

*Cultural Industry and Political Expression:  
The Rise of Canadian Inuit Film Making*  
Friday–Saturday, April 22–23, 2011  
The Gifford Room, 221 Kroeber Hall, UC Berkeley

RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY

*Includes Synopses of Films and a Transcript of the Discussion*

Canadian Studies Program Assistant Director *Rita Ross* graciously welcomed the group of anthropologists, Canadianists, ethnologists, film makers, and members of the general public gathered in the UC Berkeley Anthropology Department's Gifford Room on Friday, April 22 for a ground-breaking festival and symposium devoted to Inuit film making—quite possibly the first such event ever to be held on the West coast. She then introduced David Stewart, Academic Relations and Cultural Affairs Officer of the Canadian Consulate General San Francisco/Silicon Valley. Mr. Stewart thanked her on behalf of the Consulate and of Consul General Cassie Doyle, and expressed pleasure that people had come such a long way to help stimulate awareness of Canadian Inuit art and society. The Consulate works in conjunction with the Canadian Studies Program, and with a network of similar entities throughout the country, doing outreach to raise Canada's profile in the U.S. There is a growing interest in Arctic matters, as this event and others like it demonstrate.

*INTRODUCTION: Nelson Graburn*

Professor Graburn reported that upon speaking of his involvement with an upcoming Inuit film festival, he had frequently been met with allusions to Alaskan or Greenlandic work—to which he had responded that in fact he had *Canadian* work, which was even better. He had also encountered the question of whether Inuit involvement with film making and media such as television might signify a loss of Native culture and incorporation into white, “Hollywood” culture, or whether it might on the contrary constitute a form of resistance, a *strengthening* of one's own culture. Either way, the context in which this debate resides is definitely changing over time, as well shall be seeing in the films.

Canadian Inuit have countered threats to their language and culture, resulting from powerful governmental attempts to assimilate them, in part by developing their own media production systems, such as the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC). The introduction of broadcast media into Inuit society, around 1960, coincided with the first major government push to equip Inuit with the accoutrements of Canadian society—wooden houses, electricity, education, etc.—and making it more difficult for them to conduct their traditional lifestyle. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) began providing radio in Inuktitut in the town of Inuvik, in the Western Arctic, in 1960, and slightly later in Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit). CBC dispatched Elijah Menarik, an Inuit from James Bay, to Iqaluit in 1960 to start

up radio broadcasting there, which consisted mainly of Inuktitut translations of the CBC news. The first Inuit-themed television programming began in 1967, with Southern-produced black-and-white film being shipped to the fourteen local communities that possessed local broadcast capability. A lone Inuktitut-language program—running for a half hour once a week, and hosted by Menarik—involved traditional activities like fishing, hunting, and story-telling, with occasional visits by Inuit guests. Most Inuit found these boring, especially the younger generation.

In 1973 CBC began to broadcast its regular news via satellite—Southern-produced, Southern-oriented, and primarily Southern-hosted. Such programming could certainly be perceived as promoting assimilation, and contained as well the insidious germ of the white man’s “clock time,” resulting in the imposition on traditional activities like hunting of the TV schedule: “Better get back soon—I want to watch hockey!” Younger people began to clamor for the right to produce their *own* television and other media. To this end a number of Inuit went South to learn production techniques. Film maker and conference participant *Mini Aodla Freeman* was already there, and had published the pathbreaking *Life Among the Qallunaat*, which viewed the peculiarities of Southern behavior with anthropological scrutiny and attained considerable celebrity as the first external critique of Ottawa society. She also made ten films, two of which we’ll be seeing today.

With the founding of the IBC in 1981, the Inuit began the empowering activity of producing their own media, rapidly acquiring the techniques, procedures, and strategies this endeavor required. The origin and achievements of the IBC are chronicled in *Starting Fire with Gunpowder* (which Graburn considers one of the most brilliant ethnographic films ever made and routinely shows to the five hundred students in his anthropology survey course), part of the indigenously produced “As Long As The Rivers Flow” series. Indigenous programming from a wide variety of locations was rapidly becoming part of the daily life in Inuit society. Young people trained both in the North and the South produced documentaries, fictional programs, and radio. Eventually, the collective Isuma (“Thinking”) was founded in Igloolik by Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, in response to the general Native resentment of a number of aspects of Southern control of production, including the strictly budgeted, Southern-allocated funding, the sense of “colonial” control, and the compulsion to work to the clock. Isuma, by contrast, adopted a more flexible approach to production, allowing films to grow in response to the rhythms of the weather, funding, and inspiration. It also fosters work offering an insider’s perspective, a crucial antidote to past, outsider-produced work like the canonical *Nanook of the North*.

Not all of this development occurred in an Inuit-only context. Kunuk could probably not have worked without his cameraman, Norman Cohn, and we have with us today *John*

*Houston*, whose father, James, of whom you've probably heard, was indirectly involved in stimulating Inuit participation in film.<sup>1</sup>

When the elder Houston's popular retelling of the Arctic legend *White Dawn* was being filmed in the North by Philip Kaufman, the Japanese actors who had been cast in the lead roles just didn't work out, and were replaced by members of the local Inuit populace. Their enjoyment of, and aptitude for, the work gave an immediate boost to the idea of Inuit-made film. John trained as an artist abroad like his father, and became a printmaker ("Sharp-Shinned Hawk," a magnificent print for which John was the master printer, hung in the Gifford Room throughout the proceedings).<sup>2</sup> He continued to make films with and about Inuit, and founded the Ajjit Media Organization to support Inuit film making in Nunavut.

While working for IBC, Zacharias Kunuk made the non-narrative collage *From an Inuit Point of View* (1985). After that, in conjunction with his indispensable cameraman Norman Cohn, writer and editor Paul Apak, and cultural narrator Pauloosie Quliktalik, he made two films about Inuit pre-contact life in the 1930s, dealing with traditional Inuit skills and activities like building meeting-houses and constructing weirs for trapping fish. Isuma then produced several films about contemporary Inuit activities and events, among them commercial carving; an unauthorized bowhead whale hunting; and the 1999 creation of Nunavut. Then came Kunuk and Cohn's *Atanarjuat* (The Fast Runner; 2001), a hugely successful retelling of a thousand-year-old Inuit legend that won the Caméra d'Or at Cannes, and their *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (2006), about the victory of Christianity over shamanism. They also produced Jobie Weetaluktuk's *Umiaq Skin Boat*, another film about traditional skills, which appears on this conference's agenda. Isuma has throughout maintained a principled adherence to the idea of Inuit control of production, the revival and transmission of traditional Inuit knowledge, and a reflection of the Inuit approach to things.

Films addressing the colonial (or post-colonial) condition include *Starting Fire with Gunpowder* (mentioned above); Weetaluktuk's *Kakalakkuvik*, about the horrors of the residential school system; and *Ullumi*, which examines the challenges faced by Inuit living in

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<sup>1</sup>Jim Houston (1921–2005) was a Canadian artist who in 1948 flew to Hudson Bay to paint the North and discovered the Inuit of Inukjuak making small carvings. He bought some, encouraged more, and later returned to foster Inuit art for sale. Living in Cape Dorset with his wife Alma from 1953, he also taught the Inuit print-making and he became the major force publicizing these new commercial arts by his writing, speaking, and film making.

<sup>2</sup> John also worked with his mother Alma running the Houston Gallery North in Lunenburg NS (1981– ). In addition to the Inuit Art gallery, he continued as a print-maker, carving the wood blocks (Japanese style) for local Maritime artists. Later he worked for five years to foster print-making in the Inuit community of Pangnirtung, NWT.

the contemporary world. *Qallunaanik Piusiqsiuriniq* (Why White People Are Funny) satirically posits a research facility on Qallunaat (White People) Studies in which Inuit scholars present papers on the numerous peculiarities of the *qallunaat*. Several disturbing topics being dealt with in contemporary Inuit film are the non-Inuit ancestry of many Inuit (first broached in Zebedee Nungak's *MacGregor Tartan Eskimo*), and global climate change—"Silaqaraluarnaq" ("The weather is out of its mind"), which was shown later in our program.

The Inuit film industry in the north is thriving. Canada is unusual in the extent of its successful cooperation between white and indigenous peoples, and possibly unique in having a national television network (the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network [APTN]), with daily non-stop aboriginal-language programming: you can go all day without hearing French or English!

**Film: *STARTING FIRE WITH GUNPOWDER* (1991)**

An exhilarating montage documenting the multifaceted history and operation of the IBC, this film is anchored by the narration of Inuk film maker Ann Meekitjuk Hanson (who had been the lead female actor in the previously mentioned Houston film *White Dawn*). She offers the idea that Inuit have taken to filmed media with such alacrity because they are by nature "a communicative people," and such media as television afforded a new way of communication. It is significant that these new media are strongly visual, as writing has not traditionally been a major Inuit medium of communication: there are more films in Inuktitut than books in the language. IBC's output runs the gamut from depiction of traditional culture to the wildly popular adventures of Inuit superhero Super Shamou. Dramatizations render treatment of difficult issues like domestic violence and substance abuse effective, and charming hand puppets lend grace and surprising verisimilitude to homely vignettes. The IBC gives a face and a voice to subjects as diverse as glue-sniffing and home-birthing, and from the difficulties and rewards of the past to the challenges and confusions of the present.

Toward the end, the film shows an old man performing the eponymous activity, in which a potentially violent substance (gunpowder) is used to peaceful ends—a symbol of the Inuit way of life in general, and of their adaptation to the volatile medium of film in particular. "The most important task is to record the words of the Elders while we can. . . . Their recorded wisdom will be the heritage of Nunavut."

**PANEL DISCUSSION: INUIT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Nelson Graburn (NG):* This was a good introduction to four subjects for the next two days. You'll notice some of the people from that film are still around—in this very room! From this kind of thing many of us have been inspired; this encapsulated a lot of it. I'd like to invite our visitors to come up here, to a discussion of the relation between film and TV development

and the economic development of Inuit in the North. [Introduces film makers *Mini Aodla Freeman (MF)*, *Lena Ellsworth (LE)*, *John Houston (JH)*, and *Jobie Weetaluktuk (JW)*.]

*NG*: One or two thoughts: There are three possibilities for development—economic development, political development, and making of TV, films, videos, etc. First, making these productions brings in money and helps people have regular jobs; it gives them a view of themselves as people who are creative, not just working for somebody else. Second, the North can draw in outside companies and with them, larger outside sources of money, which are used to employ not only actors but all the support staff needed for large productions. Third—and in the long run, perhaps most important—these images go all over the world, so Native people of the North, their arts, and their lands get better known, which brings in tourists—some interested in hunting and fishing, others to see artwork, others to trek in the mountains. We see more and more as the ice gets less in the Summer an increase in the number of cruise-ships, which has gone from three in Summer 2000 to over fifty every season now. How to control this is a bit of a problem, but it is providing some economic opportunities. This all ties together with a whole lot of things that are happening in the Arctic.

*JH*: [Greets the assembly in Inuktitut.] Welcome everybody—welcome here, in the same way we have been made welcome here. I want to thank Nelson and Rita and the organizers for bringing us together. You really have a tremendous resource in Nelson Graburn, who has no superficial connection to the Arctic. By contrast, this morning I was surfing the Internet, looking at the biographies of Inuit who are in film: it is about a micron shallow. If you look up Jobie Weetaluktuk, hundreds of sites will say they give you everything about Jobie there is to know, but there's nothing there; they don't know him.

I had the privilege of growing up among Inuit and between two languages, two cultures, which provided some insights. The Inuk word for “be welcome” says more than that: it means you feel like you're on a solid base, you're grounded, you're standing solidly, and you're feeling comfortable: “Feel like you're standing on solid ground.” This was a deep thing in the experience of our family. When I grew up we didn't know we were white kids and my friends were Inuit. Then I moved South, I saw people grouped by skin color and race, and didn't understand. As a child in the Arctic, I always helped visitors. My father was the first representative of the Canadian Government in the Arctic; he was always looking out for Native development opportunities. There was a monopoly by the fur-trading companies at the time. If you didn't want to hunt fox—Inuit had always hunted fox, but if you didn't want to hunt fox there was a problem, as the Hudson's Bay Company wanted you to hunt only fox every day, nothing else. My father made a list of initiatives in one of his sketchbooks, *Ten Initiatives: What Can We Do?* One of the ideas was to develop carving (the Inuit have been carving for thousands of years, though not commercially); print making was another one. Before film, these were used as a form of communication—a lot of communication happened through those pieces of stone, [saying] “This is our way of life.” In the Fall of 1957 in Cape

Dorset, printmaking was introduced, and became another way of explaining things. The Church had come down strongly against shamanism, the old religion; Inuit were forbidden to talk about it. But the Church also realized the Inuit had to have a source of livelihood, and if they could make money making carvings and prints, some of it might show up in the collection plate. And it was *mute*: it showed spirits and so forth, but didn't really talk about them. That it was mute testimony left room for film making: this print or carving is beautiful, but *what* is that person thinking? Film making was quite wonderful in that sense.

I was a fly on the wall when the novel *White Dawn* was chosen by Paramount Pictures to be a feature film, with Philip Kaufman directing it, in 1973. I went North and got hired on as a coffee boy. Something very important happened at that time. There were different agendas: the people from Hollywood went North with the idea that they would “extract” this project, and brought as many skilled people as they could, then picked up some local people, as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The lead Native roles would be played by Japanese; they had it covered. The film makers got a real surprise: this was a subtle, very different culture, not easily captured. There were a couple of very good Japanese actors whom we'd all respect if we saw them in Japanese films (one of them had been in *Seven Samurai*), but for the Inuit, who were being very polite and accepting, it was laughable. When this actor stepped out of the igloo, his movements were traditionally Japanese, blocky movements [Houston produced a few stylized, squared-off, big-samurai moves]. In the Arctic, you'd slip and break your neck! The Inuit carefully choose their steps, there's an economy of action. So the director wondered, “Is it going to take longer to get local Inuit to learn how to act, or to get the Japanese to act Inuit?,” and realized they were better off with Inuit: “We're never going to get there with the Japanese.” So there was this conversation that was all about not losing face, in which Philip Kaufman offered the lead Japanese actor a different part, and the actor said that actually he had just been offered a big part back home, if it wouldn't offend anyone he might just accept that, and Kaufman saying “I wouldn't want to stop you from a great opportunity!” It was all done in a way Inuit would approve of—there was no big confrontation. And in the end, off went the Japanese and it created an opportunity: the Inuit were not just hewing wood and drawing water, they weren't just driving snowmobiles around: suddenly they were lead characters.

