

Curatorial Incubator

V.3

2005



Biographies

Zoe Leigh Hopkins is a writer/director whose short film Prayer for a Good Day has screened extensively in international festivals including: imagineNATIVE film + media arts festival, Sundance Film Festival, Sami Film Festival, Norway, Message Sticks Festival, Sydney Australia and American Indian Film Festival, San Francisco, where it was nominated for Best Live Short. She has trained at Sundance Institute Screenwriter's and Director's Lab and has a B.A. in Film from Ryerson Polytechnic University. She has directed for television and has a feature film in development.

Wanda Nanibush is a filmmaker whose latest short narrative, The Gift, was screened at the 2005 InsideOut festival in Toronto. Currently, she is working on two experimental shorts at LIFT. She was Festival Coordinator of the imagineNATIVE film + media arts festival (2004) and curator/coordinator at the Peterborough Optic Nerve Festival and on-going series coordinator (2003-4). She has a BA in Philosophy with emphasis on Native Studies from Trent University.

First Nations Curatorial Incubator 2005

Curating is not just glorified "shopping" (choosing just the right shoes to show off that colour...) Curation puts forward an idea and the works then support, defend, slyly amplify, or, at times, downright contradict, that idea. But it is the idea that turns a random sample of "new works" into a curated programme.

The Vtape Curatorial Incubator aims to foster curatorial skills and produce new curatorial writing in the media arts. Following workshops presented by professionals in the field, the participants then must make their choices and begin the task of crafting a curatorial essay to frame their selection. It is this framing that, in some ways, performs the crucial task of providing the public with a program of works that speak to each other in ways that the individual works could not. The public is an integral part of the Curatorial Incubator; without a public screening, a curated program is just an idea. It breathes itself into existence in the audience's experience.

This year, the Curatorial Incubator worked with the imagineNATIVE Festival to support two curated programmes for the 2005 festival and for screening at Vtape. The incubatees were Zoe Hopkins from Vancouver and Wanda Nanibush from Toronto. It was a pleasure to work with both of them. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the imagineNATIVE Board of Directors and staff and to Executive Director Danis Goulet for their enthusiastic support of this collaboration. Working closely with imagineNATIVE was a great pleasure and brought Vtape full circle, having helped to found the festival in 2000. Workshop presenters included Cynthia Lickers-Sage, Richard Story and Shelley Niro. Richard W. Hill provided invaluable expertise in editing the essays for publication here. I also extend my appreciation to the Vtape staff and Board for their unflagging support for the on-going project of the Curatorial Incubator.

Lisa Steele, Creative Director, Vtape

Indigenous Tragicomedy

Gerald Vizenor, an Anishnabe writer and theorist, once said that the comic spirit is at the centre of Indigenous cultural identity and helps form the collectivity that is the heart of our worldview. In a 1987 interview with John Bruchac, Vizenor said:

You can't act in a comic way in isolation. You have to be included. There has to be a collective of some kind. You're never striving at anything that is greater than life itself. There's an acceptance of chance. Sometimes things just happen and when they happen, even though they may be dangerous or even life threatening, there is some humour. Maybe not at the instant of high risk, but there is some humour in it. And it's a positive, compassionate act of survival, it's getting along.

The comic spirit has long been evident in Indigenous oral and written literatures, songs, paintings, drawings and reserve living rooms. Not surprisingly, it is becoming increasingly present in our films. You will find this emerging spirit in the three films I have programmed: *Wagon Burners*, by Terrance Houle; *Green Bush*, by Warwick Thornton; and *Tama Tu*, by Taika Waititi. These films are tragicomedies: fictions that include elements of both tragedy and comedy while avoiding the specific pitfalls that trouble each when they are on their own.

Tragedy requires a hero with a sense of being superior, of rising above or being beyond a situation and environment, of seeking out a higher cause. Indigenous cultures, to hazard a generalization, do not separate their being – their being in the world as human being – from all else that lives (including other human beings) and so a straightforward tragedy cannot express the spirit and subject-

tivity of Indigenous Peoples. Likewise, comedy relies on well-worn stereotypes and reaches a happy ending. If you have been held down – suppressed and oppressed by those very same stereotypes – it becomes impossible to use them straightforwardly without perpetuating the system of symbolic inequity all over again. The tragicomedy, however, is the art form of the (post)colonial condition. (By “post” I mean stuck in like a tree that has been cut and stripped of its bark then hammered into the ground and still standing – not that colonization has ended for us here in Canada.) Indigenous resistance is defined by the enduring tragedy that stems from the after-effects of colonization and present day colonialism, combined with the survival humour and the enduring strength of our traditions. The three films in this program exemplify tragicomic filmmaking. They are stories of multifaceted people dealing with absurd situations in complex ways. They are a testament to Indigenous spirit and its capacity for joy.

