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Women can do anything they want. This women's video workshop can help people communicate with each other. It can make them understand. A long time ago, just with words and language, people really believed in stories and legends. Our stories are useful and unforgettable.

~ SUSAN AVINGAQ

our mission

The goal of Arnait Video Productions (Women's Video Workshop of Igloolik) is to value the voices of Inuit women in debates of interest to Canadians and all people everywhere. How does one experience the dawning of the third millennium in a small Inuit community that is going through fundamental political and social changes?

Since its beginnings in 1991, Arnait Video Productions (AVP) has traced a trajectory revealing the originality of its producers, the context of their work and lives, as well as their strong desire to express cultural values unique to Canada.

Working in difficult social conditions – through community and family problems as well as precarious financial situations – the sheer endurance required on the part of the women to produce these video-documents testifies to the important place Arnait has in their lives.

The first works of our group revealed the strong urge the women of Igloolik have to share their oral traditions. Whether in the form of a series of interviews (Women/Health/Body and Itivimiut) or as short works linking songs to words and reenactment of traditional activities (Qulliq, Ataguttaluk Starvation, Piujuq and Angutautaq), the videos that we produce celebrate the specificity of the culture of women in Igloolik.

While the video works situate themselves in the specificity of their production, they are universal in their motivation for expression. It is this combination that has resonated and secured diverse audiences across the Arctic, in South America, Europe, the United States, and Canada.

Since 2000, Arnait Video Productions has produced feature documentaries such as **Anaana** (*Mother*), **Unakuluk** (*Dear Little One*), and the short fiction film **Ningiura** (*My Grandmother*). **Before Tomorrow**, based on Danish author Jørn Riel's novel, is the first feature-length fiction film produced by Arnait Video Productions, scheduled for release in 2008.

our style

The originality of AVP's productions is due to the efforts undertaken to create a production process that is in harmony with the lives of the women involved in each project. Our production values reflect the cultural values of the participants, such as respect for Elders, hunting and fishing seasons, community events and family traditions. We work as a team to write each script, to create costumes and accessories, and to shape performances.

The use of the docu-drama genre permits us to take on our own themes. With alternating interviews and scripted portions, we take on different approaches to explore our chosen subjects. With this method, we give a voice to several generations of Inuit:

- The Elders, who still live by traditions of the region around Igloolik;
- The adults, who have lived in the world of traditional culture, but also in that of *Qabluna*, or white men, and are versatile within both worlds;
- The young, heavily influenced by the Western world which brings them to learn, first of all, the tools and skills of that culture before those of their grand parents.

The whole of our work is the expression of research into traditional and contemporary Inuit narrative styles. We seek to create innovative stories for our time by respecting and rediscovering our traditions.

biographies

The members of Arnait Video have always worked collectively on their productions combining their ideas, knowledge and expertise. Here is a look at some of the women behind Arnait.

Mary Kunuk CO-PRODUCER | CO-DIRECTOR



Mary is a founding member of Arnait Video Productions. Artist, printmaker and video maker, Mary Kunuk received North West Territories Arts Council and Canada Council grants to produce several experimental videos using computer animation. These have been shown in festivals and galleries around the world. Kunuk is co-producer/director of *Ningiura*, Arnait's first Telefilm Canada-financed short drama based on authentic oral histories, traditional knowledge and the contemporary reality of Igloolik today.

Marie-Hélène Cousineau CO-PRODUCER | CO-DIRECTOR | CAMERAPERSON



Marie-Hélène formed the collective Arnait Ikajurtigiit (Women's Video Workshop), and is its coordinator/trainer as well as an active collaborating producer. Cousineau has written about the experiences of women making video in Igloolik and curated several exhibitions of their work. She has received several Canada Council and Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec video production grants. Her video work has been widely exhibited in Canada, the U.S and Europe. With an MFA in Communications from University of Iowa, Cousineau was also associate professor of Communications at Concordia University in Montreal (1997-1999). She is co-directing *Before Tomorrow*, the first Arnait feature-length film, with Madeline Ivalu.

