



Arctic Indigenous Film Fund



**ARCTIC INDIGENOUS FILM FUND ESTABLISHING PARTNERS:**



## **ARCTIC INDIGENOUS FILM FUND (AIFF)**

The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund is the result of an international collaboration involving partners across the Circumpolar Arctic. Our board is made up of members from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Sápmi and Russia.

The aim of the foundation is to promote high-quality Arctic Indigenous Peoples film projects and co-productions that enhance indigenous peoples' cultures, languages and societies.

AIFF activities focus on capacity building, climate and the environment, indigenous land rights, and indigenous knowledge.

The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund was established through the International Sami Film Institute in Norway, and it exists as an independent organization governed by the AIFF board of directors.



Photographer: Kaja Smith

# MARJA BÅL NANGO - SÁMI, NORWAY

## FILM AND STORIES THAT HEAL

Marja Bål Nango grew up in a time where the Sámi Parliament was already established, the Sámi flag was designed and the first Sámi feature film was made. "That's the gift the generation before gave me...the knowledge that Sámi people have a place in the bigger society." - Marja

She sees story-telling as a means for people to process events as they occur, and to heal the wounds of society. Her short films examine topics such as sexuality, trauma and norm-breakers within indigenous societies.

## MANY ART FORMS IN ONE

"It's my only plan in life." - Marja, on her plans as a director.

Marja (b. 1988) studied drama in upper secondary school in Tromsø, and in her spare time she wrote and directed comedic sketches. After graduating she took a year off, and during that time she realized that she needed to make films. She spent the year living at her grandmother's home, and every time she thought about a story she would like to tell in theatre, it would appear as a movie in her mind.

Marja sees her film-making as the product of her artistic evolution. She has always been drawn to the arts, experimenting within different art forms throughout her life, and she finally settled on film when she directed her first short.

Marja studied film at Nordland kunst- og filmfagskole. Her first short film starred her sister, Ingir Bål, and the late great Sámi actor Nils Utsi. This experience was a great starting point for her filmmaking, as she was able to work with such an established actor.

Marja's award winning films have been screened at festivals across Europe and in North America. Marja has been the recipient of a three-year grant from the Sámi Arts Council and she is also one of the women in the Norwegian Film Institute's talent program. The next step for Marja is writing and directing a feature film. She is currently writing a screenplay with her sister, Ingir Bål.

## SOME OF MARJA'S FILMS:

Njuokčamat (The tongues), short, 2019

Hilbes biigá (OMG - Oh máigon girl), short, 2015

Før hun kom, etter han dro (Before she came, after he left), 2012



*Photography: courtesy Marc Fussing-Rosbach*

# MARC FUSSING-ROSBACH - KALAALEQ, GREENLAND

At 23 years old, Marc Fussing-Rosbach has already directed an award-winning feature film. His fantasy feature *Akornatsinnittut - Tarratta Nunaanni* (Among Us - In The Land of Our Shadows) won the award for promising young filmmaker at the Nuuk International Film Festival in 2018, and went on to screenings in Canada, the U.S., Australia and various countries in Europe.

*Akornatsinnittut - Tarratta Nunaanni* is hailed as Greenland's first feature-length fantasy film. Remarkably, Marc wrote the script and the music, and did the visual effects and editing himself. The film is entirely in Kalaallisut - Marc's mother-tongue.

Marc's father introduced him to movies and taught him how to edit photos, and this set him on the path to filmmaking. He is self-taught. He does his own filming, and works with various software to edit scenes and compose soundtracks. His visual effects work is in demand by other Greenlandic directors.

"What inspires me as a filmmaker is seeing great talented people working together with their own special talents." - Marc

## A NEW WAY OF TELLING

Marc grew up watching *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, and he knew he wanted to make his own films from an early age. He takes inspiration from narrative gaming, but the subject matter in his films is always centred in his culture. He plans to make more feature films based on traditional Inuit stories from Greenland, such as the story of *Qivitoq*: vengeful creatures with no face who used to be human beings.