I have heard far too often: “Why are our films so depressing, they don’t capture how we really are.” My response is always to remind people of the history of this country (and my penchant for sad songs) but I have to admit that they have a point. I think these films have been missing the comic spirit. We, as Indigenous filmmakers, found that our absence, our collective erasure from nationalist, colonialist histories and narratives needed to be urgently addressed. The very real, lived tragedies of colonization, dispossession, subjugation, assimilation, and racism produced traumas that needed a voice and knowledge that needed to be shared. We needed and still need to tell these stories of abuse and loss at the hands of the church, government officials, residential schools, national policies,

business interests and the dominant community. Such crises are often dealt with within the experimental and documentary forms. These lived realities inform all the films in this programme. They are the element of tragedy in our tragicomedies. The comic element enters very much as the survivalist Indigenous humour described by Vizenor. It is our way of saying, “you can try to take it all away but we will never disappear. We will continue to resist oppression, but our hearts and souls will seek joy and maintain a spirit of hope.” As Vizenor suggests, tradition and community play an important role in this comic spirit. It is from the place of community and tradition that the comic spirit is born.

Now that the comic spirit is entering our films, it may hint that significant healing has begun and the strength of our traditions is more secure. The traditions I refer to are the spirit of humour, the trickster spirit, our survival smiles, our love of laughter and jokes. This humour is not a simple matter. Our humour allows us to be a conduit for the trickster spirit, which, through its actions, becomes an important subversive tool. Not only does this mean we know how to have a good time and laugh at ourselves, it means that, through the trickster spirit, all things that are fixed, accepted, entrenched, held sacred, formalized, and organized can be disrupted, scattered, disorganized and transformed. The comic element that releases the trickster is our power – the danger we pose is the power of transformation. When I speak of our traditions I do not see them as an unchanging perfect past, which can be retrieved, untouched by time and colonization. Our ceremonies, teachings and ways of being are important, we have fought hard to maintain them and they are part of our strength. Yet the practices and



ideas we call 'tradition' are not fixed or self-evident. Within each film in this programme tradition plays a role, but the audience will be surprised both by where it is found and by what is found. The tragicomedy is perfect for allowing an unsettling spirit to perform, confounding all our well-laid thoughts and feelings. They open up a space for dialogue, they do not tell you what to think.

Houle, Thornton, and Waititi are all in touch with their comic spirit while never losing sight of the past and present tragedies that have created and continually effect our situation. These films are testaments to the Indigenous art for affirming life with joyful wisdom in dire circumstances. *Wagon Burners* is a first film by Blood/Blackfoot artist Terrance Houle from Calgary, Alberta. It's shot on Super 8 and has a home movie feel to it. *Wagon Burner* welcomes you into a celebration. The main character, played by Albert Day Rider, feels like he could be your cousin. It must be the way he stands with his hands in the pockets of his hoody, a pensive, innocent expression in his eyes and a smile playing about his lips. He is positioned in a field with a small replica of a settler's wagon beside him. He brushes his hair from his eyes and you know he is up to something. Then he douses the wagon with gasoline and uses his lighter to set it on fire. We laugh because his action has made the stereotype manifested by the racial slur "wagon burner" absurd. It also has made the pain it has caused travel up into the sky with the smoke. It's performative parody on the prairies.