Madeline Ivalu CULTURAL ADVISOR | ACTOR | WRITER | MUSICIAN | STORYTELLER | DIRECTOR



Madeline has been a key elder participant in all the productions by the AVP since 1991. She was cultural advisor and interviewer for *Women/Health/Body* and *Itivimiut* as well as storyteller, musician, actor and writer for *Qulliq*, *Ataguttaaluk Starvation*, *Piujjuq* and *Angutautuq* and *Unikausiq*. She presented the videos of the Workshop at the 1996 Qaigit Symposium in Ottawa. She represents Igloolik women to Pauktutit, the Pan-Canadian Inuit Women's organization. She is co-director and lead actress in Arnait's first feature-length film *Before Tomorrow*.

Susan Avingaq WRITER | ACTOR | MUSICIAN



Susan has been a regular participant in the Video Workshop since 1991. She was a key member of the production team for *Qulliq*, *Ataguttaaluk Starvation* and *Piujjuq* and *Angutautuq* as writer, actor and musician. A renowned seamstress/artist in the Baffin region she is also active locally in teaching sewing traditions to younger Inuit women. Susan was born on the land and moved into town in Igloolik in the mid-1970s, although her family still hunts and camps on the land part of the year. In October 1997, Susan received a travel grant from Canada Council to present a compilation of Arnait works, *Taravut/Our Reflections*, at the Montreal Maison de la Culture Cote-des-Neiges and the Ottawa School of Art. She participated in the Pan Arctic Women Artists Workshop organized by the Inuit Art Foundation in 1997. She is the Art Director for *Before Tomorrow*.

Rachel Uyurasuk CULTURAL ADVISOR | ACTOR



Rachel is an elder who participates in many of our projects. She was involved in the very first video Arnait produced: *Women's Way* (1991). In the summer of 1999, at age 85, she played a major role in our production *Ningiura*. A former midwife, poet and singer, she is a respected Elder throughout Nunavut.

Oana Spinu SET PHOTOGRAPHER | WEB DESIGNER



Before joining Igloolik Isuma Productions and AVP, Oana was the Production Department Coordinator at CKUT FM, New Media associate at Banff Centre for the Arts, Technical Director of Studio XX, as well as a currently working as researcher on Territoires ouverts/Open Territories at the Société des arts technologiques (SAT). She has worked with Igloolik Isuma Productions and Arnait for several years on interactive projects such as nunatinnit.org, sila.nu and nitv.nu. She has been involved in promoting free software, streaming technologies, media literacy and activism, and community radio in Canada and abroad.

Carol Kunnuk CAMERAPERSON | EDITOR | CO-DIRECTOR



Carol assisted in the direction of Arnait's latest production, *Before Tomorrow*. She has also worked as a television producer for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and for the Nunavut Independent Television Network. She is the local coordinator of Arnait Video Productions in Igloolik.

Atuat Akkitirq COSTUME DESIGNER | CULTURAL ADVISOR | SCRIPT CONSULTANT | ACTOR



Atuat was nominated for a Genie Award in the Best Costume Category for *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* in 2007. She was also a supporting actress in this film. Beginning her career with Igloolik Isuma Productions in 1990, she starred in the lead role of the family elder for the internationally acclaimed 13-episode *Nunavut* (Our Land) Series. At Igloolik Isuma Productions, she has worked as an actress, script consultant and cultural advisor as well as a supporting actress and costume designer for *Atarnajuat*, *The Fast Runner*. In 1991, she began working with Arnait Video Productions as a script consultant and cultural advisor and is the costume designer on Arnait's first feature-length film *Before Tomorrow*.

productions

For release in 2008 • **Before Tomorrow** [92 MINUTES] *Directed by Marie-Hélène Cousineau + Madeline Ivalu*

2005 • **Unakuluk (Dear Little One)** [46 MINUTES] *Directed by Marie-Hélène Cousineau*
in collaboration with Mary Kunuk

2001 • **Anaana (Mother)** [52 MINUTES] *Directed by Mary Kunuk + Marie-Hélène Cousineau*
• **Live from the tundra** | Live streamed web site, summer 2001 | www.nunatinnit.org