With an eye for detail and pacing that invites the viewer in, Marc's films evoke a kind of timeless story-telling that brings his characters' humour and gravity to life.

## SOME OF MARC'S FILMS:

*Akornatsinnittut - Tarratta Nunaanni*, feature, 2017

*Unnukkiartulernerani* (In the Evening), short, 2014

*Psycho*, short, 2015



*Photography: courtesy Nyla Innusuk*



# NYLA INNUKSUK - INUK, NUNAVUT, CANADA

A self-described 'Inuk technology nerd', Nyla Innuksuk (32) is originally from Igloolik, Nunavut, Canada and she has always loved scary stories from traditional myths to Hitchcock. She brings this love of fright to her work in film, virtual reality and projects like her recent collaboration with Marvel Comics on the creation of an Inuk teen superhero: Snowguard.

Nyla is based in Toronto, where she studied film; but her sense of story is deeply rooted in her homeland, and she always goes back to her family and her community before beginning a new story.

## **NEW TECHNOLOGY, NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

"When it comes to emerging technologies, everyone involved is on the same level when it comes to technical knowledge, because the technology itself hasn't been created yet. This is really exciting for me as an Indigenous person who works within my community because when it comes to innovation, diversity of thought is necessary. Having people who think differently is valued" -Nyla Innuksuk.

With her work in film, VR and video games, the ideas of traditional Inuit stories and legends influence Nyla's outlook on indigenous futurism; and she is eager to explore story-telling in new and innovative ways. For Nyla, the experience of working in the south has really brought into contrast how important collaboration is for Inuit working in film. In the Arctic there is a sense of collective creativity and the tight-knit nature of the Canadian Indigenous film scene supports collaborative approaches.

In 10 years Nyla hopes that when filming in her home community there will be a more robust infrastructure for the film and television community and that there will be a shift from films being made with majority "southern" crews to productions that can take advantage of the talent and creativity being grown in the North. Building capacity is the key, and she stresses the importance of cultivating more Inuit producers.

## **SOME OF NYLA'S PROJECTS:**

Snowguard, 2018

Idea of The North, VR short, ongoing

SLASH/BACK, feature, ongoing



# LYUBOV BORISOVA - SAKHA, YAKUTSK, RUSSIA

## “SAKHAWOOD”

The Sakha (Yakutia in English) region of Russia is famous for some of the world's coldest winter temperatures. It is also home to a unique and vital filmmaking industry. More than a dozen films per year are being made by indigenous directors and producers in this region with a population of 450,000 Sakha people.

Lyubov Borisova is the young first-assistant director and editor of the award-winning feature film *Toyon Kyyl* (The Lord Eagle); a beautifully shot story of an elderly couple and the eagle that takes up residence beside their forest home. The film brings the audience to the vast beautiful landscapes of Siberia, and into the smallest details of the quiet lives of its two main characters. With glowing reviews, *The Lord Eagle* has toured on several continents.

Lyubov studied to be an economist and worked for a bank for 6 years. By chance she and some co-workers shot a funny short film for a corporate holiday. She really liked the experience, and she had a feeling she could make more films.

Lyubov's first experience working with a crew was filming a television series that was all improvisation, no script. "It was hard, but served as a good experience for future work." - Lyubov

Much of the film-making in Sakha involves great travel expenses and requires innovation and improvisation in remote areas. Sometimes filming is done in temperatures as cold as -52°C. The many films being made in Sakha speak to the determination and creativity of its filmmakers.

Lyubov and other Sakha filmmakers draw from a rich culture of storytelling in their community. Her favourite film by an indigenous director comes from another region of Russia. She says *Enmesh*, by Ainur Askarov shares a similar perspective and sense of humour with Sakha sensibilities.

Lyubov's next project is writing and directing another feature film.