What happened on location making *The White Dawn* was that Inuit looked around them, and saw a way forward. Ann Hanson, an Inuk from Iqaluit, was chosen as lead actress and went on to become a Commissioner of Nunavut; there's a list of ten or fifteen Inuit from that film who ended up in the media and other pivotal positions. I watched it again the other day and saw people realizing they were *needed*: there was a deep cultural knowledge you couldn't fake, and couldn't get any other way—real cultural awareness. Like throat singing and drum dancing: these things had vanished; the missionaries had done their work so well that local Inuit denied drum dancing had ever been there. All of a sudden a DC-3 plane full

of dogs and sleds was imported from Igloolik: anything that Inuit had kept strong was being imported at any cost. This was a very powerful message.

**LE:** I'm fairly new with the Government of Nunavut. I never thought I would work with the government. I had a lot of resentment. I had an identity crisis all through my childhood—my father's white and my mother's Inuk. A lot of pieces of this film were my role models. I feel that we're at this stage right now where we are lacking. Regarding economic development, I think the Government of Nunavut finally recognizes that this should be done, that industry will benefit the territory, because our territory has one of the highest unemployment rates. It has to do with the 75% high-school drop-out rate: there are a lot of uneducated people. My daughter's age group (16) has embraced technology, cameras; we're getting more into that. It's also a way of reaching out to Canada and the rest of the world, to bring in tourists; it's a great vehicle for attracting people. The Nunavut government's focusing now, it has created a Tourism and Culture Section. They're hoping to work toward that and make it stronger. I'm currently visiting some communities doing tourism consultations. Some communities don't want tourists, for different reasons—cultural preservation, or not having enough control, wanting more community and local control rather than the government coming in and disturbing the wildlife.

**NG:** There is a policy in Nunavut to develop media and money allocation organizations and leadership, but they must have some policy directions. \$500,000 was allotted to Isuma and other projects. Is there still an annual money input? Is there some subsidy for film companies, to entice film companies to come in—are those programs still going?

**JH:** I helped write that film policy. The reason those things happened is that we all were trying to make films in Nunavut, with everybody feeling very separated and on their own. There didn't seem to be any cohesion (this would be in the 1980s, let's say), and there was RWED, the old Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, and there was nothing for film. If you were trying to do *anything* in film it could be very tricky. If a community wanted a film to happen, the local hamlet had a CIP—Community Improvement Program—funding, and they would say, "It would improve our community if Lena came and did a film," or something, and they would apply for funding and everybody would turn a blind eye and said "Okay, never mind: it's film, but if everybody thinks it's community improvement, we'll go with it." Then there were the year-end monies you'd find in March if you knew Ed McKenna, say, or some other highly placed bureaucrat. You could pitch your story—there was no forum for it, you'd have dinner at his house and say, "I'm trying to do something," and he'd think about it, and there would be \$55,000 sitting in a drawer somewhere. But you had to know who and when to talk to them, it was a kind of old boys' network; it wasn't really even. And I was one of those people—I was doing okay, I was getting funding; but it didn't seem a very good system for building anything up. So we got together with, by then it was being called the Department of Sustainable Development, and there was a film symposium held, before Nunavut—the first one was in 1998, the next one in

1999, and while it was being paid for by EDT—no, it was DSD: the acronyms get to me—in any case it was being convened by the economic development part of the territorial government, and we reached a point where we asked them to leave the room: “Could you leave for an hour and a half, have a nice lunch or something?” (They were our hosts; so this was interesting!) And we held a meeting and elections, and I was voted president of Ajjit, which means “Images,” an association which represented everybody who was a stakeholder: hairdresser, skidoo driver, or producer. I did that for nine or ten years. One thing we recognized was that there needed to be a policy so we [film makers] could be recognized, and not have to pretend to be something else, which was demoralizing. We pushed the government to come up with a film policy, but it was taking them so long, and after a while they explained all the delays: There’s so much we don’t know; with film, the more you get into it, the weirder it is. So Charlotte DeWolff and I rolled up our sleeves and said, “We’ll be ex officio members of your task force, and we’ll help write it.” It was a little unconventional, but everything in the Arctic’s a little unconventional. In the draft policy we advocated for a film commissioner; every other jurisdiction in Canada has a commissioner to talk with governments and other stuff, and we need one. They suggested that Nunavut film could be created in-house, just an extra desk in the corner; but we insisted it could not be like that. It had to be a separate corporation, at arm’s length; otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to talk to them directly; we’d be scared all the time.

You need all these pieces to create order and change. Today there is funding in the range of \$550,000 a year. The problem with it is, we’ve been quite vocal in Nunavut, attracting people to come in—and when a film comes in, it sort of pollinates things, gets people thinking about new techniques, and then you’ve got to have the Inuit film industry growing up. \$550,000 is not enough for that. It’s capped, it’s juried, and in any case if you have a project and you’re approved, you’re going to get a “labor rebate”—really a grant, or contribution, from the government. It’s calculated as if it were a labor rebate, but as I mentioned, it’s capped, and juried, so you cannot count on it. As producers organize their films they have to work one, two, three, four years ahead, and if things are changing every year it’s very hard to plan. By contrast, Iceland, which was *nowhere* in film, did something very different, and the government got behind it fully, no questions asked: “You come to Iceland, you make your film here, show us the receipts, money you spent in Iceland, and we’ll give you back 14 percent for every dollar you spend.” [Incentive has recently been increased to a whopping 20 percent refund on production costs in Iceland.] It’s automatic, no funny stuff, no poring over the receipts—like when you go to Europe and you get that VAT refund at the airport; they just stamp the receipt, they don’t ask, “Well, what did you spend it on? What time of year was it? Well, if it was that season, it’s not eligible.” There’s no funny stuff; they don’t do any of that, it’s just, “Ka-bing, ka-bam, ka-boom, here’s your money back, thanks! Come again!” Director Clint Eastwood said he loved filming *Flags of Our Fathers* in Iceland; and some Bond films dropped millions there. They know that for each million dollars they spend there, they’ll get \$140,000 back; they can plan years in advance; there are no questions asked. Well,



you can't be doing pornography; there's a very short list of provisos—less than one page. Here it's very different, because it's capped, and it's juried, and it's time-sensitive, and so forth. Our success is our problem: through Ajjit and the Nunavut government working together it stimulated the industry, every year there are new people coming into film making, and Nunavut film looks at them and says "We've got to give you a chance." There just isn't enough to go around. What do you do? Support young film makers—which is essential—or support the older, established ones? The only way is to leap in like Iceland, and stick by it. In Nunavut they say, "But what if an \$11 million film came in? We'd be ruined!" I don't think so.

**MF:** I used to receive money from the federal government when [the Inuit film industry] started. Then when the manager had to move away to Iqaluit, the money didn't come any more. And they had to raise money from private places like Heritage Canada and Makivik Corporation all these different little organizations. Then I think when Nunavut started the money was included to operate the IBC. I think that's where they're getting their money at present.

**NG:** So it's decided in Nunavut?

**MF:** Yes, exactly. They have to run six stations across Nunavut and pay the people that are involved.

**NG:** That brings up a question: Nunavut is now separate from the Inuit territory of Northern Québec, which is called Nunavik. So if Nunavut gets its own money from its own tax sources, what has happened to support of film making and television and so on in Nunavik? You [to JW] come from Nunavik and you operate there: has it lost out?

**JW:** Nunavik is in Québec; it's part of the Arctic region of Québec. It's Inuit territory. Where I'm from is Inukjuak.

**NG:** [Displays map, shows separation of Nunavut and Nunavik, the former being an independent territory, the latter part of Québec.]

**JW:** Yes, well Québec is always special [chuckles]. I said I'm from Inukjuak, Québec, but actually I'm living out of territory in Victoria, B.C., for now. It gets hard when you're looking for funding from a province. Québec has a funding agency called SODEC [Société de développement des entreprises culturelles] for the Francophone community mostly. English and First Nations can access it, but it's really designed for Francophones, to promote the French language and culture. Although in theory I can access those funds, what I will be promising is my *own* culture, my *own* language; and although Québec wants to accommodate my people, sometimes we get the crumbs of this funding agency—especially if I'm living out of the province. Then it's much more difficult, because I belong to the James Bay Treaty. If you're Inuit in Nunavut you have another treaty, but in Québec we have the

treaty with the Cree—a separate treaty but with the same party. All that’s to say I have no real serious connection. Where I get my funding from mostly is Canada Council for the Arts; they have money for artists of many descriptions—film makers, dancers, painters . . . many artists. That seems to work best for me. I’m always thinking about going back to Québec, especially Montréal, because that’s where I have most of my work. So it always seems like I have to go back there.

The economy of Québec is very mixed. It’s a mixture of traditional Inuit and white economies. I make films and I try to make them where I grew up because I want to tell the story of my people—that’s important for many of the Inuit people: they want to represent their own stories. As John was saying about *White Dawn*, and imported productions, we do get a lot of people who come into our region, and it’s wonderful when people are interested in you and your people, and I do work with some of these people. Just this morning I was doing a translation for BBC, who have an ongoing interest in Nunavut, to show my language and culture at least in small bits; it’s very nice to have all that. We want to tell our own stories and develop those ideas, and to be more than hewers of wood. That’s where we want to go.

Québec has its own identity and we’re part of that, but we’re really apart from it too. This week we’re having another referendum for self-government. It’s very difficult in some ways, because some of the fighting is very personal, though not as bad as the James Bay Agreement, which was very volatile. But it seems like many organizations are trying to sell us what many of us don’t want. Many Inuit want to be apart from Québec but in some ways we can’t be, because we have very small numbers. We’re a big part of the territory, but small numbers—there are about 10,000 Inuit.

**NG:** We’re talking about this particular subject, the James Bay Treaty—in the 70’s [the Inuit] lost the title to land, but gained some rights and a small amount of money; they have their government and run the school board, financed from the Treaty. Some have done well on the Treaty, invested well. Why don’t *they* support you? Does Makivik have support, for their own people to be expressive, and run their own TV and radio and film making?

**JW:** Makivik really manages our compensation money, invests these monies for us, runs some business for us; but culture is apart from that. Culture is always the small thing—something you think about *after*; like, when it’s time to watch TV, that’s culture time..

**NG:** Well, one of them got a bonus of \$600,000 last year, and the other one \$400,000, so you’d have thought they’d have some money left over for culture.

**Audience Member:** I have two financing questions after listening to you. When there’s never enough money I can see how it can get volatile. One question is, does every foot [of film] have to count—you can’t leave stock on the floor or anything, because money’s so tight? Also, are certain subjects taboo, like child abuse—you can’t get funding for such subjects?

*JW:* That's a very tough question. Some of the sexual stuff you can't talk about. Even in meetings—like we have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which came to many Northern communities, and people did talk about stuff like pedophilia, sexual abuse, and stuff like that. I guess in some ways you could depict that, or talk about it, in a documentary film.

*MF:* To answer her question, like I said, the government of Inuit, of Nunavut, which is based in Iqaluit, and has its own offices throughout the thirty-six communities in the North . . . because those communities are so far apart, you can only visit them by airplane or skidoo, or in Summer by boat, which might take a month or two—the financing part, sometimes you have to resist. I had to raise my own money to make a couple of films in the past. Thank goodness my husband's very good at raising money! But today the Inuit government does help Inuit broadcasting.

*Audience Member:* Is it significant that I haven't heard APTN mentioned yet?

*NG:* I mentioned it. Yes, APTN is very important.

*JH:* There used to be a consortium called TVNC [Television Northern Canada], and the Government of the Northwest Territories (this was before Nunavut was created) sat on that board. So in fact, the government was actually a co-broadcaster. And that meant that when they wanted to do public service announcements and so forth they could commission television to be made. It wasn't a third-party process. This is a little unusual, but it did get some things done back in the day. In 1999, the CRTC granted TVNC a license for a national broadcast network, and it was going to be an aboriginal broadcaster, rather than an Inuit broadcaster. And that was met with great joy at the time—people like David Poisey [co-director of *Starting Fire With Gunpowder*] were delighted. Part of the mandate of the new Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN) was that twenty-five percent of its broadcast material had to be in a Canadian aboriginal language. For the first few years, ninety-five percent of that twenty-five percent was in Inuktitut—because the rest of the First Nations' languages weren't really too together; most people couldn't speak their language, and there was such a disparity: people who *could* speak weren't making films, while people who wanted to make TV generally couldn't speak the language. Of course there were some exceptions to this, but that was by and large true; and it *must* have been true, because for years, APTN, which had a Canada-wide, aboriginal-wide mandate, was getting all but one percent of its programming from Inuit, because Inuit had held onto their language by and large. Then, with a lot of fostering and all the changes that happened, they had a production facility in Winnipeg, bringing in people from the community and developing other aboriginal producers, and today there are several television series going on which have aboriginal directors—not in Inuktitut, not in the Arctic. Basically, what we've come down to today is that again we're hobbled by our own success, because with APTN

succeeding many more broadcasters have been developed much closer to their Winnipeg home.

It's expensive to make any kind of film, TV, any media project, in the Arctic. If the story demands that you go to more than one community, you're in real trouble, because it costs thousands and thousands of dollars. You could nip over to Bali or Ulan Bator or Tasmania far cheaper than you could travel between two parts of the Canadian Arctic. It's a monopoly situation; there's very little competition up there, and it's just thousands of dollars. When you do get to a place, and you have to put your crew up, you could maybe get billeted, which would save your budget; but otherwise, if everybody expects to be put up in a hotel, it's \$200 a night plus meals. There can be up to four beds in a room and they're getting two hundred bucks for each person, plus meals: they're getting a thousand bucks a day out of the people staying in that room. That's lovely—unless you've got this little film budget which you just feel falling apart in your hands.

