

CAPE ANN Museum

Cape Ann Museum Opens *1st Peoples: Portraits of the First Light* with Photographs by Matika Wilbur at CAM Green

Free and open to all

On View: June 29 to September 1



Three Sisters: Carla Cuch, Adriana Ignacio and Berta Welch from Aquinnah Wampanoag. Photograph by Matika Wilbur during her residency at the Cape Ann Museum in May 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

GLOUCESTER, Mass. – Cape Ann Museum is proud to present [*1st Peoples: Portraits of the First Light*](#), a new exhibition of photographic narratives by Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip Tribes) made in consultation with SmokeSignals, a Native creative agency based in Mashpee. The exhibition features contemporary photographs of the original stewards of what is now known as New England including portraits of Nipmuc, Wampanoag, Shinnecock, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot peoples. The photographs are accompanied by excerpts from conversations around identity, culture, and sovereignty. The exhibit will be on view in the Janet & William Ellery James Center at the Cape Ann Museum Green (CAM Green), 13 Poplar St. in Gloucester, from June 29 through September 1, 2024.

“We are delighted to welcome Matika Wilbur to Cape Ann and to have the opportunity to showcase images from her Project 562 alongside a selection from the 15 additional portraits made as Matika travelled across Eastern Massachusetts during a recent artist-in-residence with the Museum,” says Oliver Barker, Director of Cape Ann Museum. “This collaboration, which has been led for CAM by Miranda

Aisling, Head of Education and Engagement, is a vital component to the Museum's ongoing commitment to accurately tell the Native histories of this area with Native partners."

[*1st Peoples: Portraits of the First Light*](#), is part of the [CAM Native Initiative](#), a three-year pilot program jointly funded by the Museum and the Institute for Museum & Library Services. The CAM Native Initiative is being developed and presented through a variety of research opportunities, programs and installations at the Cape Ann Museum, each of which are dedicated to centering and expanding the histories and contemporary stories of Native people from across Eastern Massachusetts.

Pulling both from Wilbur's [Project 562: Changing the Way We See Native America](#) and from a week-long residency at the Cape Ann Museum, [*1st Peoples: Portraits of the First Light*](#) celebrates the diversity and resiliency of modern Indigenous identity and addresses the importance of honest representation.

"I hold in my heart a special reverence for the original people of the Eastern Gate, the first people of the first light, those that welcome the dawn," shares Matika Wilbur. "These are portraits of contemporary Nipmuc, Wampanoag, Shinnecock, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot peoples. They are artists, professionals, historians, seedkeepers, fisherman, McArthur Genius Award winners- they have published books, organized movements, fought for sovereignty, #landback, and civil rights- they are makers, dreamers, mothers, grandfathers, daughters and friends." Wilbur further shared that the people photographed are "deeply caring about their community. They are resilient. They will sing you a song. Cook you a meal of stuffed quahogs and lobster while your children play around a bonfire. They will laugh deep belly laughs with you. They are some of my favorite people and I cherish my time with them. And it is my great hope that through these portraits and this exhibition at the Cape Ann Museum, you too will come to cherish your Indigenous neighbors."

Matika Wilbur is a critically acclaimed social documentarian that belongs to the Swinomish and Tulalip peoples of coastal Washington. Project 562, her crowdfunded initiative to visit, engage, and photograph people from over 500 sovereign Tribal Nations in North America, is her fourth major creative venture elevating Native American identity and culture. In 2023, Wilbur's book *Project 562: Changing The Way We See Native America* was published with praise from *There There* author Tommy Orange, was longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal, and was a *New York Times* Bestseller.

Wilbur currently hosts the podcast [All My Relations](#), which invites guests to delve into different topics facing Native peoples today and explore the connections between land, creatural relatives, and one another. The podcast has been downloaded 3 million times. Wilbur has offered over 300 keynotes at such places as TED, Harvard University, Yale University, and Google and in November 2023, Wilbur released her curriculum *A Visual Learning Guide To: Transform. Indigenize. Decolonize.* in partnership with The National Education Association. In the five months it's been available, this curriculum has been adopted in over 200 classrooms.

[*1st Peoples: Portraits of the First Light*](#) will be on view Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. The exhibit is free and open to all. Light refreshments will be provided during the opening day, Saturday, June 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

On Friday, July 19 at 6 p.m., the Cape Ann Museum will host Matika Wilbur for a special Keynote Presentation accompanied by song, jubilee, and food from local Tribal peoples. Registration is

encouraged. To register, please visit: <https://www.capeannmuseum.org/event/1st-peoples-portraits-from-the-first-light-artist-talk-and-reception/>

On Saturday, July 20, the exhibition will be on view during [Indigenous Heritage Day](#) at CAM Green from 1 to 4 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.



CAM's Native Initiative design, created by SmokeSignals in partnership with the Cape Ann Museum, is a play-off of Eastern Woodlands patterns with two common pots. This graphic is used by the Museum as a recognizable visual tying together all of the elements of CAM's ongoing Native Initiatives including public projects, objects on display, events, and educational materials.

1st Peoples: Portraits of the First Light is funded in part by the Institute for Museum & Library Services.



The Cape Ann Museum, founded in 1875, exists to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of the area and to keep it relevant to today's audiences. Spanning 44,000 square feet, the Museum is one of the major cultural institutions on Boston's North Shore welcoming more than 25,000 local, national, and international visitors each year to its exhibitions and programs. In addition to fine art, the Museum's collections include decorative art, textiles, artifacts from the maritime and granite industries, four historic structures, a Library & Archives and a sculpture park in the heart of downtown Gloucester. In Summer 2021, the Museum opened the 12,000 square foot Janet & William Ellery James Center at the Cape Ann Museum Green. The campus is located on the site at the intersection of Washington and Poplar Streets in Gloucester and is open seasonally.

The Cape Ann Museum is located at 27 Pleasant Street in Gloucester and is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. General admission is \$15.00 adults, \$12.00 Cape Ann residents, seniors, and students. Youth (under 18) and Museum members are free. Cape Ann residents can visit for free on the first Friday (from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) and second Saturday (10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) of each month. More information can be found on www.capeannmuseum.org or please call (978)283-0455 x110.

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