The film's tragic element is not in its images but in the knowledge the audience brings to the film. It assumes you know that "Indians" were branded pejoratively as wagon burners in North America. You immediately bring to mind Hollywood westerns where "savages" on horseback – totally incapable of reason – attack the poor innocent white settlers with tomahawks, torches and flaming arrows. The dominant narrative saw the white settler as the victim of "Indian" violence with images further instilling fear and mis-perception. This is an inversion of the real tragedy, which was the violent dispossession of Aboriginal Nations by these same settlers and the military that cleared the way for them. It is important to realize that images and racist epithets have material consequences in the world and are formed as a justification for actual governmental social and political policies. Negative portrayals of a people often precede a major policy shift that will

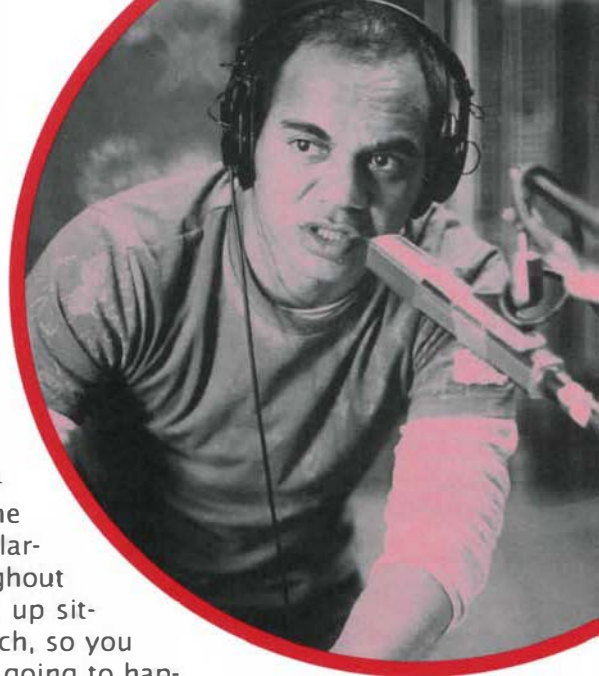
adversely affect them. It is this history that is invoked when he burns the wagon. And it is this pain that is the catalyst for the ceremony that is the film itself. As the wagon burns, Albert Day Rider starts to put it out with his feet, stomping and finally dancing. A powwow dancer emerges from the flames like a memory. It's a beautiful image of transformation and reclamation. The film's music is by Isho Bailey and is an important reminder that the moment of powwow is now; it is not a return to the past. You hear the screeching rock guitar during the initial rebellion of burning the wagon but it continues beyond that, mingling with the drum and powwow songs when he starts to dance. His hoody and jeans do not become powwow regalia. Houle maintains the mixture of traditional and contemporary pop culture. The film is a beautiful ceremony marking a moment of transformation in the character's relationship with a racist imagery and its concomitant history.

Green Bush also deals with colonial history and its affects on the Australian Aboriginal Nations. *Green Bush* is a short drama by Kaytej artist, Warwick Thornton. The film won Best Short Film at the Berlin International Film festival and screened at Sundance. *Green Bush* has had a broad appeal for audiences and a wide reach internationally. The film's high production values mean it looks and sounds great. The story starts with a young DJ named Kenny bike riding through dusty desert past a few green trees in Alice Springs, Central Australia. It cuts to a sign on the side of a building that reads: "Country Radio 98.7 Aboriginal Music in Aboriginal Country." Kenny locks his bike and enters the station. As he is setting up for his show we can hear a news opinion programme about a new proposal to have liquor sold at service stations, with the commentator arguing that everyone has the right to drink. DJ Kenny's show is called *Green Bush* and it's for Aboriginal folks in prison, their friends and family. He takes requests from the inside and outside, thus, serving as a conduit for connection and communication. The music is a character in the film; often the audience can just sit back and hear the lyrics while he calmly and coolly does his thing on screen. The first song is about what not to do: "Keep away from breaking the law, drinking petrol ... Don't go wasting your life..." At this point you start to think about the state of Aboriginal Australia and the similar problems of a high incarceration rate, high alcoholism, general stats you might read in the morning newspaper. The next

song is *I'm just a Black Boy*. Each song is very upbeat and political, part of the consciousness-raising, self-determining politics of the eighties and nineties. The music is from CAAMA productions, a long-standing mainstay of Indigenous music.