So, in answer to your question earlier—“Does every foot have to count?”—yes, absolutely every foot has to count. I'm kind of a traditional film guy, I learned that from Philip Kaufman in *The White Dawn*. It's just like you've got twenty-dollar bills whirring through the gate. If you're interviewing Elders, I feel like an Elder tells a story three times. The Elder will tell you a little synopsis. If you ask them about a controversial subject like shamanism they have to think before they speak, then there's usually a short synopsis—the *Reader's Digest* version—and then they'll stop, probably thinking: “He's a white guy; his attention span is severely limited.” Usually we as a race go up there and go, “Oh, I want to learn your language. I want to learn all about your culture; this is all so *fascinating!*” And then you get taught about two words and say, “Okay, that's enough of that; those words are too hard to pronounce: I'm done.” Inuit are used to that, so when you say, “I want to learn everything about shamanism,” they think, “Sure you do. I'll give you twenty-five words on the subject, and maybe that will be enough for you.” So the Elder will give you a bit then stop. Nelson will be very familiar with this as well: you just hold their attention; don't break eye contact. I've got a crew with whom I have to communicate in other, subtle ways, perhaps telepathically, because I'm not going to break contact with the Elder. I'm just there, being sympathetic, nodding, smiling, receptive: “Bring it on.” And they're thinking, “He wants more! My goodness.” Then they break into the main opus, which could be ten minutes or longer, and I'm still there, receptive and nodding, because the story comes in threes. And then, the Elder will look at you—you're still nodding, still receptive—and give you a little tag at the end, which summarizes the whole thing. So you sort of get an intro, the body, and then a summary. And I find that in my film, if I go through and take the little bits that the Elders have said at the end, it makes a beautiful little farewell thing—like at the end of a documentary, when you've got ten or eleven people and each of them says one little thing, and it brings the whole thing to life.

So it's a very expensive exercise, if you want to try to do all that stuff, and if you want to go to different communities to do it. It can be crippling. So you have to have whatever support you can have. Often it comes down to the government: Nunavut are trying to have their own government; Nunavik, to whatever degree they can, being part of a province, are also trying to do their own self-governing. But it seems to me, and I wonder if Jobie agrees with me, that these jurisdictions have kind of inherited the fundamental idea that business and culture are two different things. There's the Canada Council: if you wake up and say, "I just want to wander around in my back yard and count the dandelions, and maybe my sister could film me doing that," then that would be a Canada Council thing; it's like a flight of fancy. Then, if you have a real economic, nuts-and-bolts idea, a feature film, four hundred people are going to work on it and it's going to be an industrial endeavor, then that comes under Telefilm Canada, or some of our funding agencies which are economic development agencies basically. That is a schism, there is a kind of schizophrenia with this thing which of course is both: it's not strictly art and not business. Film is a funny thing: it's never strictly art and not business, and never strictly business and not art. It's the two. If we could see some strategic partnerships between departments—for instance in Nunavut (I'll be specific) we have the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth. It's a lovely name for a department; in a way the department has the most ambitious mandate of any in Nunavut: culture, language, Elders, and youth—that's what it's all about, right? They are the smallest, least funded department, but they've got all these noble things that they want to try to do. Then you have the Department of Economic Development and Transportation (ED&T), which is doing the economic side, and we've already seen that the amount of money that's going into this thing is not enough, each year, and each year people are coming into the system with great hope, and they don't ever get to fly—it's like your plane never gets to take off. I would love to see a strategic alliance between ED&T and the Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth (CLEY). The Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth used to fund films—they used to fund my films, for example—in a meaningful way. They gave \$50,000 to my second film. Then they started saying, "We don't support companies"; but how do you make a film if you're not a company? They said they wouldn't support anything corporate, it had to be just individuals. And on the federal level you have a dichotomy, a schism like this, as well: you have to support artists and art projects—Jobie's been talking about getting funding from the Canada Council, which is that side, it's the arts side. Then you've got the Canada Media Fund, or Telefilm Canada as it used to be called, which supports the industry side. So you've got industry and art, and that's been perpetuated into the Inuit jurisdiction. It would have been lovely if they could have said "Inuit don't see a big difference"—like the Inuit I know don't say, "Oh, that's *art*, that's not business." That's not an Inuit way of looking at projects; it's more "What needs to be done? Let's do it."

It would be lovely to see something like this: up here on the federal level you have the Canada Council; down here—I'm speaking about the Nunavut model; Jobie could speak to a parallel in Nunavik—but down here you have Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth: a very

natural, strategic partnership there. The Canada Council doesn't know how to give out money in the Arctic: they don't know where the people are or what the projects are—self-admittedly. So why don't they give a purse to be administered by Culture, Languages, Elders, and Youth on the ground, on a matching level, which would double the funding that CLEY has to support artistic projects. And what they do, is all the young people who are being stymied now, who are trying to get their first projects off the ground, who need \$10,000, \$15,000 development or something to get a little film going—there you go. You've got Canada Council up here, federally, you've got Culture, Languages, Elders, and Youth down here, and they're cooperating on this sort of more arts side. And over here you've got the Canada Media Fund, or Telefilm Canada, and down here you've got the Department of Sustainable Development: strategic alliance there. And then of course the two sides have to talk to each other. That's the big problem—I'm sure your government can't be any different from ours, all these big [silos], all this big business going on, but they aren't always communicating between each other. They need a protocol for how to talk.

It sounds like an awful lot to be done, but I truly believe that if something like that were to be put into place, you would really see change. Instead of people like Jobie poking around and saying, "Well, I'm going to see if I can't find enough money to do another film"—I'm in the same boat right now—we'd get some gunpowder to get the fire restarted. Thank you.

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**NG:** The next two films we're showing are both quite old, and not necessarily professional copies, so they may not be up to the wonderful standard of the copy made of the last one, which you could see was also really old. We promise you that tomorrow we're going to be really up to date, and we won't be so technologically challenged.

**MF:** I just want to surprise Nelson to thank him for making all the arrangements for us to come here, and waiting for us at the airport. We would like to throat-sing two songs. She [Basja Ellsworth] and I just met, so we're not professionals—we haven't practiced that much, but we'll go at it.

[Mini Aodla Freeman and Basja Ellsworth, the daughter of Lena Ellsworth, perform two traditional Inuk throat-singing pieces, to great acclaim.]

**NG:** Thank you very much, from the bottom of my throat! Mini needs no introducing. She's been here three or four times: she's worked for the government; she was one of the early people to get into film, media, and television; she was an author—very famous as a young woman, an anthropologist of white people; she's also written books on Inuit women artists, like the women artists of Cape Dorset; she has acted as a mediator, as an Elder, as a consultant. She's one of those people who has helped people all her life: all the places she's lived, she's always active. She's come here and helped us out a few times, and she's helping us out today. So welcome, Mini.

**MF:** I started out in film making by being hired by the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. I am one of the founders; there are six of us who founded IBC. I ran the IBC in Ottawa and had offices there; that's from where all the workers out in the field got paid. They got to film their own ideas in the field. Unfortunately, a few years ago, when I moved to Edmonton, they couldn't find another manager, so they moved the offices to Iqaluit, and the lawyer who was helping us said to me, "What is it that you want?" I said, "I want Inuit broadcasting to be run by Inuit, with films made by Inuit." He said, "How is that to be?" I said, "It won't be like CBC—Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—and I don't want it to be like any other TV. I want it to be Inuit broadcasting." And he said "Okay. I get it." So he wrote down the bylaws for Inuit Broadcasting; by the time he finished it was two hundred pages long. The bylaws are somewhere. When they moved IBC they had all the papers from way back, and they started in an old American army base in Iqaluit. It was very wet in Spring, and all the films that were made by different film makers out in the field, and the bylaws, are gone. So it will be history for us, and when I die, it will die. [Laughs]

So that's how Inuit Broadcasting happened. It's still happening today, it still has five stations across the North in each different place, and we had ten board members from each different community. And that's how Inuit Broadcasting happened.

I have been interested in film ever since I saw a movie in residential school when I was five years old. I saw the first few movements and I took off—I was so scared! I was five years old. It was about Minnie Mouse and Mickey Mouse. I think what made me scared was that they kept saying "Mini." That's the first time I'd ever seen something moving on the wall.

That's not the only thing I became interested in: I also became very interested in skating, to be a skater. At the back of my mind was, "How do you become a skater when nuns don't give you information how to go about it?" So I had to forget all that, and I had to forget the filming and all that; and finally when I became the manager of Inuit Broadcasting I started filming. The money was there, with IBC, and I had to travel up north to make films. All in all, I made ten films, which are lost now. I only have the ones for which I raised money on my own. One of them I'll be showing.

I was born surrounded by politicians. My grandfather was a community leader, and my other grandfather was a community leader in our Summer camp. So I grew up with a very political family. So I came to hate politics, really hate it, and to have nothing to do with it. Even if some minister wanted to be voted for, I couldn't be interested. And then by accident this film I last made is on politics, about the Cree and James Bay, and when the dam was being built in James Bay: that was the reason the film was made. I hope you enjoy it. Thank you.

**Film: *NAJURSITUT* (The Keepers) (1994)**

Magnificent Northern scenery is juxtaposed with people discussing environmental change:

*Glen Okrainetz* (member of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee and the Provincial Government of British Columbia): We're trying to understand the ecosystem and the anthropogenic changes.

*Inuit Speaker*: If our ancestors hadn't managed our environment, we wouldn't be here.

*Glen Okrainetz*: There's a sense of partnership which is unusual—it cuts across political, scientific, and cultural boundaries, because people realize it's their *home* we're talking about.

*Inuit Speaker*: From what I have gathered, I believe we will eventually experience hunger.

*Biologist*: Phytoplankton are eaten by small copepods, which are eaten by cod (*ugaq*), which are eaten by seals and whales, which are eaten by people: at every step, pollution is concentrated ten times, because when you eat something most of it is burned off, and the rest goes into the fat. That's why pollution is so bad in the Arctic; it's not as bad in the South because there's a shorter food chain: grass–beef–men.

*Inuit Speaker*: Geese taste different from when I was young.

*Biologist*: I haven't lived on this land for fifty years and hunted the animals and eaten the food every day. That's why we should listen to the Elders.

*Inuit Speaker*: The young seem to have rediscovered eating Native food; they're joining us in meals now. Native food will never stop being eaten.

*Inuit Speaker*: I never really thought it was a hard way of living. All I can remember is that each and every day I was taken care of.

*Glen Okrainetz*: Instead of having teams of scientists going out for years at great expense, in a space of a year we've had people who actually live on Hudson Bay tell us what they know about it, what they've observed, the changes they've seen taking place.

*Inuit Speaker*: People dam to make money. As Inuit we realize their true intentions.

*Inuit Speaker*: From my innermost resolve, I am saying: Don't dam the river!

*Inuit Speaker*: We are looking at the future. You, the young person who has a child in your lap: your child is the future we're talking about.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**Audience Member**: If you were filming something like this today, would there be more women involved? It looked like a completely male-dominated event.



**MF:** I was there! At that time they were hiring people who had great knowledge of the area; that was the only reason why they had men at the time.

**Audience Member:** Was the water level *dropping* in 1994? Now the global warming people are saying the water is rising.

**MF:** I've talked to Inuit people and asked them about global warming. In the North, global warming is not happening soon. It's the repetition of things that went on over and over. That's the answer they give me.

**Audience Member:** The two ideas have completely different origins; they're not related at all. Both may be happening at the same time. One phenomenon is geological, and the other is meteorological.

**NG:** The land is rising in Hudson Bay because that is the area that was depressed by the ice mass.

**MF:** Inuit people believe that the reason it's happening in Hudson Bay is because salt water is mixing with fresh water.

**Audience Member:** What was the outcome of the dam situation? Did they build it?

**MF:** They built two dams, and they were going to build another one but both Inuit and Indians stopped that.

**NG:** A quick story about the next video. We had an exhibition of Inuit art at Berkeley; I had an Anthropology class put this on using the Hearst Museum here, and we had Mini come down. She came to my class and she was showing them how the Inuit wear clothes and hats and whatever, and I left for a minute, and when I came back I found she had plotted with the students and they were making a movie about the exhibit. It was incredible: it all happened behind my back. Mini was staying with us and by breakfast the next morning she had written the whole treatment and script for the film, telling us everything she wanted to show in it. So we hired a cameraman and started to shoot right away while Mini was still staying in Berkeley that week. The students in the class did all the editing, put the music in, everything. It was a miracle, created in Mini Freeman's mind in just twenty-four hours.

### **Film: *ILISAAT AMIA YIKAMI* (Berkeley Studies Inuit) (1993)**

A partially staged documentary, this film functions not only as a view into the life of a *Qallunaat* college student, for Freeman's students and countrymen back in Nunavut, but as a genuine anthropological record of a UC Berkeley Anthropology class in 1993. It commences with a survey of the quotidian activities of a student in her dorm, getting up and preparing for the day. Then Nelson Graburn's Anthropology 189 course on Inuit art is featured, first being introduced to the Inuktitut syllabic script, then discussing the upcoming exhibition,

with students making suggestions and sharing their ideas and concerns. Graburn marvels that his students, whose ignorance of Canadian Native culture was nearly total prior to the course, have now become experts on it. Freeman is shown discussing clothing—something of critical importance in a land of climatic extremes, and capable of expressing numerous personal nuances as well. She assists Graburn in modeling a knit, pom-pommed cap: worn straight, it is “sensible”; jauntily angled, it indicates a “show-offy,” somewhat stuck-up personality. Students are filmed giving presentations before various portions of the exhibit, and there is a Family Day, with interactive stations set up outside Kroeber Hall for children to indulge in a hands-on introduction to various Inuit crafts. Finally, Freeman is filmed speaking to the camera in Inuktitut, for her people back home; she comments that the prints and other art objects are conserving memories for future generations, and that the event, and the film recording it, demonstrate things Inuit can teach the white man. She ended the film by walking around the exhibition in the museum pointing out the objects exhibited and saying how well the students had explained Inuit material culture in the labels they wrote for the exhibition.

***DISCUSSION:***

***NG:*** [Invites the four film makers to the front to take questions.] Let me say one thing: we sent the camera man off to the dormitory where the student was showing how you do things in the morning. He got there at 9, and we were expecting him back in the classroom around 10:30. Well, he didn't get back at 11, or at 11:30. . . . We wondered what he was doing! All he had to do was show a woman getting up in a bedroom. It took a long time—very expensive.

[In response to a question about distribution of the film in the North]: When I went to the Eastern Arctic in 2000 I sent copies to the schools and libraries, and then I took copies, and asked if they had them, and gave them copies. So there are copies in nearly all the libraries in the North.

***Audience Member:*** This is a naïve question, but didn't people have cell phones, and so access to the video on their cell phones, able to upload it?

***LE:*** There are only a few communities with cell phone access. I don't know if Nunavik has it, but there are maybe five communities now in Nunavut with cell phone access.

***Audience Member:*** I noticed there was a lot of uploading of images and videos and so forth; I wondered what the equipment was there.

***LE:*** Mainly cameras. A lot of homes now have computers and laptops.

*JH:* And libraries—there’s usually a Visitor Center or something. It’s broadband, so it’s not the high-speed Internet you may be used to, but it’s faster than what you had before. So people who don’t have their own set-up can go into the libraries.

