

Documentary on wisdom keepers refreshing change from TV fare

By F. Henry Lickers

For the past 34 years, I have refused to have a television in my household. My wife and I agreed that the programming that we saw on TV did not reflect the values and methods of teaching which had been taught to us. This view has been reinforced over the years by the little amounts of TV that I have seen while on business trips. The Great Silver Eye, with its need for more and more action and stimulus, is not the way in which most people truly learn, and it is not the way most people live.

Mohawk Wisdom Keepers by Danny Beaton was a refreshing change from the normal fare which is dished up to us.

Story telling and life-learning techniques are methods used by native people to pass information from one person to another, from one group of people to another, and from one generation to another. The way in which this information is passed is intimate and personal. This documentary reflects the way native people teach. Each section of the film is like a Living Portrait of these wisdom keepers.

The documentary, *Mohawk Wisdom Keepers* is aptly named. Tom Porter, Harriet Jock, Judy Swamp, Alice and Lehman Gibson are known and acknowledge wis-



Elder Tom Porter and film-maker Danny Beaton

dom keepers among the Mohawk and all native people. To hear their voices and see their faces speak to me was a moving experience. It also helps to have known Anna and Harriet Jock as well as Tommy Porter and Judy Swamp. These people have always been true to the teaching of their Elders and leaders of their communities. As I listened to the words of these people the time seemed to melt away and before I knew it the film was finished. I didn't realize that 45 minutes had passed but I realized that I had to watch and listen to it again.

Harriet Jock spoke about her mother Anna in a way that will touch anyone who watches the film. Her expression softened as she spoke about the joy of living

with her mother and learning the things she needed to know.

Tom Porter spoke with his usual eloquence about the world's spiritual and physical conditions. While his message spoke of dire consequences of the modern world's actions, he did not leave us without hope. The original instructions that the Creator gave us are still here. All we have to do is listen to both our hearts and minds to understand the message.

Note: Danny Beaton's newest file project - "The Iroquois Speak Out for Mother Earth" will be broadcast on Vision TV at 9 p.m. on March 30th.

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