After the show, as Kenny puts a large pot of stew on the stove in the radio station's kitchen, there is a knock at the door. An elderly Aboriginal man, Tjipli, asks if he minds some company. "No worries," replies Kenny, which becomes the theme of the film as the night falls. It is hilarious when Kenny comes and goes throughout the night and more and more people end up sitting in the kitchen. No one really says much, so you wonder why they are all there and what's going to happen. As Kenny says, "I don't know what's going on. Every night you mob hole up in here scared of what's out there." The point is hammered home when Kenny answers the door to an elderly woman named Rose who has a very large gash on her head. She whispers a common refrain: "cuppa tea." He calls an ambulance for her. When it arrives you know this has happened many times and that her son is her abuser. You also know she won't call the police.

Songs get eaten in the machine that is playing the music and Kenny's frustration mounts until he throws it out the front door into the sand. Thornton uses this moment to lighten everyone's load as we laugh at Kenny's inane attempt at resolution through anger. He is frustrated at the violence he sees all around him and as his helplessness overtakes him, he feels as useless as the machine. He tries to call on Rose's son for a fight. An old man stops him: "Settle down you don't want to be a part of this." Kenny replies "But I am a part of this." "No, you're a



good part of this," says the old man, who also tells him, "Better do nothing." Kenny storms out but you know what the old man said is profound.

There is so much silent speaking and silent humour in this film that is also characteristic of our old folks humour. So much in the eyes. He picks up the machine, comes back in and they all laugh in relief. No one wants him to get swallowed up by the anger that has consumed the young people they are afraid of. They also want to keep their safe haven at the radio station. That anger is the fallout from oppression and lost hope. Kenny has hope and he is fostering that hope with a sense of community: the community that forms in his station and the community that forms around his show. Kenny plays a 1982 track by Aboriginal activist Gary Foley, on stage with The Clash, a radically political British punk band. The song calls for Aboriginal Land Rights and describes the arrival of white settlers, racism, and the history of colonization in the form of stolen land, murders, residential schools and prisons. As the lyrics tell us "they were rounded up like dogs", we get a glimpse of the sad sighing faces of the elderly

Aboriginal folks in the kitchen. This is in contrast to the image of a younger Kenny smiling and mouthing the words. Kenny is obviously influenced by the Black Power movement of the sixties and seventies in Australia, which was lead by Gary Foley. A generational difference between the elders who experienced directly the oppression that Foley is yelling about and a young Kenny who grew up after Land Rights and Indigenous organizing became the norm. An outgrowth of the movement was a resurgence in traditional songs, ceremonies and ideas among Kenny's generation.

Kenny puts on traditional music until he has a handle on his anger and helplessness. He seems to gain purpose and



strength from the songs. Once he is calm and hopeful, he says goodnight to his "captive" audience with tears in his eyes and puts on the song *No more fear* with the poignant lyrics "don't you know yourself? We are the people of this land and we better hold on." It could end here but that would miss the major theme of the film; the tradition of interconnectedness and the emotional bonds formed through continuity and the everydayness of community. Kenny finds his strength amidst all the violence through that very connection and his place in it. Tjipli is outside waiting for a smoke and a smile. The subtlety of the daily humour is very particular to the community in this film and it is their spirit's cushion against the darkness outside the station and inside their homes.

Tama Tu or *Sons of War* is an awarding winning New Zealand film by Te-Whanau-a-Apanui artist Taika Waititi. It's a fictional exploration of the lives of young men in the Maori Battalion during the Second World War. Maori men are known around the globe as fierce warriors and that tradition continues. *Tu* is the Maori 'God' of War and the word has fourteen meanings all derived from the root meanings growth, upright spine and combat. The idea of the warrior and the cultural practices that surround it are very complicated but it is important to see the Maori Battalion in Waititi's non-dialogue drama as a sign of cultural continuance. The New Zealand army has relied on the Maori's skills in battle since the Boer war and acknowledged this in 1994 when the army adopted the name *Ngati Tumatuenga* (The Tribe of War). The army also learns the *haka* (exercises/dances) and *Taiaha* (a Maori weapon which is now the symbol of the army). Waititi has created a testament to these brave Maori soldiers and the warrior tradition.