*NG:* I remember particularly in Kimmirut, when I went to stay there again in the year 2000, I think I showed Mini’s film on videotape but I had a copy on a disk, and they said, “We can’t play this.” And I said, “You *will* be able to play it in the future; I’ll leave you one.” It was obvious. And then within a few years *all* schools and public libraries had computers and Internet access, kids are playing video games non-stop—they even had to ban the kids from coming to the libraries before 4 p.m. because it was non-stop playing computer games.

*Audience Member:* Has there been any outreach to casino tribes, to get that together for a source of income?

*JH:* I tried in the East with the Pequot; they have a fabulous museum out there, and I was presented there three days in a row. They showed my first three films, three days in a row, and I got to meet the people. I put in an application, which they encouraged me to do, but they didn’t end up going for it. And I can understand, you know, because they only cleared two million dollars a day at that place. I think they take in twenty-five, and then by the time they’re finished with all the taxes or whatever all is involved, there’s a net profit of two million a day from what I understand. That just left me wondering where that all goes, because I think there are only something like twenty-four, or at least a very small number of actual Pequot in the world.

*NG:* But they did actually subsidize the Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian; they were the biggest single donor for that museum.

*JH:* Fantastic. I’m really glad to hear that.

*Audience Member:* I can speak to that. I have a niece who worked there, and I know some of the Elders in the area, because Algonquin is my area. They didn’t know how to spend money and they basically over-committed. They thought that a couple of million dollars a year of revenue was a lot of money, they thought they could do anything, and they over-committed. They’re in trouble—there are all these things they would have liked to have done, but they made all these commitments and encumbered all their funds. And there are close to six hundred of them, not twenty-four.

*JH:* Well I don’t know much about it, but I do know it expanded quite a bit.

*Audience Member:* They built a second tower, but they also allowed the Mohicans, next door, to build.

*Audience Member:* Do you guys still have a film festival going on?

*JH:* It's like an arts festival; film is one component of it. There are many parts to it. It's on Aboriginal Day, June 21<sup>st</sup>, and it goes for ten or eleven days.

*LE:* I think they're shortening it.

*JH:* Nunavut has always wanted to have its own film—when I say “film” that's of course film, television, and media—our *media* festival, that would really focus attention on that one particular sector. That's been quite difficult. In conversations with the Department of Heritage, who usually give funding to festivals, one of the issues was that we didn't really want to have the festival in one place all the time, because Nunavut is so vast and if you just say, “It's going to be in Iqaluit and that's it,” that's very satisfying for people who live in Iqaluit, and for everybody else, they think, “Well, there's one more thing that just happens in the capital and has got nothing to do with us.” So we proposed the idea that you have sort of Winter and Summer camps, that you have this one place, Iqaluit, where there are activities each year, but then other activities would go traveling around. But they said they had a real problem with that; they said, “Just pick one spot, and you'll get along much better.” And we said, “Well, if that's right from the beginning, that's a fine process. We did a lot of consensus-building, we talked to a lot of people in different parts of the territory and told them the nomadic part of the festival would only come to their community once in a while, and they thought they'd be quite satisfied with that.” Because if you're in Kugaaruk, which is not that easy to get to, there's not going to be a festival in your community every year, but you know that sometimes there can be; it's not just out of the question. So those are some of the issues, and it will all have to be taken up again. I think with these things you do a big push, and you don't get anywhere, and people lose the momentum to keep trying, and probably three or four years go by and it's time to try again.

*NG:* I think I'm right in saying that Isuma, which makes its films in Igloolik, has a website in which many or most Inuit-made films are on site, and you can just look at them and call them up on screen. I'm wondering what effect this has on the ability to get money back, or if you just don't make money—you're showing films for free. I can preview any film I want for free on my computer. Isuma was very good in saying they want everyone to see Inuit films; but I'm wondering what that does for people. You've made a lot of films.

*JW:* Well, I haven't made a *lot* of films. One of my films is produced by Isuma, so it's online on IsumaTV—if you're not aware of it you can check it out on the Internet, and watch films by indigenous film makers, Inuit and other nations, other countries. It's very interesting. I have only one film there, and it was produced by Isuma, so I never got a cut.

*NG:* They raised all the financing for that film, so it's theirs?

*JW:* Yes.

*NG:* But your other films—they can't have them for free?

*JW:* If I put them there, they could have them for free.

*NG:* Would you like to sell it to them, or rent it to them?

*JW:* They don't really buy them. People can buy the films for a nominal fee; they can actually order the DVD, so it's a network. It's a site where producers can showcase their work.

*JH:* There's another aspect to it that is interesting, which is that Isuma becomes effectively a broadcaster by having this. It's a clever model, because without the content becoming monetized—there really isn't a financial model right now for it, they basically said to everybody "Just throw your film on there; go ahead, you're not going to make any money, just put it on there if you feel like it"—nevertheless they are broadcasting (if you like, they're webcasting) content. They're using that as a stepping stone to saying, "Wait a second: would we not then be a broadcaster? And in that case would we not trigger other funding by providing a license?" See, that's the big thing in Canada. I don't know how it works here, but nothing works in Canada until you have a broadcast license. If you try to go to the Canadian Media Fund, which used to be called Telefilm Canada, and you say "I want to do this," they say, "Great. Do you have a broadcaster attached to this project?" One of the reasons they do that is that before, in the "Golden Days," people would just come up with any idea and get funding for it, and it would never go anywhere; nobody ever saw it. Somebody would say, "I grow marijuana. I'm going to film my growing operation," and they might get \$100,000 from the government, and, well, give me a break. So they said, "If you can't get anyone interested in *broadcasting* this, you can't get dollar one." So that makes sense when you're trying to responsibly spend taxpayers' money, but in a territory that has not had its own resident broadcaster, this has been a source of frustration.

Going back to the APTN conversation, I'm one of the people who in the past would have an idea, I'd roll out my idea and get a broadcast license for it; everything has changed in Canadian broadcasting. Now you roll out your idea, you're hoping for a response, and they go, "No. We're doing reality TV shows now; they cost us a tenth as much. So why would we do [what you're proposing]?" Everything's changing drastically. So the question is, if APTN aren't going to support you, if you want to do aboriginal-language programming and APTN says, "No thanks," are you dead in Canada? Is that it—you can't make the film? So I think that's potentially a good role for Isuma. There aren't really dollars in it as much, but if you're trying to get through the gate by having a letter from a broadcaster, that may be enough to let you leverage some more money.

*NG:* What's the relationship to APTN—do they fund you up front, if they think your idea is good, or do they wait until you've made it, and then say, "Okay, we'll take it"? How do they help finance film making?

*JH:* One is called “commissioning” and the other is called “acquisitioning.” The acquisition is when you make something that they aren’t a part of, and they haven’t had any input into. With the commission, you go and discuss it with an editor and you get commissioned to do the project with a certain number of terms of reference. I remember I was frustrated by APTN and I went to another group, Vision TV (which is now being re-branded as Zoomer TV) and I took them a recycled project and they said, “Okay, could you put some stars in it? Could we have some Canadian stars, like could we have Neil Young in it, or Brian Adams?”—some of the rock stars. I thought, “I’m not quite sure how rock stars really fit into my film about Elders, but I’m not saying ‘no’; let me think about it.” So that’s your interaction with the commissioning editor. At a certain point, they say, “We’re on the same page. Go ahead and make the film.” If you go through a process like that, in very nuts-and-bolts terms you could get thirty thousand dollars to (depending how high or low on the TV dial you are) two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the commission. If you do it as an acquisition it’s a tiny fraction of that. They say, “Sure: you’ve got this thing made already; you made it without us.” If you made it completely without them, it doesn’t have their name on it, and if it doesn’t have their name on it, it doesn’t satisfy their requirements for Canadian content. They need to be able to check off another hour of Canadian programming or aboriginal programming or whatever. It’s worth a lot less to them, so maybe they just say, “Sure, we’ll give you a few thousand.” So instead of a hundred thousand dollars, I’d be lucky to get ten.

*Audience Member:* I was talking recently with the independent film liaison for YouTube, and he said that there were Inuit films that had garnered wide audiences on YouTube. Do you see that kind of trend; are there any other stories, or is there starting to be a movement among Inuit film makers?

*JH:* The guy up in Arctic Bay—sort of hip-hop? *Don’t Call Me Eskimo*; that’s one.

*NG:* The question is about people who put their films up on YouTube and get to be famous.

*JW:* It wasn’t me.

*NG:* You don’t know anything about it, you haven’t watched it happen with other people?

*JW:* No, nobody I know of.

*MF:* I never thought about being famous. When I first started making film, what I wanted to do was teach young Inuit people in schools to keep going to school—not to stop until they finished. That was my point in making films.

*NG:* And now you’ve given them another model beyond film—going to the University of California at Berkeley.

**MF:** You know, the films don't last. They perish very easily if you don't look after them. If you want to go on making films you have to keep making new ones. Sometimes you have to follow the last story you made into another film.

**Audience Member:** It just took me about five minutes to get a free version of *Nuliajuk* on my laptop; it seems like there really might be a problem making money.

**JH:** It's going all through the system—broadcasters trying to figure out their relevance, how to keep some kind of traction in a rapidly shifting world. I have a son who's ten; he says, "Oh, Dad, I can find that show for free." If there's a game he's really interested in I'll say, "I can buy that for you"; he goes, "*What?* Dad, I can find a hacked version in one minute." It scares the pants off me. If you're a broadcaster now you kind of have to wonder how long you're going to be around; and maybe you stick to what makes you money, like reality TV shows. Cooking shows are good. All those things you can do in one room, just change the lights—get really ballsy and just once a year change the lights a bit, that's all you have to do, and everything's new once again. But otherwise it's a franchise: you just set up the first show and everything rolls from there.

I really enjoyed Mini's presentation and films, but it just made me think of something. Obviously I'm aware of this issue of the old episodes, old films disappearing through wetness in an army building or whatever; it doesn't matter how it happens: "Whoops! It's gone." Not to put any pressure on Nelson Graburn, but just an idea: could there be an archive of whatever's left that you can go to when a copy gets wet?

**NG:** Aren't there places in Igloolik that are supposed to be the ultimate archive?

**JH:** Not that I know of. [To others] Have you been asked for your films? I haven't.

**NG:** I had heard the Nunavut Research Center was supposed to be keeping a lot of stuff; there was a place in Igloolik that was supposed to be the official repository.

**JH:** In Inuit Prints, the Cape Dorset people, I'm sure you're well aware that they made a deal with the McMichael Collection of Canadian Art, and the idea was getting the art out of the community, because in Pangnirtung, where I lived for five years, there were these beautiful projects done interviewing the Elders; I said, "Where are they?" and was told, "They're over there, they're safe." They burned when the school burned down. I think the idea of having the definitive repository in an Arctic community, where fire is such a huge danger, and there are other dangers as well. . . . I love the idea that you'd have a Nunavut archive, and then have a duplicate archive as well. Today, in the digital universe, why wouldn't you? It's just hard drive space. How about a parallel duplicate archive somewhere else?

**NG:** A lot of people may know about Avataq. Avataq is a Nunavik research center archive, and they're trying to set themselves up as the ultimate archive and repository for things from

Nunavik. Did they ask you for copies of your films? They're really after all the records of what people are doing; I thought Avataq was doing that. So Avataq is missing out on new art forms that are coming out or that they haven't bothered about.

**MF:** Maybe they need to be trained.

**NG:** They have a lot of trained people in Avataq.

**MF:** I mean, how to store things. Maybe the idea is not there.

**NG:** But Avataq *does* store things; that's what it does.

**MF:** Well, what's wrong with them? I noticed the film we just showed was starting to get dark.

**Audience Member:** Digital media have to be restored about every fifteen years. Try to find a Betamax player! You've got to think about format: it's not just about the environment where you store it. When we used to make film you could keep them for 150 years; digital has a much, much shorter life span.

**JH:** I like to try to work by challenges sometimes—find one piece of a puzzle and try to find somebody to match it. I wonder: when you hear about the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation giving computers around the Arctic; I presume they have capacious storage space. Nelson, you've heard all this stuff people were *going* to do, and then Jobie and I are where the rubber meets the road—where nobody's being asked to archive these films that are actually being made. If there were the possibility of an off-site repository, like Bill and Melinda Gates might be able to provide—it's not that expensive; there's not that much stuff. Obviously the material should be archived and renewed in the Arctic; but then to present that as part of the puzzle. It's already half-funded.

**NG:** : There are some very sad stories. I went back to Salluit, Nunavik, in 1986 and took some slides from when I was there in 1959, 1963–64, and 1968. I gave slide shows and every night people were there, it was full; and right after my sixth showing a TV crew showed up and asked me to do the slide show again. Unfortunately I was so exhausted I fainted and they didn't get to shoot, but I gave these carousels of slides to the community, and they said the safest place was to put them in storage at the TV studio. And a few years later the whole thing burned down. A guy called me a few years ago saying, "Why haven't you given us your films?" "How old are you?" I asked. He was twenty-two. I said, "Well, my films already burned to death before you were born." McGill is another repository; there are a lot of negatives and photos from the 50s and the 60s; they're predigital so they're probably okay. We've got to find a place where they're safe. Or maybe we should just oil paint them.

**JH:** In any Arctic editing facility they go day and night when they're working against a deadline; there are people working after midnight, and you *have* to make sure there's blank



tape around all the time—because it’s 2 a.m. and you need a tape and there’s none around and you look around and there’s a whole shelf of tapes, maybe featuring an Elder who died ten years ago . . . it’s terrible, but you know it happens! So if every time you made a film if you could deliver a copy to broadcast *and* a copy to archives, that would be great.

**NG:** Lena, I’d like to ask: in Iqaluit there’s been this project of having young people bringing in the Elders from all over Nunavut, and they interviewed them and videotaped them, and a lot of these people are not any longer around. But they’ve got them on tape, and some of these interview topics have been turned into books, and they’re wonderful books. There’s one on midwives, and one on shamans, and a linguistic program recording language from old people. Where do they keep that stuff, in Iqaluit?

**LE:** I think the series you’re talking about was developed by the Nunavut Arctic College. It’s in their library. They produced different series, on religion, spirituality, I think midwifing, different topics, through their Inuit Language and Culture Program. They produced books, and they sell them through the college.<sup>3</sup>

**NG:** They videotaped the Elders, and then someone transcribed it.

**LE:** I didn’t know they were video-ed. I knew they were recorded, but I’ve never seen footage or heard that there was footage. My understanding was that it was all audio.

