learned—alternated between bestie and beastly. Midway through production, we directed another documentary called *ÉVOCATEUR: THE MORTON DOWNEY JR. MOVIE*. The late, in-your-face talk-show host couldn’t hold a candle to the fireworks that erupted between these two.

Katie especially didn’t share Mort’s love for the spotlight. Over the course of five years, we followed Susie and Katie on expeditions to Siberia, the Kiribati Islands in the South Pacific, the Virginia coast of the Chesapeake Bay, and Peru. Each plan was met with hostility and questions from Katie. Why must my mother drag me on her fieldtrips? Why can’t I stay home with my friends? Why must you film my mom and me even when we’re fighting? To that, the unspoken answer: Otherwise we’d never be filming. As Katie, her bond with her mother, and their relationship with us matured, so too did the trust among our group and our sense of a shared mission.

Raised on John Hughes films (listen for singer-songwriter Dar Williams’ tribute to them in the closing credits), we couldn’t help but see the upheaval of a teenager’s world as a metaphor for that of our changing planet. Communities we visited also felt anger and incredulity at being

forced into a situation; worked to accept it on their own terms; and struggled to build on it in a way of their choosing and that ideally improved upon their original lot. Sometimes, despite whatever progress had been made, these communities would sink back into their original anger and incredulity. But they were determined to move on.

When we returned from the field for the last time, we sought to make sense of this long and intense journey. We took a pilgrimage up to the tiny hamlet of Hancock, New Hampshire, in the midst of a furious, weeklong blizzard. Our guru was Mary Catherine Bateson, the then 76-year-old daughter of the world's best-known anthropologist Margaret Mead.

Mary Catherine had herself finished a storied career as a linguist and anthropologist. In her living room, surrounded by souvenirs of countries visited and cultures researched, the sunlight streamed through a wall of windows, outside just beginning to melt the mountains of snow. We asked as an anthropologist's daughter what she observed of the observer. We questioned how and why she first became interested in what her mother did. We asked about how the cultures her mother studied dealt with unprecedented changes nearly a century ago.

Her remarkable insights form the backbone of *THE ANTHROPOLOGIST*. They provide a structure for our observations with Susie and Katie and perspective for them to stand as a lesson. It is one we hope current congressmen, future scientists, and communities both now and eventually in peril will heed.

About the Filmmakers

Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger are Ironbound Films. Headquartered in an old inn on the Hudson River opposite West Point Military Academy, Ironbound Films creates documentaries for theaters, television, museums, and the web. We produced and directed THE ANTHROPOLOGIST. In addition, Daniel wrote, Seth edited, and Jeremy did art direction for the film.

Our last documentary *Évocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* premiered at Tribeca, hit theaters care of Magnolia Pictures, and aired on CNN in August 2015. It was a *New York Times* Critics' Pick and was chosen in 2013 as best documentary by NY1; a top-ten movie by *LA Weekly*; and a top-ten documentary by *USA Today* and the International Press Academy.

Before that, we produced and directed the feature documentary *The New Recruits*. It profiles social entrepreneurs and business school graduates in Kenya, India, and Pakistan using market principles to fight poverty. Narrated by Rainn Wilson, *The New Recruits* aired on PBS. In 2011, it was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Business and Economic Reporting.

Our previous documentary was *The Linguists*, the world's first look at how languages become endangered, and how scientists document, archive, and help return them to use. The first film funded by the National Science Foundation ever to premiere at Sundance, *The Linguists* went on to win top honors at hundreds of film festivals around the world, enjoy a gala premiere at the Paris headquarters of UNESCO, and air on PBS. In 2010, *The Linguists* was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Science and Technology Programming.

Seth and Daniel produced and directed the *America Rebuilds* series for PBS, which investigates the engineering, business, and politics of reconstruction at the World Trade Center site. Narrated by Kevin Spacey, *America Rebuilds: A Year at Ground Zero* premiered in 2002 as PBS's signature broadcast of its 9/11-anniversary programming. *America Rebuilds II: Return to Ground Zero*, narrated by Mariska Hargitay, premiered in 2006 for the five-year anniversary.

Seth was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Historical Programming for *Resistance: Untold Stories of Jewish Partisans* (PBS, 2002). Daniel was nominated for *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (PBS, 1997).

Jeremy innovated some of the Web's first video content, transforming the "webisode" into an indispensable tool for businesses and advertisers. Jeremy is co-creator, executive producer, and writer of *The Fantastic Two*, a serial web comedy starring William "The Refrigerator" Perry. Jeremy saw his fifteen minutes of cult celebrity as a producer and sometime on-air contributor to the *Imus in the Morning* television program on MSNBC.

Seth is an Artvark (University of the Arts in Philadelphia, 1996), Daniel a Brunonian (Brown University, 1994.5), and Jeremy a Great Dane (SUNY Albany, 1995). They are all dads: of Lillian, Sander and Asa, and Samson and Annabelle, respectively. They live within play-date proximity in the Hudson Valley, New York.

