

THE LABRADOR INSTITUTE, THE COLLEGE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC
& THE LABRADOR FILM FOUNDATION

present

LABRADOR/ANS ON FILM

2013-14 SEASON

SCREENING #4: ASPECTS OF INNU CULTURE

Our final screening for this season is decidedly short; not, it should be emphasized, for lack of content. Our goal today is to examine a profound shift in filmmaking that is taking place in Labrador, a shift that is peculiarly evident in films that take the Innu as their subject. As we have seen in this screening series, the recent documentary work of German filmmaker Sarah Sandring challenges what we could rightly consider a myopic representational tendency towards the Innu. And Christine Poker's work – both documentary and (critically) narrative – encourages us to think about Innu culture along entirely other lines. In short, contemporary films about the Innu break the documentary conventions that have been all too common in Labrador, moving decisively away from the “talking head” and more towards a director-driven, sensory experience. That it is culture that serves as the wellspring for this shift is no surprise. It is here, in the complex ecology of custom, spirituality and narrative (to name but a few components) that we find the most compelling alternative *strategies* of representation. As you watch these films, we encourage you to not only note the superficial differences but also to pay attention to the process of your own understanding – how it is that you come to know – through these films. Until next fall.

1. *The Sweat Lodge With Dominic Pokue* (6 mins, Innu Nation, 1999) Produced by Phillip Nuna and Ted Ostrowski. Filmed inside the Labrador Interpretation Centre, this piece is had the feel of a museum or interpretative film. Realized in only two distinct camera angles, Pokue's narration drives this film. It is not an example of visual storytelling.
2. *Pien ashtunu - Pien Makes a Canoe* (9 mins, Wolverine, 2002) This film is notable as much for its distinct visual styles – specifically the use of still imagery in the first half and talking head footage in the second – as it is for its extensive use of soundtrack. No stranger to the camera, here Mr. Penashue is here noticeably removed from his subject. We see him interacting with the materials of the canoe only by way of still images. When he speaks to us, it is also as an observer: he is not directly involved in the construction. How does this affect our understanding of Mr. Penashue's relationship to his construction?
3. *Kuekuatsheu Mak Muak* (15 mins, 2013) Directed by Navarana Igloliorte. We are particularly grateful to be screening Ms. Igloliorte's film in this context. Here, what begins as a talking head piece quickly transitions into a unique dramatization of an Innu legend, which seems to owe something to both film and theatrical traditions alike. To the former: notice the peculiar way the wolverine moves, an effect achieved by

manipulating the number of frames that occur per second. To the latter, pay attention to the striking costume design, which flies in the face of any kind of realistic convention. And yet, throughout, we continue to *hear* the story as it is being told, a technique that seems to owe something to Co Hoedeman's claymation adaptations of Inuit legends for the National Film Board. Bound by no particular convention – at least those set out by the media – Ms. Igloliorte's film is greater than the sum of its parts, suggesting a strategy for the novel representation of the real.

Coordinated by Morgon Mills

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