**NG:** But even those tapes are critical, too. In the film that Mini made I held up a book of the syllabics; this is a book called *Inuit Dictionary*, which was put together by Tamusi Qumaaq.<sup>4</sup> [Inukjuak and Montreal], a man from Puvirnituk, who said the young people weren’t speaking the language properly, and he was going to copy down the old language before it disappeared. He had a lot of cards, and he went to all the old people in the village asking them what the words meant. He had a stack of four or five thousand cards. It was wonderful. The Inuktitut definition of “woman” was “someone who’s not a man; the person who looks after the children.” It was suggested to him that he transcribe the work using Selectric typewriters with Syllabic balls, and they published it as a book and wanted to get a copy to every school, so nobody would ever forget Inuktitut. I have a copy; that’s what I was using in my class. People have been conserving the language for a long time.

**MF:** I had one of those typewriters, and somebody stole it. They must have been really disappointed, to see Syllabic [script] on it. [Laughs]

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<sup>3</sup> *Interviewing Inuit Elders*, book series. Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College.

<sup>4</sup> Qumaaq, Tamusi 1991. *Inuit Uqausillaringit, Ulimaisigutit*. Avataq Cultural Institute, Inukjuak and Montreal.

**NG:** Peter Pitseolak, a famous Elder who used to take photos and later made movies, said to me when I went to live with him in 1968, on the first evening I was there, “Do you want to see some movies?” I said “Sure—where are the movies tonight?” And he said, “The one’s I made.” He’s famous for his photographs but he also made movies—not Super 8, just the old 9 mm black-and-white movies, shown on the wall. He himself said, in the 40s, “Our whole culture is moving very fast. It is going to be forgotten. The children of the future won’t know what we did or who we were.” So he not only photographed people, he photographed myths; he’d get people to act out myths. He wanted to preserve all of that; he saw it was disappearing. I think all of his stuff is being looked after by McGill, so at least we’ve got a lot of stuff being professionally looked after.

**JH:** Peter Pitseolak used to develop film out on the ice, with the bright sun beating down. He had a way of lying down on the ice under an army blanket to slip the film in—when there was no shelter. He was a genius.

**NG:** He didn’t get along very well with your father sometimes. Two geniuses in the same village!

**Audience Member:** Mini, you mentioned skating at the very beginning and I immediately thought about hockey. I read about an Inuit Women’s Hockey Tournament—did you ever get to play?

**MF:** Not then; there was nothing coming from the South like that. If we played anything, we had to make up our own way. It’s only about 1959, 1960 that things started to arrive in my area. That’s also about when we began intermarrying, Cree and Inuit; we never used to do that.

**NG:** Nearly all the big schools now have hockey; it’s one of the most important entertainments, the most important single sport.

**LE:** Every community has a Community Hall, and in Winter they have an arena. Hockey is a big thing in Nunavut. We have Jordin Tootoo playing for the Nashville Predators.

**NG:** One of the San José players was an Inuk, wasn’t he?

**Audience member:** No, he was Cree I think—Jonathan Cheechoo.

**MF:** When hockey came on, my bannock-making totally stopped—and you know how bannock is.

**NG:** Some people had TV sets before Inuit TV was even broadcast. Sometimes you’d get a guy from Tennessee coming through, preaching. When TV really started people just froze. It ruined the normal visiting patterns—they never returned. People used to visit all the time.

**MF:** At one point we went through a period where people did not care anymore who was visiting whom, but personal communications are finally back, now that people are used to TV. And now they can afford it. Before it was terrible: there'd be one TV in somebody's house. We went through hell! We did. We went through changes we were never prepared for—suddenly! Everything: candy, TV, anything that came from the South.

**NG:** There was duplicating machine fluid in these metal cans by the duplicating machine with a big label saying “Tuqunaktuq [This Kills].” Inuit people just said “That’s only for white people; it won’t kill *us*.” And Facebook—what part does this play in people’s lives? It must extend your networks.

**MF:** You know, adapting to something seems very hard for other people, but the reason Inuit adapt so easily is we are so curious—about Southern, mechanical stuff. We learned it so fast; but some of us not properly.

**JW:** I’ve been Facebook friends with Nelson. It’s a pretty good thing for many things, like when we go to festivals, and you can meet people and they’ll be your Facebook friend; so that’s a good thing; you keep in touch. There are a few things—hockey is one of them. I’m on the Canada Fan Club, and on a game night it generates maybe too many hits, you get inundated with other people’s comments. The other one in the North is the referendum about regional government. In some ways it’s dividing into three groups: those who want self-government, those who don’t, and those who don’t know. It’s become very important, because we’re connected on a daily basis: you message your friends and they post messages, and your friends message you—or your enemies.

**Audience Member:** Have you any idea of the percentage of those who are on Facebook nationally?

**JW:** It’s got to be very high. It’s not the whole population. I know some of my friends, in my age group, are not on Facebook and not on the Internet. You have to be computer literate, for one thing, and interested in whatever topics we’re talking about.

**LE:** the majority of the youth have Facebook, and you can actually see Syllabics now, people posting in Syllabics, and you can get the font. We [she and JH] are friends on Facebook; I’ve seen him advertise his films, and we’ve advertised that way. You’ve heard of the show “Wipeout”? They recently had a Canadian version, and people were saying “Oh, there’s one from Nunavut,” so all of us went on Facebook and checked and sure enough—one from Cape Dorset.

**JH:** My daughter is a throat singer and she has her own website about her art. One quick Facebook story: I have an Inuit art gallery and there was a carving somebody had been trying to identify for twenty-five years, and had given up on. They were thinking of giving it to a museum, but it’s not as interesting to a museum if it’s unidentified, so they came to me

saying, “Could you identify it—*quickly?*” Well, after twenty-five years the trail’s gotten a little cold, but I got the piece, looked at it, and I thought maybe Facebook could help me here. I have many friends on Facebook, and I went out and said, “Gosh, what do you think?” An Inuit woman replied from the High Arctic, “My signature is on it, but that’s my maiden name—you would not have found me with it—and I didn’t carve it. My uncle carved it. I did a lot of chores for him, so he gave me the piece.” She tried to sell it but they didn’t want to buy it without a signature, so she signed it—no problem for her! So after twenty-five years, the length of time for me finding out the identity of the artist was one hour and twenty minutes.

**NG:** Thank you very much. See you at dinner!

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## ***SATURDAY***

**NG:** Thank you for coming. We’ll be starting with a film that a number of us have seen or been involved with, *Qallunaanik Piusiqsiuriniq*, or “The Business of Searching for the Customs and Culture of White People.” In English, it’s known as “Why White People Are Funny.” I’ve shown this all over the world; the Maori were especially pleased with it, and wanted many copies. We’re pleased to have Lena here, as she’s one of the people who had a hand in making it.

**LE:** *Ublaakut*; Good morning. Mark Sandiford [the film’s producer] read an article that Zebedee Nungak wrote in an Inuktitut magazine, called “Qallunaat 101,” and that’s how this film was inspired. Nungak is also a commentator on CBC every Friday morning, and he’s inspired me, and I wrote to him after this piece he shared on the radio called “The Big Hellos.” The Inuit call white people *Helloraaluk*—which is “big scary hello.” In the old days, when children were acting up, they’d say, “The Big Hello’s are going to get you: stop it!” When we were working on this film the title actually was “The Big Hello’s.” I got involved through exchanging emails with Zebedee. Mark came up to Iqaluit and asked Zebedee to recruit people, so that’s how I became involved in casting and some of the scriptwriting. This is like a mockumentary. It was a lot of fun, and we had a lot of debates and interesting discussion, and in some ways it didn’t turn out the way I wanted, but I wasn’t the director, and I’m happy I had some say in it. I was just happy to be involved; I learned a lot. It’s too bad Zebedee isn’t here to share it with us. [Zebedee Nungak, a former leading politician, wanted to stay at home in Nunavik that week because of the upcoming referendum on reworking the James Bay Treaty.]

**Film:** *QALLUNAANIK PIUSIQSIURINIQ* (Why White People Are Funny)  
(2007)

“Every once in a while Inuit make the headlines!” [a tabloid headline is shown: “NASA Rover Discovers Eskimo Tribe On Mars!”] *Qallunaanik Piusiqsiuriniq* reverses the anthropological lens by positing an Inuit Institute for the Study of White People (or, as the Institute’s director terms them, “those who are dogmatic and authoritative about things they know nothing about”). At a symposium Inuit scholars report their findings on an array of *qallunaat* topics, including: greeting patterns (“HELLO!!!!,” “Wassap?,” “G’day mate!,” and “Ciao” being among the recorded forms); sociology (“those who wear blue collars” versus “those who wear white collars”); naming systems (frequently featuring words combined in ways that don’t make sense: “Hens’ sons”? [Henderson], “Shotwell”?!); etiquette (they have to wait until a certain time to eat, and there are rules on how to chew); and educational system (“grindingly slow”). The Qallunizer 2000, an apparatus for detecting *qallunaat* blood, is unveiled and demonstrated. It is proposed that researchers be dispatched overseas to study the *qallunaat* believed to reside there, and if possible to teach them to speak and behave in a proper Inuit manner. Inuit spiritual leaders should be engaged to bring this warlike people to civilization, and “get them to abandon their way of life.” Finally, the *qallunaat* in attendance (including Nelson Graburn) are issued numbered ID tags, so they can be kept track of. The film ends as it began, with a sickening performance by a *qallunaat* banjo player of “Old MacDonald Had A Farm,” this time with the bewildered Inuit scholars gamely joining in, in an attempt to divine the purpose and meaning of this bizarre anthropological datum.

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**NG:** Some of us have learned a lot about ourselves! And we’ll learn more at the next conference. And now for something completely different, going back a little farther in Inuit history. I’d like John Houston to take over, and to talk to us about the first film of his he’s going to show to us today, which may resonate very well with some of us who know about the history of Inuit and Inuit discoveries and contact. If you’ve seen *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, it will be very appropriate to have this too.

**JH:** This was my third film. It capped off a trilogy which began with *Songs in Stone*, when I kind of thought I knew what I was doing, which is dangerous when making a documentary because you have to be open to changes. I had everything all planned, and to make it worse the broadcaster sent their commissioning editor up to watch everything I did, which was very intimidating. Afterwards, I was exhausted flying home in the charter plane, fell fast asleep, and dreamed it was the first part of trilogy. I didn’t know what the other films would be at all—the lesson was, “You don’t know the half of it.” The second film turned out to be *Nuliajuk, Mother of the Sea Beasts*. Sedna, She is often called. She could, at Her discretion, withhold the bounty of the sea if people disrespected her. She was an old-style deity, I guess. The third one, *Diet of Souls*, just scratches the surface of this vast world; the Elders were opening up—one shaman explained how he had traveled in spirit form down to the sea bottom and appeased Sedna, complimenting her hair. These were not things people were talking about on camera; they were suppressed. People were opening up for the first time—

their own kids and grandkids didn't know these Elders knew these things. Animism, shamanism, at over 12,000 years old is the oldest form of spirituality on Earth, and it's strange that it was almost wiped out of existence. I realized I was only getting part of it, and *Diet of Souls* could follow it up.

The second film involved a lot of research in anthropology libraries. The sea goddess has about forty names, some of which are actually terms of respect. Some Inuit believed that if you said her name she would *be* there, so you'd use "That Great One Deep Down There" in order not to call attention to yourself. *Nuliajuk* is her actual given name, rather than a term of reverence. After this film, I felt there was so much left unsaid—there was just this vast body of knowledge. I came to feel like I'd been introduced to this invisible university. I would meet someone, and because of how much he or she knew, they were like a Professor Emeritus in a particular discipline. And the Elders do have different disciplines. You come into a community, and you see some old people, and you might not realize it, but they all know different things. So if you're talking about sea mammals, or whatever your questions are, you would be told, "Oh, you've got to go talk to so-and-so, because they have deep knowledge about that." But then if you wanted to talk about something else, like the days of conversion to Christianity, you'd be told, "Well, he might know a fair bit about that, but really you should be talking to *her*, because she's the one who has that knowledge." So it's very much like different departments or disciplines. It's all unwritten; you have to dig in to find this traditional knowledge, the Inuit ways of knowing"; it's this special world. And you just have to imagine all of this being wiped out: the missionaries were trying to forbid all of this knowledge, because it wasn't always shamanic, but it was all interconnected, it was all related. So you have to just wonder, if as a people you develop this body of knowledge—this university system—and all of a sudden you're told, "No: you can't have that. We don't want people to know that it even existed." So all your professors are now secret professors. It's a very disempowering, strange thing to do to a culture. It was my pleasure to go around and talk to some of those distinguished people; they might not have a label or tag, but among their own people, they're highly recognized. Mariano Aupilardjuk is an example of a respected Elder among his peers. And they gave some guidance. And the guidance that I got was very humbling—because I found on the journey that, first of all, I didn't know the *answers*: that I knew going in. But I discovered I don't know the *questions* either! And that was humbling.

I was interviewing a woman who died at 105, one of the last of the facially tattooed Inuit women (she's on the DVD cover of my second film). I had fourteen written-out questions—priding myself on being quite the amateur journalist. I asked her four of the questions; I tried in Inuk and tried working through a local translator, because there is a difference of dialects. I wasn't getting anywhere. She never looked at me. She was fussing with a lamp, looking a bit grumpy—at 101 years old (which she was when I interviewed her) anybody would get a bit grumpy having someone asking them senseless questions. I looked at my remaining ten

questions and saw they weren't going anywhere either. And she's 101—it's not like I can think it over and come back in ten years or something. So I stopped my crew; I told them to just take a break, do nothing, stand around. And then I kind of prayed. I threw myself open to the universe, and said, "All I want is ONE worthy question. I would give anything for one good question! Just send me something, and whatever pops into my head, I'll ask it. Unedited. I promise." I sat there quietly; the crew did nothing; and a question popped into my head. I said, "That's just crazy!"; but I had promised. So I turned to her and said, "Do you have a way to make undersea creatures come closer?" She's been sitting there tending her lamp and suddenly she turned and looked at me for the first time, as if I'd just entered the room; it was as if for the whole previous hour and a half I hadn't even been there. And she said, "Yes, I do." I was kind of trembling, it all became very ancient, and it was like I was saying to her, "Prithee, will you share it with me?"—because their language is kind of archaic. "Pray tell, would you tell me what that was?" She said, "I have a song." "Will you sing it for me now?" She hadn't sung it in seventy-five years, she said, so she might be a bit rusty. And she sang it.