## SOME OF LYUBOV'S WORKS:

*Toyon Kyyl* (The Lord Eagle), feature, 2017

*Choochuk*, children's film, 2016

*Tiin meii* (The Wise Tin), children's film, 2015



# ANNA HOOVER - UNANGAX, ALASKA PENINSULA

## FILM AS PART OF ORAL HISTORY

Anna Hoover was studying for an Master's in art history when she realized filmmaking was the creative art form she connected most with. She mentions how precious the footage of her late father being interviewed is. "I can still hear the cadence of his laugh- his voice."

For Anna, film is a way to document and celebrate indigenous oral histories. It provides an opportunity to show perspectives that might not otherwise be known; such as the profile she did of an 83 year old man in her village. Documenting his teachings made it possible for many more people to share in his traditional knowledge.

Anna completed her Master's in Indigenous Filmmaking at the University of Washington, and has since branched out into short fiction films, with plans to make a feature film in the future. She also does film installation work as part of her visual arts practice.

Anna is one of a team of six indigenous Alaskan writing fellows, who are contributing to the creation of the PBS series Molly of Denali - a children's television show featuring a young Alaska Native girl as the main character.

Anna is a bush pilot. She learned to fly so she could get around in parts of Alaska that are not accessible by road. She is inspired by the beautiful and vast Alaskan landscape and the self-sufficient people who call it their home.

One of Anna's favourite films is The Hunt for the Wilderpeople. She sees it as a rare, tender story about men. "It has such well-developed characters, Taika Waititi makes it look easy." - Anna

## SOME OF ANNA'S WORKS:

Molly of Denali, Scriptwriting Fellowship, 2018  
The Last Walk, short, Arctic Film Circle series, 2017  
Alaxsxaq - short film installation, 2016  
Welcome to BSSD, documentary, 2015

## **AIFF STRATEGY:**

- Support development of indigenous film projects across the Arctic.
- Invest in film productions that enhance the cultures and languages of arctic indigenous peoples.
- Encourage co-production by building a sustainable film industry in the Arctic, with special emphasis on indigenous peoples' cultures.
- Build competence in the Arctic film field by strengthening collaboration between film institutions, companies, producers and universities.



## ARCTIC INDIGENOUS FILM FUND FINANCIAL GOALS

The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund is a trust foundation, that supports indigenous film projects in the Arctic.

The Ten Year Goal to Build the AIFF Investment Base:

200,000,000 NOK  
≈ 21,000,000 EUR€  
≈ 25,000,000 USD\$

AIFF welcomes everyone to support the future of Arctic Indigenous Film.



**The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund supports emerging Arctic Indigenous film talents and co-productions; thereby supporting the growth of a professional network of competent filmmakers in the north.**

**Implementation:**

The Arctic indigenous film Fund supports, promotes and unites Arctic filmmakers.

AIFF is the main funder for Arctic Indigenous film projects, from screenwriting to production and marketing.

AIFF works to provide access to the best technology and new innovations in the film industry for Arctic Indigenous filmmakers.

AIFF is working to provide the best film education possibilities for indigenous filmmakers through indigenous film and education networks, and collaboration with noted professionals in the industry.







Cast and crew on the set of *Maliglutit (Searchers)* dir. Zacharias Kunuk. Photographer: AJ Messier

## **ARCTIC FILM PRODUCTION TODAY**

The arctic region is on the cusp of rapid development, with increasing political, financial and strategic importance, and there has been much focus on cooperation between the countries in this part of the world.

While interest in stories about the far north has grown, filmmakers from arctic indigenous communities still have limited opportunities to access the resources needed to bring their works to the world stage. There has been no international funding structure to encourage indigenous collaboration and co-production in film; and there has been a lack of specific funding for films by indigenous filmmakers.

There is no lack of talent in these indigenous communities, and there is a great wealth of stories from the arctic just waiting to be told.

The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund has been created to help foster cross-border collaborations between indigenous filmmakers, and to encourage co-productions that bring arctic indigenous filmmaking up to a world-class level.



**ARCTIC INDIGENOUS FILM FUND**

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