1999 • **Ningiura (My Grandmother)** [28 MINUTES] *Directed by Mary Kunuk + Marie-Hélène Cousineau*

1996 • **Unikausiq (Stories)** [6 MINUTES] *Directed by Mary Kunuk*
• **Aqtuqsi (My Nightmare)** [5 MINUTES] *Directed by Mary Kunuk*
• **Travelers** [38 MINUTES] *Directed by Marie-Hélène Cousineau*

1994 • **Piujuk and Angutautuq** [27 MINUTES] *Collective direction*

1993 • **Mixed Feeling** [10 MINUTES] *Collective direction*
• **Qarmaq** [25 MINUTES] *Collective direction*
• **Itivimiut**, Oral tradition project: 16 interviews [16 HOURS, UNEDITED]
• **Women's Day Celebration** [30 MINUTES] Video record

1992 • **Women/Health/Body** | Oral Tradition project: 9 interviews [9 HOURS, UNEDITED]
• **Attagutaaluk (Starvation)** [23 MINUTES] *Collective direction*
• **Qulliq (Oil Lamp)** [12 MINUTES] *Collective direction*
• **Women's Way** [20 MINUTES] *Collective direction*
• **Video survey for a Women's Workshop** [20 MINUTES] *Collective direction*

photo gallery

Before Tomorrow In the 19th century, two isolated Inuit families celebrate their reunion after many years of separation. They have only heard stories about white people – and are fascinated by their clever and curious artefacts. After Ningioq, an old woman, her best friend, and her grandson, Maniq, leave to dry fish on a remote island, a strange illness sweeps through the camp. Ningioq and Maniq are soon left alone in the world, where they must find the means and the will to survive.



Unakuluk (Dear Little One) In Inuit culture, adopting a child from a relative, friend or acquaintance is common. This documentary explores family relations through the personal histories of women who have experienced adoption in one way or another.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- Médiathèque du Gonzier (Martinique, 2005)
- Native American Film and Video Festival (New York, 2006)
- Etnografisk Museum (Stockholm, 2006)
- Channel 24 (Igloolik)

Anaana (Mother) Vivi Kunuk, a woman who practiced traditional hunting and is the mother of eight, including filmmakers Mary and Zach (*Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner*), recounts stories of her remarkable life prior to her people's relocation into government settlements in the 1950s



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- APTN (Canada, 2003)
- Land Insight Film Festival (Montréal, 2003)
- Maori television (New Zealand, 2005)
- Native American film and Video Festival (New York, 2003)

Ningiura (*My Grandmother*) An Inuit elder and her granddaughter get to know and appreciate each other after a family tragedy. This experimental drama is based on authentic oral histories, traditional knowledge and the contemporary realities of Igloolik.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- APTN (Canada), Channel 24 (Igloolik)
- ImagineNative Film Festival (Toronto, 2001: Best Video)
- Native American Film and Video Festival (New York, 2003)

Unikausiq (*Stories*) In this computer animated work, Mary Kunuk explores stories of songs recalled from her own childhood. As she has said, "Recording them on video is my way of keeping them alive". Stories told by Madeline Ivalu.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges (Montréal, 1997)

Aqtuqsi (*My Nightmare*) An aqtuqsi is a dream from which one must wake up, a paralyzing nightmare. "I decided to put my *aqtuqsi* in video. It's so interesting because it is not a nightmare or a regular dream: an *aqtuqsi* is something that can paralyze you when you're sleeping."