About the Cast

Susie Crate is an interdisciplinary scholar specializing in environmental and cognitive anthropology. She has worked with indigenous communities in Siberia since 1988 and specifically with the Viliui Sakha since 1991. Her current research focuses on understanding local perceptions, adaptations, and resilience of Viliui Sakha communities in the face of unprecedented climate change. Susie is author of numerous peer-reviewed articles, the 2006 monograph *Cows, Kin and Globalization: An Ethnography of Sustainability*, and senior editor of the 2009 volume *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Encounters to Actions*. She is an associate professor in the department of environmental science and policy at George Mason University.

Katie Yegorov-Crate studies international studies and linguistics at Indiana University Bloomington. She was born in the Sakha Republic in Siberia and grew up in Fairfax, Virginia, with her mother, anthropologist Susie Crate, and father, Sakha historian Pronya Yegorov. Katie speaks English, Sakha, Russian, Spanish, and Korean.

Mary Catherine Bateson is a writer and cultural anthropologist who lives in Hancock, New Hampshire. She has written and co-authored many books and articles, lectures across the country and abroad, and has taught at Harvard, Northeastern, Amherst, Spelman, and abroad in the Philippines and Iran. In 2004, she retired from her position as Clarence J. Robinson Professor in Anthropology and English at George Mason University and is now professor emerita. Since 2006, she has been a visiting scholar at the Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College. She has served on multiple advisory boards including that of the National Center on Atmospheric Research, which deals with climate change. Her memoir *With a Daughter's Eye: A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson* is about her mother and father, noted anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson.

Margaret Mead is the most noted and celebrated anthropologist of all time. She did her undergraduate work at Barnard and received an anthropology Ph.D. at Columbia. She was the curator of ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History, where she published her bestsellers *Coming of Age in Samoa* and *Growing Up in New Guinea*. She made a total of twenty-four fieldtrips among six South Pacific peoples. Mead became an in-demand lecturer, wrote a column for *Redbook* magazine, and was a popular radio and television interview subject on a variety of topics. She was married three times, and with her third husband anthropologist Gregory Bateson had a daughter Mary Catherine Bateson. The couple divorced in 1950. Mead died of cancer in 1978 in New York.

About the Field Sites

Siberia, which at five million square miles accounts for more than three-quarters of Russia's land area, has an increasing problem with melting permafrost. Permafrost is soil, rock, or sediment that is below the freezing point of water (32°F) for more than two consecutive years. Permafrost can run more than 300 feet deep and be tens of thousands of years old. Its upper layer, known as the active layer, usually thaws in the summer and freezes in the winter, but as the earth's temperatures rise, that schedule is changing. Melting permafrost also risks releasing powerful, stored heat-trapping gases in the form of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. Scientists have noticed that permafrost is melting at a more rapid pace. Many of the plant, animal, and human habitats that live above or around permafrost will have to relocate.

Kiribati is a small South Pacific island country made up of low-lying narrow atolls a mere few feet above sea level. It is home to about 100,000 people. Saltwater from rising sea levels is contaminating fresh water supplies and crop soil and causing severe coastal erosion. It has devastated the coconut and papaya trees and other varieties of vegetation on which people rely. Increased wave heights and frequency pressure the shoreline and seawalls. President of Kiribati Anote Tong acknowledges that the entire population will need to relocate within thirty to sixty years.

Peru is home to 70% of the world's tropical glaciers. Glaciers slowly release water into rivers that provide water for drinking and farming. Warmer temperatures are melting the glaciers at a pace that is drastically impacting Peru's water supply. Scientists have estimated that the glaciers have lost more than one-fifth of their mass in the last three decades. As glaciers withdraw for the first time in potentially millions of years, metal-rich rocks are left uncovered, and the meltwater is carrying acid-heavy metal deposits into the rivers. This is devastating to water and soil quality, which in turn ruins crops. Peru's water security is at great risk and major population centers will need to develop alternate water sources or relocate.

Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in North America with 64,000 square miles of rivers, creeks, marshes, and open waters. In Virginia, centuries-old fishing communities of "watermen" who live around the Chesapeake Bay face critical changes to their ecosystems. Seawalls have been built to slow erosion from rising sea levels, but land is still sinking and superstorms are washing away shorelines. One devastating result of coastal erosion is that sediment is running off into the Bay, allowing sand and silt to block sunlight from reaching grass beds that offer shedding blue crabs refuge. Softshell crabs are considered the economic lifeblood of the Chesapeake Bay.

Credits

Ironbound Films presents

A film funded by the National Science Foundation

THE ANTHROPOLOGIST

Produced and directed by

Seth Kramer
Daniel A. Miller
Jeremy Newberger

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Editor
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Original music
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Vocals
Dar Williams

Director of Animation
Max Winston

Poster art
David FeBland