Tama Tu is silent as Maori soldiers hole up in a bombed out house waiting for night to fall. There are moments when the reality of war and the possibility of death are ever present – you see a crow fly in, you see a dusty picture of an Italian family cleaned and placed on a mantle, and you watch as the Maori soldier on look-out goes to shoot the "enemy" but can't when he notices that the Italian soldier is just trying to pet a kitten. Then you watch as the Italian soldier gets shot in the head anyway, by someone unseen. There are other moments when we see the boys cracking up with suppressed laughter as they play jokes on each other. Mature jokes like "pull my finger" and "hey look you pissed your-

self " when really someone has spilt water on you. There are moments when you can feel the closeness of the soldiers, which comes from a shared culture. They make faces at each other, silently communicating the joy they carry inside despite what is going on around them. It is expressed best in the tag line for the film "Boys will be boys, even at war." The faces are reminiscent of the warrior's *haka*, which is still learned by Maori youth.

The Maori also have a tradition of women songwriters that continues today. One of the most famous, Tuini Ngawai, wrote a song for the Maori Battalion with a verse expressing what we experience happening between the boys in the film:

"Oh Brave band of Tu
be strong.
Do not let yourselves be
Struck down.
Let your thoughts be always heavenwards
To guide you along the path
That is the proper one.
Depend, depend
Each upon the other
And unite."

They have allowed their traditions to flourish by practicing them as living realities rather than sacred unchanging artifacts. An example is the *tohu* that appears in the film in the form of a toy soldier with which one of them "plays" war as the real thing rages outside. As night approaches, the Maori soldiers gather to say a *Karakia* (prayer) to unite their spirits before they head back to war. The signs we need to notice now come in forms that we may not recognize as traditional but they will have their place just the same. Tradition itself, the less and less we fix it, becomes open to critical engagement and change.

The trickster spirit lives in all the films in this programme and each of the Nations, people and landscapes we visit in them. Our future belongs to us if we allow ourselves to imagine it and these pioneers, in showing the tragicomedy of our lives, help us do just that.

The Nish Tragi-Comedy, neither tragedies nor comedies but a mix of both. The tragi-comedy is the post colonial condition. The enduring tragedy which stems from the after effects of colonization and present day colonialism mixed with the survival humour and the enduring strength of our traditions which make up Indigenous resistance.

The three films in this program exemplify this genre of filmmaking. They are stories of complex people dealing with absurd situations in a complex way. They are a testament to Indigenous spirit and its capacity for joy.

Green Bush

Warwick Thornton

Australia, 27mins, 2005, 35mm, Colour
Canadian Premiere

The story of DJ Kenny, the host of a radio show for Aboriginal inmates and their families, and his nightly visitors. A subtly humorous and heart wrenching reflection on what he can and can't do for his community.



Warwick Thornton was born and raised in Alice Springs. Thornton is an award winning filmmaker of Kaytej heritage from Central Australia. Green Bush, his latest drama, won him Panorama Best Short Film, Berlin International Film Festival.

Tama Tu

Taika Waititi

New Zealand, 18:00 mins, 2005, 35mm, Colour

During World War II, six soldiers of the 28th Maori battalion sit out the night, waiting to storm a bombed-out house in Italy. This film shows how human vitality shines even in adverse circumstances.

Taika is of Te-Whanau-a-Apanui descent and hails from the Raukokore region of the East Coast. Award- winning director of Two Cars, One Night.

Wagon Burner

Terrance Houle

Canada, 4:00 mins, 2003, Video, Colour

A funny and poignant act of resistance to the confines of the name "Wagon Burner." Terrance Houle is a calgary based artist in painting, installation and mixed media. Wagon Burner is his first video.