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, 2001)
- Gallerie Vox, exhibition Awakening (Montréal, 2004)
- Glenbow Museum, exhibition Inusivut: Our Way of Life (Calgary, 2003)

Travelers An experimental documentary about the relationships between the director, Marie-Hélène Cousineau, and the women of Arnait Video Productions. The film is a self-portrait and an exploration of the distances travelled in life across land and time, through cultures and with personal growth and courage.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- The Northern Lights International Film Festival (Alaska, 1996)
- Maison de la Culture Côte-des-Neiges (Montréal, 1997)
- Qaggig: Bi-annual Inuit art Fair and Symposium (Ottawa, 1996)

Piujuk and Angutautuq A portrait of two women from Igloolik: Madeline Ivalu (Piujuk) and Susan Avingaq (Angutautuq). Piujuk translates as *pretty face* and Angutautuk as *strong young man*. It contains images of both women from the past six years engaging in community events and performing traditional songs. Computer illustrations created by artist Mary Kunuk are an integral part of the video.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- Glenbow Museum, exhibition Inusivut:Our Way of Life (Calgary, 2003)
- Oakville Galleries, (Ontario, 2000)
- Qaggig: Bi-annual Inuit art Fair and Symposium (Ottawa, 1996)

Attagutaaluk Starvation Rose Ukkumaluk, an Igloolik elder, relates the tale of Attagutaaluk, a woman who survived a starvation and lived to become an honoured resident of Igloolik.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- Gallery 101 (Ottawa, 1995),
- Oakville Galleries (Ontario, 2000),
- Qaggig: bi-annual Inuit art Fair and Symposium (Ottawa, 1996)

Qulliq (Oil Lamp) Women of the Video Workshop reenact traditional women's activities including the building of an ice house, using a seal oil lamp, and other home-based activities. The *qulliq* is the seal oil lamp and stove of the old days, the only source of light and warmth. The women also tell their story in words and songs as they install the *qulliq* in their igloo.



SELECTED SCREENINGS

- Glenbow Museum, exhibition Inusivut: Our Way of Life (Calgary, 2003)
- Images 93 (Toronto, 1993)
- Native American Film and Video Festival (New York, 1995 & 2005)

press notices

Parrallogramme Vol. 19 No. 4. 1994 | Inuit Women's Video | Des femmes inuits vidéastes | Marie-Hélène Cousineau

« At present, participants use video to express their traditional identity in the community and their role as women. This does not mean that the use of technology maintains them in a powerless situation. On the contrary, women participating in video production reaffirm their values, knowledge and experience in ways which are empowering to them. »

Inuit Art Quarterly Summer 1996 | Marie-Hélène Cousineau, videomaker, interviewed by Kathleen Fleming in July 1995

« Since Susan, Madeline and Matilda didn't really speak or understand English, I had to figure out how to teach them [videomaking] without talking, by showing. Sometimes we had no translator, and we just learned by watching. It was important to me that the training come out of their activities. We would film whatever they wanted so they could relate to it. »

~ MARIE-HÉLÈNE COUSINEAU

Le Devoir June 3-4, 2006 | Isuma, les images du Nord | Denis Lord

« Ce film de 46 minutes porte un regard très personnel sur le phénomène de l'adoption, de tout temps fort répandu chez les Inuits. »

Nunatsiaq News July 21, 2006 | Inuit Survival Drama First Feature by Women Film Makers | Jackie Wallace

« When Marie-Helene Cousineau went on public radio in Igloolik 15 years ago to invite women to learn about making movies, she never imagined that she and a small local group would be shooting a feature film with a \$3.5 million budget. »

Also featured in *The Ottawa Citizen*, Inuit films still in infancy

Video Review, Inuit Women's Video

By the Skin of their Tongues, Attagutaaluk Starvation Taruagsuk Women's Colective

The Gazette, Women of the North tell their stories

Concordia Thursday Report, Helping Igloolik Women make videos

Magnetic North, Body, Voice, Narrative; Indigenous experimentalism

Nunatsiaq News, First we take Tasiujaq, then we take the world

Glenbow Museum, Arnait Inuit Women's Video

Calgary Herald, Women preserve the native voice | News at the Calgary International Film Festival

Vox, Awakening

Elle Québec, Marie-Hélène Cousineau Filmer l'intimité et l'immensité

Native Unity, January 28 2007, Igloolik & Puvirnituq Women Cooperate On Feature Film

Canada Council for the Arts, Artist Profiles and Success Stories | Inuit women tell their stories