



# UVANGA

A FILM BY  
MARIE-HÉLÈNE COUSINEAU AND MADELINE PIUJUQ IVALU

*Uvanga* (Myself) is the second feature film from the Arnait Video Collective, the same team that won Best Canadian First Feature Film at the 2008 Toronto International Film Festival. Directed by Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Piujuq Ivalu, the film was shot entirely on location in Nunavut.

# STORY | SYNOPSIS

Anna is nervous when she and her son, Tomas, arrive in the small, close-knit community of Igloolik in the Canadian Arctic.

Anna had a short-lived affair with Tomas's Inuk father when she worked in Igloolik. But Tomas, now 14 years old, was born and raised in his mother's native city of Montreal and never knew much about his origins.

Tomas is bright, strong, and curious about his father's culture, but his father is no longer around to show him the way. For Tomas's mother and Inuit family, the joy of his homecoming is mixed with memories of a brief and painful chapter in their shared history. Over the course of two weeks that seem to blend into one long day under the midnight sun, Anna and Thomas strive to reconnect with the family they can no longer ignore.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE |

The characters of Anna and Tomas were not inspired by anyone in particular, but there are many families like theirs in the world today: separated, mixed-blood children discovering their roots and shaping their identities; grandparents connecting with newly found grandchildren; and adults trying to mend broken relationships.

This story could have taken place anywhere, but the one we are telling takes place in the North in a remote community on Baffin Island. The script is anchored in the culture, lifestyle, people, and place of Igloolik, Nunavut.

At Arnait Video, we have been making films in Igloolik for 20 years. After finishing our most recent feature film, *Before Tomorrow*, our production group went in different directions. The elders, Susan Avingaq and Madeline Ivalu, went on to produce documentaries on traditional customs. Carol Kunnuk directed a documentary on a contemporary female musher, while Marie-Hélène Cousineau directed a two-episode documentary on the impact of mining in the North, as well as a short comedy. Arnait Video also co-produced a documentary series called *The Uluit*, the story of an all-female hockey team from Inukjuak. The series was nominated for a Gemini for Best Documentary Series. In the last three years, we have also produced various web blogs and documentaries.

With the support of Nunavut Film and Telefilm Canada, Arnait Video was able to go forward with the development of *Uvanga*. Marie-Hélène Cousineau continued writing, together with writer and editor Trevor Ferguson, and in the summer of 2011, she returned to Igloolik to discuss the script with the rest of the group. We went over all the details of the script and had many meetings with prospective actors.

The film is truly an actor's film. We had the opportunity to work with an exceptional team of experienced Igloolik-based actors. Interestingly, they had never worked on a contemporary story before. Working with them helped us sharpen the scenes and the Inuktitut dialogue developed in the script. We used this same approach with *Before Tomorrow* to ensure absolute cultural authenticity.

In shooting the film, we wanted the camera to focus on the actors and let them shine. The camera work allows the audience to view the world of the film through the characters' eyes. We wanted the film to depict an explosion of emotions and the flow of life, without dwelling on resolutions or closure. With this emotionally open and natural approach, we hope that the audience will feel close to the characters through the events of their lives.

*Directors Madeline Ivalu and Marie-Hélène Cousineau*

# CAST & CREW CREDITS |

## Directors



### MARIE-HÉLÈNE COUSINEAU

Co-director Marie-Hélène Cousineau formed the Arnait Video Collective, where she works as a coordinator/trainer, as well as an active collaborating producer. Along with co-director Madeline Piujuq Ivalu, she directed the feature film *Before Tomorrow*, winner of the Best Canadian First Feature Film at the 2008 Toronto International Film Festival. She also co-produced the 2011 APTN documentary series *The Uluit*, which was nominated for a Gemini for Best Documentary Series. Her video work has been widely exhibited in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. With an MFA in Communications from the University of Iowa, Cousineau was also associate professor of Communications at Concordia University in Montreal (1997–1999). From September 29 to December 16, 2012, her installation *Perdre et retrouver le Nord* was on view as part of the opening eight-artist show *Archival Dialogues: Reading the Black Star Collection* at the Ryerson Image Centre in Toronto.



### MADÉLINE PIUJUQ IVALU

Co-director and actress Madeline Piujuq Ivalu has been a key elder participant in all Arnait Video projects since its inception. With Marie-Hélène Cousineau, she co-directed Arnait's award-winning feature film *Before Tomorrow*. She was a cultural advisor and interviewer for the Arnait productions *Women/Health/Body* and *Itivimut*, as well as a storyteller, musician, actor and writer for *Qulliq*, *Ataguttaluk Starvation*, *Piujuq and Angutautuq* and *Unikausiq*. She presented the videos of the Arnait Video Collective at the 1996 Qaigit Symposium in Ottawa. She represents Igloodik women at Pauktuutit, the pan-Canadian Inuit women's organization.

# Actors



## LUKASI FORREST (TOMAS)

Newcomer to the big screen, Lukasi Forrest is from Kuujuaq, Nunavik (Northern Quebec). He has been involved in the local Junior Rangers, the Police Cadets, his school soccer team and other sports. He previously trained and performed with Cirqiniq, a Cirque du Soleil social circus program. Given the opportunity, Lukasi would like to continue acting. In the meantime, he is continuing his schooling and plans to work as a monitor at the Kuujuaq Youth Camp this summer.