The Evolution of a Story

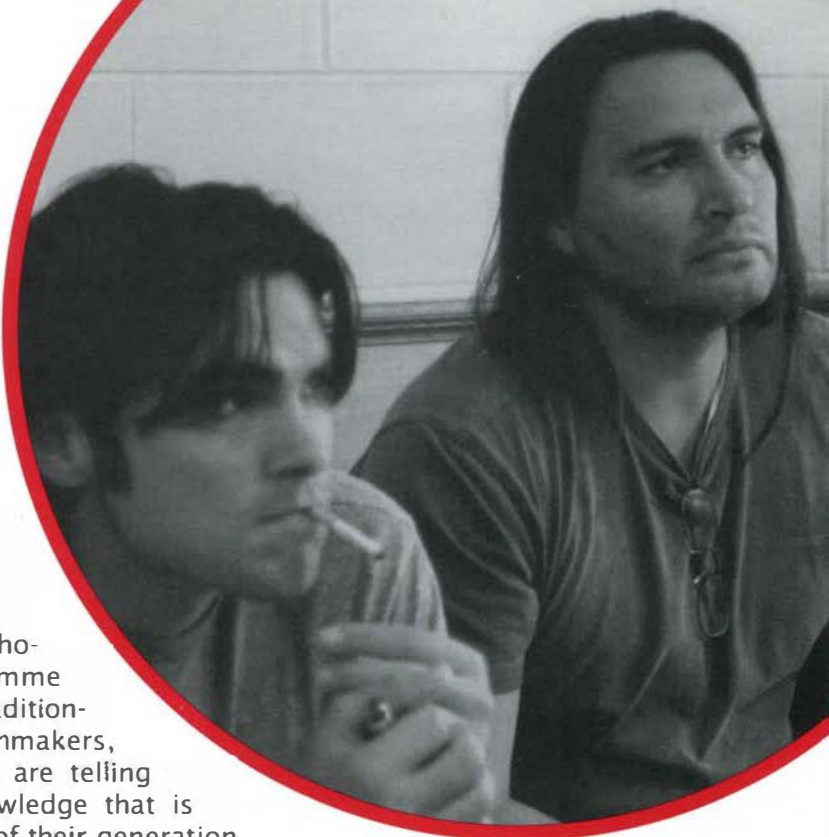
When I was growing up my dad would tell me the Mohawk Creation Story. I remember hearing about The Woman Who Fell From the Sky, The Left-Handed Twin, The Right-Handed Twin and how the sun and the moon and the world came to be. I feel bad that I don't yet know this story well enough to tell it to the children I one day hope to have. I also feel bad that I remember this story more from my dad's written version than the oral one. Regardless, the Creation Story is still one of the things that shapes my world-view. It is part of me.

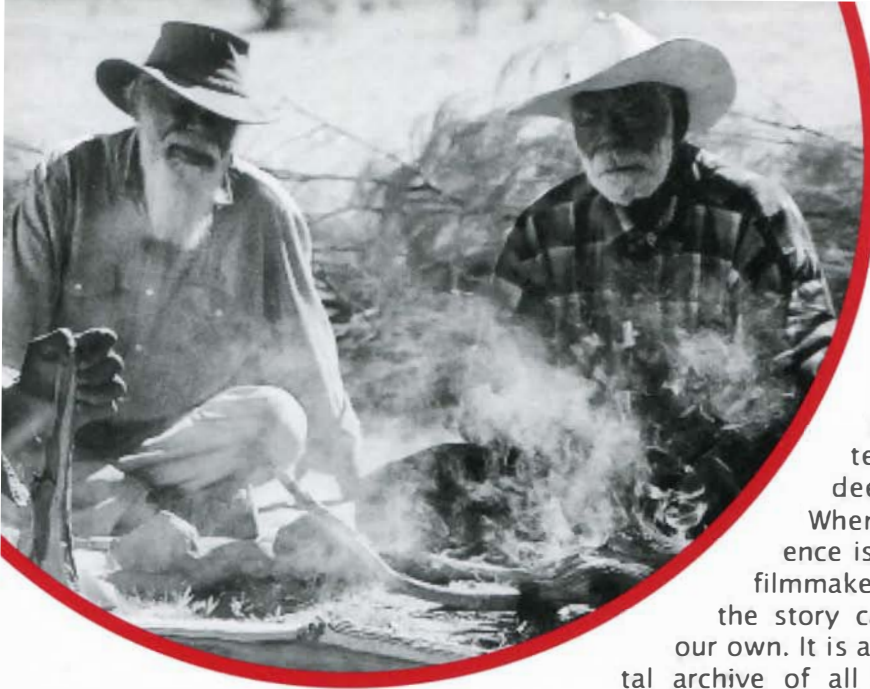
In Native traditions there are certain types of stories that perform very special tasks. From one generation to the next they are used to pass down skills, values, ways of life and explanations for how things came to be. These stories are the key to the survival of our cultures. Thus, a true Storyteller is a keeper of knowledge who holds a position of honour in our societies. Besides these ancient stories, our lives are also made up of many other kinds of stories. These come from mass media such as books, television and movies, academic historical and theoretical texts, or, on a more intimate level, family and personal narratives from our own experience. As Native people, our understanding of traditional stories is framed by the many other narratives that make up our experience. Conversely, our experience of these narratives is also framed by our knowledge of traditional stories. The relationship is dynamic and goes both ways.