The crew was there shooting the song on Super 16, not video. If you're recording an Elder singing a song that may never be there again, you reload—sound, everything—as if you were going to film an explosion or something: you can't just say, "Let's go film that again." She started to sing, and stopped a few times. The camera-man checked the footage, and after a while he started shaking his head: "We're running out of film," then making the finger-across-the-throat gesture, which is *not* good. "We're dead." But then he looks at the gauge, and he looks back up at me, and I wish I had a photograph of his face: it's probably the weirdest face he's ever made. His look just says, "I don't get it." This is a total professional, he's worked all over the world, and he didn't know what was going on. The Elder finishes her song, and she makes a little sound, a little self-deprecatory laugh: "Little me, singing such a big song." And the camera *immediately* runs out. You can go and ask him—Paul Mitcheltree, he lives in Halifax—about the time when the film waited for the Elder.

*Diet of Souls* was everything we could get the Elders to say about that ancient, secret world of theirs that didn't directly reference her—that great one at the bottom of the sea. It turned out that there was the whole thing about her, and then there was another whole film sort of in her shadow—that whole world, but not talking about her. I hope you like it.

### **Film: *DIET OF SOULS* (2004)**

An Inuit shaman said that our greatest peril lies in the fact that our diet consists of souls: all the creatures we must strike down to live have souls. At the outset of the film, an Inuit hunter says that snow buntings with their tiny chicks, and lemmings with their young, can take a heavy revenge. John Houston, narrating the film, says that most Inuit have converted to Christianity, but that when it comes to animals, they appear to revert to an older spirituality.

The film intersperses stunning shots of Inuit art with live interview footage. Elders speak of the laws governing hunting—not *wasting* animals: if one is wounded, it must be followed until it's killed—and respecting fellow dwellers on the planet. “If an adult were to mistreat a caribou, a fox, or a wolf, anything, that person’s life would be shortened. The desire to live a long life made me petrified of misbehaving; it’s the only reason I’m still here!”

The rules governing the hunt spring from prudence, tactical wisdom, and above all a profound respect for other animals. You must let the lead animals go by before striking; then just take the meat you can cache and the skins you can carry; stretch out the dead caribou with its head pointing in the direction of home; and after killing, give a drink of water. (The film commences with a hunter pouring water from his mouth into a seal’s fatal wound.) It is important to treat the animals with respect when killing them, in order not to be attacked by their souls.

The missionaries dictated that *people* have souls, but animals were just there to be killed. Elders tell tales of animals undergoing transformations each time they’re killed and eaten, and seals giving their lives up at breathing holes. Houston accompanies a man and his grandson as they perform a vigil at a breathing hole; after three hours of intense cold and immobility the younger two give up. The Elder later tells his grandson, “Only when you catch your first seal will I be done with you.” Another advises that traditional knowledge “should be known, and understood in the future. Because the land will need protection.”

### ***DISCUSSION:***

***Audience Member:*** It was amazing how certain art pieces blended with the narrative.

***JH:*** Thanks. I think I was sort of born to do that: I grew up in that explosion of expression now called Inuit art. When you talk to the people who make the art there’s so much knowledge; you get some of that looking at the sculpture. It was an honor for me to incorporate the art, without trying to explain it. There’s an inherent mystery in art: if the person making the art could explain the reason for making the art, they wouldn’t need to make it.

***MF:*** How long were you there, to film that?

***JH:*** Each film is a journey; each film takes about two years. The actual filming takes around a month. The seal hunt footage at the beginning was footage that didn’t fit into *Nuliajuk*. I wanted to keep it whole, not just chop it up, and the editor said the same thing: “Maybe you’ll get to use that another time.” Luckily I was working with the same editor with this film; there’s this terrible problem of how to begin something, and he said, “Remember that seal hunt scene?” We popped it in and it was like magic. I just go into museums and film like crazy, build up a kind of library. Does two years seem like a long time or a short time? A long time, right?



*MF:* A long time.

*JH:* Mini has worked with Inuit producers and many times they shoot for an hour and a half then edit down to an hour. My hat's off to them. I could never do that.

*MF:* Do you know if Makkitu Pingwartok is still alive?

*JH:* Yes, she's like my little mom. When we came and lived in Michigan she came with me; she's like family. It's like a trip down Memory Lane when I visit her in Cape Dorset: she's got my pants from when I was four years old, my super-hero (well, Robin Hood) costume. . . . It's like an archive.

*NG:* I just want to say that people say the Inuit make this art to sell to white people, but actually there's collusion, because they make it to show their children, too. So there's a dual purpose. They've cumulatively kept this knowledge alive.

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*NG:* We'll move on into another vein of film. We're lucky to have Lena here, who was very involved in the making of this film, and was one of its four co-directors.

*LE:* We felt that there were a lot of researchers doing films on Inuit, so we wanted to make one from the Inuit perspective. There were four co-directors, with different passions and focuses. Mine is on education and culture. We all feel like we have one foot in the modern world and one foot in the traditional way of life, and are trying to figure out how we can mix both of them. We came together and had a lot of discussion. Someone asked yesterday whether there were any taboos, and we had a lot of discussion and worries about that. As Inuit, who do we think we are, to do a film and be in it? We were always taught to be humble. That's probably why we're a lot more quiet, and don't share as much: we don't want to come across as boasting. Political repercussion was also an issue: how far could we push? Because it might affect us, or even our children—"No one will hire us after this!" I hope you enjoy the film.

**Film: *ULLUMI* (Today) (2007)**

"We are the children of those children" [the children who were taken away from their families by the residential school system]. "My mother was born in an igloo. She taught me everything she knew; but her culture's changing, and it's changing fast."

*Ullumi* deals with the fact that many Inuit find themselves between cultures, attempting to conserve the traditional Inuit way while struggling to adapt to the demands of a modern, global society. "Our children," says Lena Ellsworth in the film, "are not equipped to function in any culture: you're never going to be white enough, but you're not Inuk any more either."

Co-director Qajaaq Ellsworth says that it's a confusing time for the young, receiving different messages from the Inuit side of things and from the non-Inuit side.

George Berthe (prominent Inuit politician and entrepreneur) is shown instructing co-director Tunu Napartuk in the ways of the hunt.

Napartuk: "I'm part of that generation that wasn't taught how to hunt."

Berthe: "When I'm in the office I dream about being out on the land. But when I'm out on the land hunting, I never dream of being in the office."

Qajaaq Ellsworth: "The Inuit approach to learning is to observe, to watch. If you don't understand, that's okay: there's going to be time for you to understand."

George Berthe: "If you can really appreciate your own culture, and understand it, that's a good start."

Footage of glorious scenery and Inuit domestic life alternate with discussions of the task of coping with contemporary life: the Inuit suicide rate is seven times the national average, eleven times it in Iqaluit; there is a huge problem with substance abuse; the high-school drop-out rate is about 75 percent.

An Inuit Elder: "If the young seem troubled, speak to them. If they seem unresponsive, they still hear what you're saying."

Qajaaq Ellsworth describes his own experience of serious depression and says, "I don't want my son growing up thinking suicide's an option."

Lena Ellsworth is shown advocating for the necessity of providing young Inuit with a meaningful education, in their own tongue: "We've had thirty or forty years to deal with this. It's time to stop messing around: we need education in our own language. We need Inuit leaders."

A residential school survivor is interviewed about her experience: "We were told through an interpreter that we weren't to speak unless we spoke in English. Personally, the only word I knew in English was 'Hello.' So I guess I didn't speak that year."

Lena Ellsworth: "We have to act now if we want our language to survive."

George Berthe: "We're adaptable—doing old things in new ways. Some people feel we should still be wearing caribou skins and things; but a dormant culture dies. The Inuit are never going to die."

### ***DISCUSSION:***

**Audience Member:** Near the beginning there was some talk about Inuk grammars and textbooks in elementary school, and I think the teacher said they had to write their own. I wondered if there have been any textbooks published now.

**LE:** They do have some, but it's very limited, and even the stuff they have in high school is the same as what they're using in kindergarten, grade one and grade two.

**Audience Member:** I was thinking that since the Inuit culture is so private, personalities tend to be more quiet and listening, I was trying to imagine things that could be more group-oriented, like murals, drumming, flutes, musical collaboration, sports. I didn't see anything like that. Team sports—something that weaves people together more.

**LE:** You're right, but it takes individuals to stand up: we've been waiting around for somebody else to do it. There are sports but they're basketball and hockey. People come in and do talks on traditional history, they're trying to include that more, but not as much as we would like, because of all the history of how education was introduced. People don't value it. I think that's one of the reasons we have such a high suicide rate: people aren't going to school, but they aren't going out hunting either. They have too much time.

**Basja Ellsworth:** It has to do with what language you went into school with, too. I wasn't taught proper Inuktitut; when I went back into the English stream I had to work my ass off. My mother had to help me. You learn a lot more from what your parents can teach you.

**LE:** The Inuktitut stream is two or three years behind; when the grades are put together you're so far behind, and the message you get is that you're stupid. [Discussing issues of self respect]: My mother was married to a white man, so it was like you're no longer Inuk. Things are changing. Even in my generation we didn't know about the residential school history, because no one talked about it. So that was history for us, to hear about the assimilation, and why we're in the state we're in—because we were ashamed to be Inuk.

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**JW:** Thanks for the hospitality. I made *Umiaq Skin Boat* two years ago. The *umiaq* is a traditional Eskimo boat, made from wood and sinew and skins. The movie's not about the boat in particular; it's about survival. The story's related to transportation: the *umiaq* is a vessel, so I took it as a vessel to tell stories. The other film is about residential schools. We've been having this talk for quite a number of years, about residential schools and how it has really impacted Inuit society. Unknown to us there was a policy of assimilation, which we are just beginning to understand. The federal school system was a big part of that policy of assimilation. I decided to make this film based just on our own perspective, from the students' perspective. There are some parents who speak but there are no teachers, no administrators, no government. I decided to do that because we've been having this discussion for a number of years and I wanted to tell the story of the people I knew, the

people I went to school with. In that way it's one-sided but there's still a variety of opinion in it. Whenever we have a gathering of people there's always a difference of opinion, and to me that's interesting. So these are the differences we're going to see.

**Film: *UMIAQ SKIN BOAT***

“Take the moon for instance: our world has really changed. I find that unusual and try to discuss it with our people.”

“When ancestors looked at the moon, they said it looked like a dogsled, or an *umiaq* full of people.”

*Umiq Skin Boat* incorporates vignettes from Elders' lives into their work on constructing a traditional *umiaq*, or boat made of skin. They recount tales from their past, many of which are tragic, and continue working on the boat—stitching and drying the skins, fitting the skins to the frame, getting hungry. Many of the tales deal with mistreatment on the part of the government, but some involve kinder things: meadowlarks who “go up there to pray, high in the sky—like a trumpet!”

As the tales and the work on the boat interweave and interact, pain and healing, destruction and creation—the past and the present—begin to mingle as well, giving the movie a profound depth of texture, at once both haunting and joyous.

Finally six people set off in the first *umiaq* seen by the Inuit in a hundred years.

“The moon still brings tides, wind and animals. If you look through the old man's eyes, you will still see the bird praying. If you look back through the bird's eyes, you will notice it is we who have changed.”

The launching of the *umiaq* is a festive celebration: “After a hundred years, we are floating in a bearded seal *umiaq!*” triumphantly calls out one of the lucky voyagers.

**Film: *KAKALAKKUVIK (Where the Children Dwell) (2010)***

*Kakalakkuvik* addresses the Canadian government's appalling abuse of the many Inuit children who were systematically wrested from their families and placed in residential schools, where they were beaten and starved, sexually abused, and forced to renounce their culture and language, in a brutal attempt to “Take the Indian out of the child.” Many survivors of this brutal attempt at cultural obliteration through assimilation describe the horrors they endured with a clarity that is itself painful to endure, unfolding tale after tale of inhuman cruelty. As a result of this traumatic ordeal, their subsequent lives have been damaged, perhaps irreparably, and lasting harm was done to the culture as a whole. “We have been destroyed by these individuals,” says one survivor. “I behave in a way I wouldn't otherwise.” The specific anguish of children thinking that their parents had given them away

is dealt with in the film, as is the fact that the parents had no choice in the matter. An excerpt from Prime Minister Stephen Harper's official apology to those who were subjected to this inexcusable treatment appears in the film; the entire apology can be found at [http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/QPeriod/20080611/harper\\_text\\_080611/](http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/QPeriod/20080611/harper_text_080611/). For all that the government's apology seems unflinchingly self-condemnatory and comprehensive, its reception among the Inuit was mixed: some were moved, while others found it incomplete and insincere.

### ***DISCUSSION:***

**NG:** I'd like all four film makers to come up here, because all of them have experienced part of this life, and I would like the audience to be able to ask all of them questions about this. [MF was so moved by watching the film and recalling her own experiences at residential school that she couldn't get up and move to the table; she was comforted by LE.]

Actually, I went through a similar experience, except that I had to give up my language and learn Latin and Greek, every day of the week with exams on Saturdays—but at least you got to play soccer afterwards. I've forgotten *everything* I learned. [To JW] Where did you get all those old videos? It looked like someone was just filming your childhood!

**JW:** I got those from Avataq. I don't know who took them; you might know who some of the people are.

**JH:** Some of those were credited to Frederica Knight [the wife of the resident Hudson's Bay Company trader, Ralph Knight], who's in Winnipeg now.

**NG:** There were these two methods by which the Canadian Government introduced formal schooling: in one you could send the kids to school, but if the parents didn't want to move there, the children had to live in hostels [i.e., residential schools]; the other was to send teachers out to camps, to teach school for a month or so in turn in each camp, like Miss Hinds in your [JW's] home area. The question is which of them worked?

**JW:** We eventually moved to Inukjuak, but I remember a discussion between my parents, trying to decide whether they wanted to move to Inukjuak or not. They obviously didn't, but they felt they had no choice. As I was saying they were losing hunters, who were finding jobs in Inukjuak, so there were times we were going hungry. So our camp of about fifty people—all Inuit; there were no white people where I was born—decided to move halfway to Inukjuak. My parents believed they could manage, that they would be able to commute well. There goes *that* theory.

**NG:** There was this very strict policeman who would not let Inuit come live in Inukjuak unless they had a job, so there was a camp about five miles outside of town, with the parents

all camped together.<sup>5</sup> So the kids were taken into Inukjuak, but the parents couldn't come unless they had a job. Do you remember that? I can't remember the name of the policeman, but he was very strict.