## MARIANNE FARLEY (ANNA)

By the time she was 19, Marianne knew that her career would take place under the bright lights. She recorded an album in Quebec, with several songs making the Top 10 list. But acting had always been her passion. Once she focused on this path, her talent was quickly recognized. Being fully bilingual, she began with parts on shows for youth in both English and French, like *Big Wolf on Campus*, *Vampire High*, *Seriously Weird* and *Macaroni Tout Garni*. Following this, she had a starring role in Daniel Roby's feature thriller *La Peau blanche*, and then landed hefty parts in three first-rate prime-time series in Quebec: *Les Invincibles*, *Nos Étés* and *Les Rescapés*. On U.S. television she played in Stephen King's *Dead Zone* and had supporting roles in the movies *Christmas Choir*, *Forbidden Secrets* and *No Brother of Mine*. Marianne can be seen in Stobe Harju's upcoming feature *Imaginaerum*, a Finnish-Quebecois co-production. Marianne has also produced four short films, one of which, *Mon Cher Robert*, was nominated for a 2010 Jutra Award.



## TRAVIS KUNNUK (TRAVIS)

Travis is an Igloodik local and the real-life son of Carol Kunnuk, who plays his mother, Sheba, in the film. This was a new experience for Travis, who had never acted before. In the future, he would like to take on other parts. At the moment, Travis is the stock supervisor at Northern, the local store. He enjoys hunting and playing hockey and will be graduating from high school next semester.



### MADELINE PIUJUQ IVALU (SARAH)

Madeline Piujuq Ivalu has been a key elder participant in all projects by Arnait Video Productions since 1991. Actor, director, musician, storyteller and well-known seamstress, she co-directed and starred in the collective's previous film, *Before Tomorrow*, giving a moving performance as Ningiuq, the spirited and loving grandmother who cares for her grandson, as they find themselves alone in the world. She also appeared as a featured player in Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* and Zacharias Kunuk's and Norman Cohn's *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*.



### PETER-HENRY ARNATSIQAQ (BARRIE)

Peter-Henry Arnatsiaq is an experienced hunter from Igloolik as well as a well-known actor. He starred as Oki, the jealous rival in Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. He is also featured in Zacharias Kunuk's and Norman Cohn's *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* and Marie-Hélène Cousineau's and Madeline Piujuq Ivalu's *Before Tomorrow* and played a supporting role in Charles Martin Smith's *The Snow Walker*. In 2003, at the École Nationale de Théâtre in Montreal, he presented a unique re-enactment of the contemporary Inuit legend of Kaukjakjuaq. Co-directed with his brother Laurentio Arnatsisaq, this impressive performance included singing, acting, drumming, dancing and juggling.



### PAKAK INNUKSHUK (IKE)

Pakak Innuksjuk is a well-known carver and actor. He has acted in the theatre and in several films. He played Awva, the last great shaman portrayed in Zacharias Kunuk's and Norman Cohn's *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* as well as *Atanarjuat's* older brother in Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. Recently, he played Merkusaq in Michel Poulette's *Maina*, shot in the spring of 2012. Pakak is currently employed as a repairman for the Igloolik Housing Association.



### CAROL KUNNUK (SHEBA)

Carol Kunnuk has worked for many years in film and television in Nunavut: producing, editing and assistant directing several projects for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, the Nunavut Independent Television Network and the Arnait Video. In 2010 she directed her first documentary film *The Queen of the Quest*. Prior to playing Sheba, she appeared in Zacharias Kunuk's and Norman Cohn's *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* and took part in acting workshops in Igloolik. Carol currently resides in Igloolik and is the in-house editor for Kingulliit Productions.

# Producers



STÉPHANE RITUIT

Stéphane Rituit has been producing feature films, documentaries and shorts for over 10 years. He produced the latest films from the renowned filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, as well as several award-winning projects such as the feature film *Before Tomorrow* (2008 Canada's Best Top Ten according to the TIFF Group), the documentary *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* and shorts like *Tungijug* (Sundance, TIFF, etc.). He is also the co-producer of the web distribution platform [www.isuma.tv](http://www.isuma.tv) (2009 CNMA finalist).



MARIE-HÉLÈNE COUSINEAU

Marie-Hélène Cousineau has been producing and co-directing documentaries, web projects and fiction with Arnait Video Productions for 20 years. She co-directed the feature *Before Tomorrow* with Madeline Ivalu which won Best Canadian First Feature Film at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2008.

# Executive Producers



SUSAN AVINGAQ

Susan Avingaq has been a regular participant in Arnait Video Productions since 1991. She was a key member of the production team for *Qulliq*, *Ataguttaaluk Starvation* and *Piujug and Angutautug* as writer, actor and musician. In 2010, Susan was nominated for three Genie awards for her work in *Before Tomorrow* as screenwriter (adapted screenplay), composer (original song) and art direction.



ZACHARIAS KUNUK

Zacharias Kunuk is a renowned filmmaker whose dramatic feature films include *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, which won the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2001, and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, co-directed with Norman Cohn, which opened the Toronto International Film Festival in 2006. Kunuk is the winner of a National Arts Award, National Aboriginal Achievement Award and was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2005.



MADÉLINE PIUJUQ IVALU

Producer, actress and co-director at Arnait Video Productions. *Uvanga* is the second feature she co-directed with Marie-Hélène Cousineau.