Today we are watching many of the traditional stories disappear as elders pass away and take much traditional knowledge with them. Despite the sadness of this loss, I have reason to be hopeful. I feel hope when I look to our newest form

of storytelling – filmmaking. Ways of life and the ways of thinking that are specific to Indigenous cultures world-wide are being preserved, developed and shared on the big screen. I'm interested in this cultural transformation but also in the telling of the stories themselves and how they evolve from teller to listener.

Each of the films I have chosen for this programme touches on aspects of traditional storytelling. These filmmakers, each in their own way, are telling stories that impart knowledge that is specific to them: that is of their generation, that is of their people. Something happens to these stories when they are screened – they evolve in our minds through the lens of our own experience, from the many narratives we carry with us. In *Desire in Language*, Julia Kristeva introduced the concept of intertextuality, the idea that the process of reading not only involves a relationship between reader and author (or in our case, filmmaker and viewer), but between the many other texts (or stories) that inform our understanding. As Native people, many of our points of reference are similar, even though our traditional cultures and languages might be vastly different. We have a shared history of colonization, including attempts at imposed assimilation through institu-





tions like residential schools and other forms of oppression. We often come from places that are simultaneously worlds apart from the mainstream society that surrounds our traditional territory and yet are deeply effected by it.

When our frame of reference is similar to that of the filmmaker it is more likely that the story can evolve to become our own. It is added to the vast mental archive of all the stories we have

heard in our lives, becoming part of the fabric of our own being through its particular relationship to

them. This is not to say that stories told by Native people can't be interpreted, appreciated and understood by a wide audience.

If this programme is a story then it begins with the most unconventional form of cinema – an experimental film called *Red Buffalo Skydive*, by director Jude Norris. This film explores how image and a seemingly unrelated audio track connect to form new meaning. The image of an animated red buffalo, composed of hundreds of hand-painted stand-alone paintings, is juxtaposed with a disembodied voice that tells an anecdote of hitchhiking and catching a ride with a paraplegic skydiver. The man in the story has survived a terrible tragedy, much like the buffalo, and yet continues to skydive, just as the buffalo continue to run. The sound and image become linked by our knowledge of what they have in common. As we listen we conjure images of a paraplegic man repeatedly falling from the sky.

The repetition happens in our minds while we watch the image of the buffalo repeat. As we reference our knowledge of the buffalo and listen to this anecdote, we create a story of survival – that of the buffalo and that of humanity.

Pride is a testimonial documentary directed by Michelle Ryan and Jessica Salo. It tells, in the first person, a young woman's experience with racism. It describes her mixture of shame and pride in realizing that she is part Native and part white and how she has come to terms with her own mixed-blood heritage to be proud of who she is. As Michelle Ryan talks directly to the camera about a racist encounter with fellow students on a bus ride, we are riveted by her story. Her directness is deeply affecting – all the more because so many of us have been, at least metaphorically, a passenger on this bus. Her first person account becomes our own memory of having been either the uncle in the story, who is the subject of a verbal racist attack, or the niece in Michelle's seat who feels torn between protecting her uncle or being loyal to her friends, or one of the kids making fun of the uncle, or the teacher who is a silent witness and therefore a participant in the abuse. We are each forced to face our own shame. The images that accompany the voice-over are related to the story metaphorically; for example in the way the weather-beaten rocks represent the ragged face of a man on a bus. As viewers we understand this metaphor and conjure our own images of that bus ride, of that man's face and of that young woman sitting beside him, surrounded by her classmates and teacher. It isn't necessary to see the scene play out before us. Michelle's first-hand experience evolves from existing only in her memory to become a shared document of personal acceptance.