*JW:* I can't remember his name either. We always called him Police Hello! You remember Charlie Adamie? He actually deported his family—I think his mother had five children—to a camp in the South. That's the kind of power he had.

*Audience Member:* In the *Umiq* film, I was wondering if that black hide was bearded seal.

*JW:* Yes, it's bearded seal.

*Audience Member:* I liked it that the second film was all in Inuktitut. Was there an intentional move to disperse the people in the camps, by bringing children into the schools? Also, how did you decide who got interviewed for this film, given how many people were involved?

*JW:* There are many stories of Inuk being relocated all over the Arctic. It was just part of government policy, to relocate people. For our own relocation, my mother had been relocated from a camp further North to King George's Island. That was just a pattern of policy.

I knew all these people; I went to school with them. I decided mostly by elimination—if somebody said, "No, I can't talk about it." I only picked the ones who were willing to talk.

*JH:* My dad was on the ship that carted people into Craig Harbour. People don't talk about the Craig Harbour High Arctic relocation. It just struck me now, in terms of life experience: I'm a white guy, which is better in some ways and worse in some ways. The Prime Minister's trying to give an apology, and I feel my people messed up Jobie's people. It's a profound thing when one people sets itself up to be higher than the other. The government decided they were going to move people from this one camp, with no input from the people; the first thing they knew about it was when they just went in and bulldozed the camp, children's toys and everything. They said, "It's better than everybody standing around crying; just get on the boat, because there's nothing left for you here now." It wasn't just Inuit or aboriginal: in Newfoundland they just relocated all the people because they "needed a work force." Then ten years later it didn't work out and they moved them somewhere else. It just seems worse when there's no consultation and no buy-in; it's really foul. This relocation was from this area thousands of miles North to the High Arctic, where there are three months of black night and three months of noon. The newcomers didn't know how to hunt there. The government said, "There's good hunting up there"; then they confiscated their rifles, to be

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<sup>5</sup> William E. Willmott (1961). *The Eskimo community at Port Harrison*. Ottawa: Northern Coordination and Research Centre, Dept. of Northern Affairs,

checked out at their discretion. The Inuit said, “We don’t know how to hunt here”; so the government relocated some other people from another region that *was* High Arctic, so they could teach the first group. Those people were promised that if they didn’t like it they could go home again. Some said, “Yes, we definitely want to go home again.” But it took the government thirty years to come through, and by the time they got home the people they knew had passed away or moved to other places; some even tried to go back. It’s just the worst story

**NG:** I’d like to provide a bit of context. Why would they want to move people up here [indicates the High Arctic on the map]. This was the Cold War, and Canada felt like it was in the front line of the Cold War, because Russia was [indicating its location on the map] here. The Americans had moved up into Greenland and so on, this whole area became a military area. Canada was afraid if this territory was uninhabited, Russians, who had ice stations and so forth, could come here. So they solidified their hold on the area, all of which was rather shaky, by saying, “We’ll put RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] up there.” But the RCMP said, “We don’t want to go live there by ourselves.” That’s why they moved the Inuit there.

**JH:** There’s another major reason, which is that an RCMP post, or a scientific outpost, won’t do it. If you go to a World Court and say, “This is our area,” a Court could rule otherwise. A Court could say, “You hiring some people to go there doesn’t make it yours through traditional usage.” That’s often what a World Court would say, if you went to The Hague or something. So if you can say, “We have Native people there; they lived there and they died. There’s a little cemetery you can see. They hunt there; this is their traditional land,” then you have a better case. So although the Inuit weren’t told this, they had a value to the government that was much higher than the military or anybody else.

**LE:** I just wanted to add something about the relocation around Broughton Island—I’ve heard people who survived that, and I’ve heard people from other communities, like Clyde River, and they were saying that the authorities were trying to move them to other locations, and they were trying to bribe them. The Inuit would say, “But this is *our camp*. This is the best spot for us.” And they’d come back and say, “We’ll build you brand new houses.” “We have houses here. We have food and everything we need.” “Well, here’s money.” “What do we need money for?” Men would go hunting and when they came back they found their camps destroyed—the authorities had relocated their families and they had to go find them. That’s when the dog slaughtering began, too, which the government denies, and says it was rabies or some other dog disease. That was another way to trap people, or keep them where they wanted. Another way was to make their kids go to school, and then they would blackmail or threaten them and say, “You can’t get anything from the store; no family allowances.” There times when there was famine because the animals weren’t coming through, and they relied on those stores. But they’d be told you couldn’t get anything at the

stores unless you brought back fox furs; and that was not traditionally one of the things they hunted to eat.

**Audience Member:** I thought that one of the horrible, tragic threads in that film was the bitterness that people expressed about their parents turning them over to those schools, thinking, “They don’t love me,” and the other things you would expect. As people became adults, and went back to think about these things as more complex stories, was there ever any reconciliation among those groups in the community?

**JW:** In Inukjuak, where I went to school, last Winter they had a reconciliation event where people who went to the residential schools and the surviving parents took part, and for a couple of days they just talked about what happened at that time. One of the things that has come out of the whole apology thing was that we had the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which addresses some of this experience, and we’ve had the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That came to Inukjuak when I was there last month, and I spoke at the event. One of the things that also happens is I know some of the people who expressed a desire to go there, that they were glad it was coming to town, but when the event happens they’re nowhere to be seen: it’s too tough for them to deal with it. Although some people have had healing—like Louisa [in the film by Ann Hanson excerpted in *Starting Fire with Gunpowder*]; a lot of people have gone through that, but there are still a lot of people who can’t deal with it.

**Audience Member:** I don’t know the number of films on this subject. Is this one of the more definitive ones? It seems that some of the government officials should have seen this, even if it is after the fact. Is your film the most thorough exploration of the subject, or are there others like it?

**JW:** There’s something called *We Were So Far from Home*, by an Inuk person from Labrador, that really has a wider scope—it deals with some of the Labrador experiences, some of the Québec experiences and some of the vocational school experiences which were out of territory—

**NG:** They went down here to Churchill, right?

**JW:** —Yes. That has a wider scope. But I like mine. [Laughs]

**NG:** I will take the prerogative of ending with some good news. Zebedee [Nungak], who played the main part in the movie *Why White People Are Funny (Qallunaanik Piusiqsiuriniq)*, was the politician in charge of suing the government to get money and compensation for the move to the North and getting people *back* from the North. I remember I went to a conference and he said, “I’ve just had my most successful hunt: I speared ten million dollars!” I’d also like to say that most of the Inuit did not go to boarding school at that time; it tended to be people way in the South, in Labrador; they didn’t have



any schools in the places further north until 1960 or 1961. Another piece of good news I'd like to say is that *occasionally* they listened. The Northern Coordination and Research Centre hired a lot of student anthropologists—some sociologists, but mainly anthropologists—in 1958–59–60–61. I was one of them. First they sent me to this village here, Salluit, on the south coast of the Hudson Strait, and they wanted to know, “What’s happening in the community? Are there a lot of problems? Is it a good community?” Et cetera. You never know if they were going to listen, but as a student anthropologist, I said, “Okay” I went up there on a ship—it took three weeks to get there—and spent four months there. The next year they sent me here, to Kimmirut, Baffin Island, on the north coast of the Hudson Strait. When I started to read the history of Kimmirut—especially the history of the first people to take census, like Bishop and so on, they say, “This area along here is one of the finest areas for Inuit in the whole Eastern Arctic. And in this other area (which was called Frobisher Bay then, now Iqaluit), guess what they had? Forty-four people inhabited this bay here, and there were 450 people along this coast. One of the best places was Cape Dorset and inland, where JH was brought up, and then there was Amadjuak, here, probably the best place for hunting in the whole Eastern Arctic. The people of Kimmirut used to go both ways along the coast, but particularly to there.

When America put in the air base—Canadians did practically nothing in the Arctic until the Americans had done it—in Frobisher Bay (now called Iqaluit) in World War II, and then in the Cold War, many Inuit went by sled to get jobs there. They never met anything like the Americans. They said, “My God! These people actually are generous! They allow us to see their doctors. They throw out more food than we could possibly eat! Why haven’t the Canadians been good to us all this time? The Canadians are mean little guys from Scotland who won’t let us have anything.” The Americans were a miracle. Of course the Americans were very powerful: the Americans thought nothing of sending in fifty ships and landing 1,000 people, and constructing an air strip. Many, many Inuit went there and they got jobs—the Americans taught them how to drive trucks. Of course there were a lot of problems, too; we should talk about that another time.

Anyhow, by the time I was sent to nearby Kummerut in 1960, there were only ninety-nine officially registered Inuit left along the whole coast, and everybody had their relatives, their brothers and sisters, there in Iqaluit. I also spent some time there that Summer. Many of the people who went there said, “Yeah, now I’ve made some money, I’d liking to go back—but how do you take the fridge home?” This was the time the government was first starting to build wooden houses for the Inuit. Actually, they only had one wooden house when I was there, but they were going to build a lot more. This was like a dying community. The nursing station had closed down. The missionary had left. There was one poor old lonely guy for the Hudson’s Bay trader, and there were two RCMP. (Well, Inuit would never stick around with RCMP.) The important thing was: was the Hudson’s Bay Company still going to

be there, and what was the government doing? The Inuit said, “If the Hudson’s Bay leaves, and there’s nobody but the RCMP, we’ll leave. We don’t want to live with the RCMP.”

I talked a lot about this with people there, and with their relatives, and I made a lot of suggestions in my report. I said, “One thing is, absolutely *assure* the Inuit that the Hudson’s Bay Company won’t leave, and that the government’s going to bring more stuff into the place, instead of stripping it down. Bring the nurses back. And the other thing is, offer the people here a free passage by ship in the Summer, and let them bring whatever they want back.” Unfortunately, I didn’t go back for forty years, but when I went back in 2000, there were 440 people there. It was the most thriving place, in terms of *not* having a bar, *not* having drugs; there were places where people could go out with their families. In this place, Frobisher Bay, that used to have forty-four people, there are now 3,000 Inuit and 2,000 *qallunaat*, something like that [it is now the capital of Nunavut Territory]? It’s very difficult to support yourself with an Inuit life on this land, and I think Kimmerut is one of the healthier places. The Inuit said, when I went back, “We’re very glad you wrote that report, because the government actually did help us build up this place!”

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*JH:* This will be a short introduction. Nelson Graburn tells me I didn’t go over my allotted time on the last one, but I think that must be an example of “the camera waiting for the elder”!

My father heard this story in the 1950s. He was doing a lot of dog-team traveling along Southern Baffin and to Cape Dorset, stopping in camps. They made igloos each night and patrolled that area all Winter, and, of course, told stories. One of them was “The White Archer.” Then he moved to New York as a designer for Steuben Glass—it was an abrupt thing. Some wealthy industrialist who was famous for impulsive decisions came up there and my father was etching and all, and the guy offered to move him from Baffin to Manhattan. He hadn’t been writing; my mother would write a book and he would illustrate it. While he was down in New York there were these dinner parties of course practically every night, and my father was able to “animate his chair” with these stories about the Arctic—people would gather around the table to hear these stories about the Arctic. A woman there, Margaret McElderry, was a revered children’s book promoter—with her Stamp of Approval, she was the Oprah of her day—and one evening she said to my father, “That’s a great story. You should publish it.” My father said, “Oh, no—I’m not a writer; my ex-wife’s the writer. I can do the drawings.” Margaret McElderry said, “If I had had a tape recorder on, we could have it typed up, you could have looked over the proofs, we could have done it up and we’d have a book by now.” My father said, “I never thought of it that way; if that’s all that’s involved, sure—I’ll put it down.” Now there are film makers going after these stories, and they won’t disappear, but back then it was writing. Now everything is film so I thought I’d try to adapt it.

There was this community of Pond Inlet—the landscape was magnificent, almost hallucinatory: if you were a cinematographer that’s where you’d go when you died—the happy filming ground. The proposition was kind of like “it takes a village to raise a child”—it takes a village to make a film too, and I thought, “What if I showed up in Pond Inlet, go in with a full crew and match them with locals? There’s a theatre group there; I could cast it there.” One exception was the First Nation character; we brought in an Innu guy from Labrador. An Inuit person wouldn’t want to be put in the position of portraying someone from another culture. There was one problem: there are no trees—trees there are about two inches tall. But I had an inspiration from *Macbeth*—in which Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane—so I put out the call for trees, and had people driving by throwing off their Christmas trees.

Everyone got a chance to develop film skills. Billy Merkosak was up at the top of a ladder doing scenic painting, a backdrop mountain range, and I came storming through the building—we were late to get out to the set—and Billy said, “Hey John?” And I said, “Billy, I can’t stop, we’re way behind.” “No, no, it’s just one question: what’s a scenic painter?” “You are, Billy!” I said just as I was slamming the door.

**Film: *THE WHITE ARCHER* (2010)**

“Wow! You guys really *don’t* have trees up here!”

In a prologue to the film the cast and crew are shown preparing for filming. Then we are plunged into this ancient Inuit legend. Several Inuit are welcomed into the family home of Kungo, the tale’s hero. They confess having attacked a First Nation camp when desperate for food; one has received a bloody arm wound in the altercation, and exclaims, “We left a trail any child could follow.” With the dire inevitability common to myth—and to blood feud—First Nation trackers locate the home and slaughter Kungo’s family and drag his sister off screaming as he hides, powerless. Dreams, a shaman, a pair of kindly old people on an enchanted island, and a magic bow become entangled in his mastery of archery and his undiminished thirst for vengeance. When Kungo finally feels prepared, he sets out to kill the slayers of his family, ignoring the old woman’s final counsel that if he goes through with his plan, many more will be killed.

When he gets to the First Nation camp, however, the bow has ideas of its own, and an unlooked-for intercession brings the story to a peaceful resolution, with Inuit and First Nation peoples reconciled.

**Film: *QAPIRANGAJUQ: INUIT KNOWLEDGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE* (2010)**

Inuit Elders discuss traditional knowledge and its seeming inability to explain current climatic trends. In the past, one would go out first thing in the morning to greet the environment, and assess the weather. “Our ancestors were brilliant about the environment.

Today, It's impossible to correctly predict weather." Icebergs and glaciers are melting; water temperatures affect the quality of seal skins. The consensus is that Southern scientists are misguided in a number of respects: the polar bear population is not, according to many Inuit, diminishing, for instance. Whereas before food caches went undisturbed, and there was no danger even in going out alone to pick berries, now "you always have to carry a gun; bears are everywhere." It is also the contention of many of the speakers in the film that bears that have been tagged behave more aggressively. "Inuit law forbids the mistreatment of wildlife. Inuit do not endanger animals. It is Southerners, tagging and meddling, who are endangering bears, whales, caribou."

