

NEW LAND – The Documentary Film

Tracing historic routes, going places gloriously untrod

Film Synopsis:

In 2013 Tobias Thorleifsson and John Huston will embark on a journey into a largely untouched wilderness—arguably one of the most rugged and remote places left on the planet: Ellesmere Island. This massive landmass, located at the far northeastern extent of the North American continent, will set the stage for this arduous 70-day endeavor. New Land will focus on the past, present, and future of the stunning Ellesmere landscape. The expedition project will:

- Celebrate of the peerless, but unheralded Norwegian polar explorer Otto Sverdrup, who first discovered and mapped much of the region 111 years ago.
- Intimately portray the daily life of a modern polar expedition.
- Tell the story of the changing Arctic climate.



An iceberg on the coast of Ellesmere Island.

Film Story:

Otto Sverdrup is the least celebrated of the three great Norwegian polar explorers. He embodies the cultural ethos of what it means to be Norwegian as no other explorer. However, due to a lack of unnecessary drama and his quiet nature, Sverdrup's astounding polar achievements and feats of leadership remain unheralded. He took part in the first crossing of Greenland, oversaw the construction of the famed polar ship Fram, captained the first Fram Expedition (4 years frozen in the Arctic Ocean), and from 1898–1902 he led the second Fram Expedition, which discovered and mapped over 150,000 square kilometers of the present day Canadian Arctic.

Since Sverdrup's discovery of western Ellesmere Island and the Sverdrup Islands some 110 years ago this region has by in large remained the great wilderness that the original explorers experienced. New Land Expedition 2013 will take its audience through close encounters the wild animals of the north, arctic history, the daily challenges of an expedition and engage our audience to address the fact that, Ellesmere Island, like the rest of the Arctic, now faces an uncertain future due to climate change and resource exploitation

Part 1: The team battles their way north through the icy end of the Arctic winter. Their destination is Eureka, a tiny weather station and the site of their first resupply. This part of the film will embody the struggle and hardship of expeditions in the High Arctic. Here the team will face their greatest physical test as they get all their systems working in deep freeze temperatures and navigate their way through the area with one of the highest polar bear concentrations in the world.

Part 2: From Eureka the team will head into the unknown northwestern Ellesmere Island to Alert Point. Ski sailing over a frozen ocean and through a spectacular landscape of glaciers and peaks.

Part 3: As summer approaches the Arctic will begin to reveal herself. At this time of year wildlife encounters are likely. Herds of prehistoric musk oxen rally against the attack of winter-hungry wolves, curious Arctic Foxes roam far and wide, and polar bears feast on harp seals. The team will take travel strategically to maximize wildlife encounters and take the patience necessary to document these scenes.

Visual Treatment:

New Land will draw the viewer into a polar expedition in a visceral way. With all team members filming through every conceivable condition the viewer will be able to breathe the icy air and share in the fatty meals which sustain explorers in the cold. A series of diary-cam style interviews will engage in a very truthful way as Toby and John not only bring us into their world, but also reflect on the stories and personalities of those who first explored Ellesmere.

A significant part of the film will also document Toby and John as they undergo their journey. The ups and downs of polar travel will come through strongly as we see Toby and John's reactions to majestic peaks, awe-inspiring fjords, otherworldly sea ice rubble, and the intoxicating hues of the every changing Arctic light. At the same time the expedition will take time to shoot truly spectacular scenery, natural history, and jaw dropping time-lapses to capture the rapidly changing moods of the High Arctic. POV (point of view) cameras, like GoPros will provide action filled perspectives from kites and sleds when the team is on the move.