Winds are coming from new directions, bringing worse weather. The sun sets in a different place. Food may be contaminated with mercury, as Southerners claim, but "this is our diet; we can't stop eating it." Traditional Inuit hunter knowledge is a rich and ancient source of wisdom, but it can't stop climate change, and sometimes leaves the Inuit wondering about their place in the modern world. "We cannot exist purely by making money. If we do not have our environment, we will not survive."

Inuit Elders are nonconfrontational; it's not their way to speak aggressively. But the younger generation is becoming more vocal, and that is necessary. "We have to think of our children and grandchildren. The environment is changing. And all of us, the Inuit, are changing."

### ***PLENARY DISCUSSION***

**MF:** I enjoyed all the films. The people who make films in the North are really brave, because from my experience, at first we didn't know how the camera would work in 60 below weather. Then we discovered that everything froze in the camera and nothing was working. So people started making jackets for the camera out of sheep skin or duffle. We really had experiences with the camera when we started filming up North. One time a cameraman foreman said, "I'm coming back." I said, "Why?"—he'd just gotten there. He said, "My camera keeps freezing and I can't take any pictures." "Okay, well: think of something." I really enjoyed all of the films, and I really got sad from the film of residential schools, because I am one of those residential school people and I was really badly abused in school. It took me forty years to heal. I thought I had healed from it, and it just suddenly came back to me, and I couldn't even get up from the chair after it was over. The Elders in Edmonton, Cree Elders, helped me heal myself. I would go to one of them and speak to them and then I realized I was not by myself, that there were many of us that had been abused. I thought I was healed, but it just suddenly got to me. Thank you very much.

**JW:** About John's film, *The White Archer*: we don't do any of that dramatization so I really appreciate that. I appreciate that a lot of people were involved—it was a very ambitious project, very encouraging. For the last film, on the climate: yes, things are happening and we're not really sure what's happening. For instance this past Winter it was a very slow

freeze-up: Hudson Bay, where Inukjuak is located, didn't freeze up as quickly as it usually does. That was a concern for the people; people want to go snowmobiling on Hudson Bay and going to the fishing ground; they were delayed for that quite a bit this last year. The comments about the polar bears resonate with me, too, from the Inukjuak area. I remember around 1970 a polar bear had come close to town—I don't think anybody really saw it, but people saw the tracks; that was the talk of the town for the next couple of days. Now it's quite common that there are bears, and we don't really understand why. Part of it might have to do with the ice pads. Usually after ice breaks up, the ice chunks will circulate in the Bay, and usually they will melt. Those usually come around July; sometimes August. That might have influenced polar bear distribution, because seals love those ice pads, and the polar bears eat the seals.

**Audience Member:** Can you relieve me of my worry that the polar bears have to swim inordinate distances because of the melting?

**JW:** I cannot comment on that; I can't confirm it.

**JH:** I can speak to that a little bit from personal observation, as since 1992 I've been doing this ecotourism, by ship from Baffin to Greenland. So that becomes a small basis of observation—obviously not as much as Elders watching year-round for seventy years. We would go out from Cape Dyer heading across to Greenland, and we always used to allow thirty-nine hours for the crossing; it never took forty hours unless you encountered some heavy ice. One whole day at sea, then you arrive the following day. You'd sometimes see polar bears on the floating ice. The reason it would take thirty-nine hours is that the ship would snake through the ice—it's a bit of an icebreaker, but the captain's being careful not to hit anything too big, and if you're trying to sleep at night you're rolling back and forth. Today there's no floating ice: none. The captain sets the compass and we just go there straight, and now it's about twenty-nine or thirty hours, because we're not correcting and adjusting. It's not been just one blip; it's a general trend. With the polar bears it's not that they're swimming hundreds of miles; they're staying on land. It's all about conserving energy.

**LE:** I'm not an expert on climate change, but I've noticed in Iqaluit we were still raining in January; part of the New Year's Eve celebration involves going out on the ice, and this year we were doing this in boats. I've heard from the Elders that there are climate cycles. I notice they always throw in polar bears when they talk about climate change. I've seen all of your [Houston's] films, and I recognize some of the Elders; I feel re-inspired. I wish APTN would show them more often.

**JH:** Far from showing them more often, APTN has basically stopped commissioning them. They're not into the one-hour documentary; that's dead. Everything is changing in the Canadian broadcasting world. You saw *The White Archer* in English: the younger actors did

it in English then dubbed their own parts in Inuktitut, and the Elders did it the other way around, because APTN said younger people might not watch something with a lot of subtitles. APTN was very complimentary to me: “We really love your work!” Well, I hope there can be more of it. They said with their seven-year mandate, to renew their license, they’re going to go after the fifteen-year-olds—they’re going to make all these programs about and for kids now. With Elders, it’s bittersweet, because they’re some of the dearest, most intelligent people you would ever meet, but they’re dying. You have a sense of urgency about it. I wonder how many Inuit Elders who were born on the land will still be around when Elders come back in style?

**NG:** I lived in Kimmirut in 1960, and inland from that is a big valley called the Soper River Valley, and there’s a dead forest there. So there was a time when the trees didn’t end where they do now hundreds of miles to the South.

**MF:** In our area, in Hudson Bay, they’re not really believing yet that it’s happening. They say that each different year goes up and down, they think it’s happening that way. The thing in our area is the salt water is starting to mix with the fresh water, caused by the two dams that were built, and it’s going into the Hudson Bay, and the animals are starting to go further to taste their salt water.

**NG:** Does anybody else know about the forest in Soper River Valley?

**JH:** I wonder if that isn’t a microclimate. Like if you hang out in Churchill for a while, you’ll notice it’s tundra, it’s glacial esker. Around Knight’s Hill, there’s a microclimate, and we shot *Snowwalker* there to make it look like we were really higher in the Arctic. If you go north of there there are stands of trees—there are stands of trees north of the tundra, but it’s a little isolated microclimate, and then you go further north, and you get to the tundra that stays all the way up. There are these little areas that are anomalies, and it could be one of those.

**Audience Member:** A couple of comments on climate change. I have some Alaskan friends who said the Winter of 1985–86 in Alaska there were temperatures of minus 55, minus 60, in places like Anchorage. A point I want to make now is that many of them learned there as an engineering, or design, component: when you get much lower than minus 40, a lot of things don’t work. We have a lot of respect for the Siberians. Some of my friends in Alaska think the permafrost is much more of a problem in the long term than the glaciers that are melting.

**NG:** There’s a whole village in Alaska that’s been falling into the sea because of the permafrost melting. The other thing about the permafrost in Siberia is it contains enormous amounts of methane, and when methane is released into the air it’s about forty times as destructive as CO<sub>2</sub>.

*LE:* In the North what they've started doing is putting pylons in the ground to keep the ground frozen. When they were doing renovations in our office building they found huge chunks of concrete that had caved in.

*NG:* What's going to happen with your film making in the next couple of years?

*MF:* I have to find the money first.

*LE:* When we were working on the *Ullumi* film there were a lot of arguments with the producers. They felt it should be focused on educating the Southern audience, but we wanted to bring it back to our people. We all grew up seeing things, but we didn't know how to put them into words. For me, it was to put something into words, and to give them a different perspective and to stimulate ideas, and maybe to rile people up so that it'll inspire the youth to become more political and start producing changes.

*Audience Member:* I was thinking of that in the last hour: if there could somehow be some routing, regular publication that's widely read, at least once a month, with profiles on Elders, or pieces of history, or something that's very political. I know we have to work on messaging here in Berkeley, because we are up against a lot of messaging with the Republicans out there; but messaging gets things done. Maybe find some PR firm or continuum to keep it alive.

*NG* [To Weetaluktuk]: What are your future plans?

*JW:* There are a couple of things I'm just thinking about. I'm in the investigation phase for a film I want to do with my wife. It's her idea—we've talked about it for many years—having to do with ceremonies related to child rearing. We've talked about it with Hugh Brodie [of CBC] and he said that nobody's ever touched that in film form in the Inuit community. The other one's regarding the education of Inuit: we're really having a problem delivering our education in Nunavik; I think it's the same in Nunavut. I was in New Zealand doing research on the Maori, on how they do their education. I want to follow two Maori students and two Inuit students from Nunavik and compare their experience and the systems they go through.

*NG:* It makes me think of whether you have relations with film makers in Greenland and Alaska. Is everything all down South or are they somewhat related, Greenlandic TV and so on?

*JH:* We went to Copenhagen; we had to fly to Montréal first. Just getting together the flights costs. . . . You can practically see each other, but those flights have been cancelled; you have to go halfway around the world. This whole thing of home rule in Greenland is very frustrating, because they are now considered the same as any foreign national. People at Danish Film basically confirmed this. If you're a Greenlandic film maker and you want money from Denmark (where the money would be), it's no different from if you applied

from Tasmania or Peru. You're just as eligible, despite a millennium of connection between Denmark and Greenland. The Danish film institute director, Thomas, said, "I wouldn't put such a fine point on it. We do hold the Greenlanders in a friendly regard."

*NG:* They do get funding from the EU.

*JH:* How come there are so few film makers in Greenland? They can't make a living at it; it's sort of a hobby.

*MF:* I always think they have everything in Greenland. I mean, they're two hundred years ahead of England.

*NG:* Alexis, you've had experience in Alaska with film media and so on.

*Alexis Buntzen:* Jobie told me he went to the Indigenous Film Festival hosted by Steve at the Alaskan Native Heritage Center, and that's new, but there are other indigenous film festivals that are starting to bring people together. I haven't been to any outside of the U.S. They have some in Los Angeles that bring people together, that are organized through the Autry Museum. I was always under the impression, kind of like Mini, that *Canada* had everything, or New Zealand. The State of Alaska in the last year or so has made a lot of tax breaks for film makers, so they're starting to make more films up there—I'll hear through people, "Oh, Drew Barrymore is making a film right now, and they're looking for people from the village of such-and-such." So there's more film happening up there, but I don't think it's Native-owned and -operated and -conceived, unless it's something that one of the Native Foundation corporations have initiated. I don't get the sense that there are that many Native independent film makers like you guys up there, so it would be cool if our country would support that more.

*NG:* I was at the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, which has a lot of Native people now—it's not just anthropologists looking at them. And Ron Senungetuk [founder of the Native Art Program, and Professor Emeritus of the Art Department at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks] is a leader now, not just an artist. I made sure that there were a lot of Canadian [Native] people in the group that I invited, so he took them to studios in Anchorage and Fairbanks that were available for Native film makers, and the Canadians were extremely impressed. Now, that doesn't mean there was the money, but there were studios for making independent films in Alaska. And, whatever it's called, KUTV of Bethel, is famous for a lot of indigenous films made by Yupik people there. That may not be going on now; that was twenty years ago or so.

*Alexis:* Bethel led the way with a radio station and other media, and I know they've made some things, and they do have resources in Anchorage. There are a few Native film makers and I'm friends with some of them, and when there's a Request for a Proposal out for a Native-themed subject, they're not always getting picked to do these things. They should



really be given preference for these proposals, because they're in a lot of ways better film makers than non-Native film makers because of their better understanding and access, and knowledge of Native story-telling style. So that's kind of a problem.

But there are some Native casting agencies, and there are a lot more people moving from theater and story-telling into the film world. So we're seeing a lot more [Native] actors up there, and part of that is fueled by breaks for Hollywood films going up there.

**NG:** Well, that's something to have. There's one more piece of good news—I *think* it's good news: I wanted to have a circumpolar session at the next Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, which is taking place in Iceland in about two months. I made a proposal a long time ago, and I didn't hear much from the people there, and they said, "No, the money's fallen through, so we can't have one." But quite independently, they're having a circumpolar aboriginal film festival there. I don't know who they're inviting from Canada; there are some Sámi film makers and maybe they can get some from Russia. And I'm sure they're getting some from Canada and Alaska and Greenland.

There used to be a direct flight from Iqaluit to Nuuk; it wasn't too expensive and it took about half an hour, and Air Inuit closed it, because they lost money on it and they're interested in giving money to Mini and others who are shareholders.

**MF:** In two *months*? [Laughs]

**NG:** I don't know who is organizing it.

**JW:** *The Last Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, by Isuma, was a co-production with a Danish company. That's one of them. I sometimes meet Alaskan film makers, but that's mostly "we meet them [and that's it]."

**NG:** Any last-minute questions?

**Audience Member:** I want to say that mainly we've been responding to the information and the knowledge that's coming out of these films, but I thought the film making itself was really wonderful—the photography, the editing, the use of music. I don't know if I missed it, but where were you trained? Did you all go to film school?

**JH:** There was a clue in one film—that Inuit learn by observing. I know I was a coffee boy for Paramount for a while and I thought, "I'll keep my eyes open and I'll learn a few things," and there's some stuff you can't learn second-hand: you've got to learn it by hard experience. I'm really proud when I watch the films by my colleagues: they're clear and they flow; there's a kind of clarity of thought that I've recorded—like when the Inuit Elders are speaking about climate change. You may agree with them or not agree with them, but the thinking is clear.

**NG:** I would particularly like to praise Jobie's wonderful eye. There were a lot of things not to do with what was going on but you can't stop watching them—not just the flies [in *Umiag Skin Boat*]. The way you introduced the weather that went with the speech—the speech wasn't about weather, but you were able to alter the mood by using the weather to bracket the topic. And the quality of the photography was fabulous. I don't know—you must have been trained in the best school in the world.

**JW:** Thank you. I didn't do all that! I had a very good editor, and she has a very good sense of visual story—not just of story, but of people, so that really helps. My training: I'm a half-baked journalist. I used to work in television, I used to work for IBC, I was in front of a camera, but with IBC you kind of have to cover for people and I did a little bit of camera because of that. I'm always interested in camera, just photography in general. But I'm not really trained for film.

**NG:** I would like to add that Zacharias Kunuk, who was also the world-famous leader of Isuma, also worked for IBC, but he wanted to get out of the strictures of working for a government, lock-step program. He wanted to make his own films. So he got the training with IBC, like you, and became very familiar with the whole process. And Mini helped start IBC and was involved with all the film makers, and then because of this—observing and so on—she went off and made ten of her own films.

I'd like to thank these people, not only for bringing these films into existence for us and for the rest of the world. It's a fantastic honor to have you guys here, and thank you for giving us this [body of work], which will go on and on and on—as long as we look after it properly!

Stephen Pitcher, *rapporteur*