The documentary format is perhaps the most widely used by Native filmmakers. I suspect that it is because it most closely resembles the old form of storytelling. This is especially evident in *Karli Jalangu – Boomerang Today*, an observational documentary directed by David Tranter and Allan Collins. This film serves to preserve the Warlpiri and Anmatyerr languages and the traditional practice of creating a boomerang. We observe as four Aboriginal elders of Central Australia share their teachings on the creation of a Number 7 boomerang. It is as though we are present in the field, watching the selection of the wood, the shaping and the painting of it. We are aware that this is how these men were taught this practice

long ago and we watch as quietly as we would if we were actually there as students ourselves. This film so beautifully captures the character of these people and the intimacy of oral teachings – so intimate that sometimes no words are required. This story is engaging because this is the most ancient form of storytelling being documented and, in the process, evolving into a form that can be preserved. As observers we are integral to the preservation, perhaps not of the practice itself, but of the form of teaching and way of thinking.

From the observational film we arrive at a dramatic film, which is a form that is now more widely used by Native filmmakers. *Goodnight Irene*, directed by Sterlin Harjo, tells the story of three Seminole people spending the day in the waiting room of an Indian Clinic. It opens with the epigraph “And when they’re gone, who will tell their stories?” Watching this story unfold I am aware of a larger story – one of the conditions on reserves today and how our languages, cultures and storytelling as a cultural practice are eroding. Watching the traditional Seminole language in this film being misunderstood by some of the Seminole people themselves, we become aware that the traditional stories will change dramatically in the near future, with all too many disappearing completely when the elders who carry them pass away. This film itself is the answer to the opening epigraph. Hope lies in the filmmaker and in the audience, as the story becomes a part of the fabric of our lives. We add it to our wealth of stories and know that it contributes to the ongoing life of storytelling.

As the story of this programme ends, it comes full circle to become one of survival and development. As the old way of storytelling continues to ebb, the new way of storytelling on screen continues to flow. No doubt we are seeing the emergence of a new age of Indigenous Cinema. It is through the process of absorption that the newest form of storytelling can hope to preserve the values of the oral tradition. Because it is possible to experience a film and have its story communicate something of value to your experience as a Native person in this world, it can be said that we are seeing not the death of a tradition, but the evolution of one. As long as these stories continue to be made our own, then the tradition will continue to live through the process of being remade according to the needs of the present.

How do Native filmmakers take the stories of their people, of their surroundings, of their current place in history, and then absorb these things, and pass them on to us? This programme examines how a story changes from teller to listener over time.



Red Buffalo Skydive

Jude Norris

Canada, 3:30, 2001, Beta SP, Colour

An animated red buffalo and a tale of a paraplegic man combine to tell a new story – one of survival.

Jude Norris (Cree/Anishnawbe/Russian/Scottish/Metis) is a multi-disciplinary artist originally from Edmonton. Her work has screened internationally including at the Sundance Film Festival.

Pride

Michelle Ryan & Jessica Salo

Canada, 6:00, 1998, Mini DV, Colour & B/W

A young woman of Aboriginal descent faces her mixed ethnicity, and tells of her personal encounter with racism.

Michelle Ryan (Tsimshian/Gitsan/Scottish/Irish) is a filmmaker from East Vancouver, now living in Chilliwack.

Jessica Salo co-directed this film, which was made through the Access to Media to Education Society at the Gulf Islands Film & Television School on Galiano Island, BC. The filmmakers won the Best Emerging Western Canadian Director award at the 1999 Vancouver Int'l Film Festival for this film.

Karli Jalangu - Boomerang Today

David Tranter & Allan Collins

Australia, 23:00, 2004, Beta SP, Colour

In original language with English subtitles

In the oldest storytelling tradition, Four Warlpiri/Anmatyerr elders gather to share in the creation of a Number 7 boomerang.

David Tranter, an Indigenous sound recordist and filmmaker from Alice Springs, has worked in television for many years. This is his first film.

Allan Collins, an Indigenous cinematographer and filmmaker was raised and lives in Alice Springs. He won the AFI/IF Award for Best Cinematography on the feature film "Beneath Clouds".

Goodnight Irene

Sterlin Harjo

USA, 14:00, 2005, Beta SP, Colour

Three Seminole strangers wait out the day together in an Indian health clinic.

Sterlin Harjo (Creek/Seminole) is currently working on his first feature film "Four Sheets to the Wind" which he workshopped at the Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program.

Images

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OPERATING AS A DISTRIBUTOR, A MEDIATHEQUE AND RESOURCE CENTRE

with an emphasis on the contemporary media arts, Vtape's mandate is to serve both artists and audiences by assisting and encouraging the appreciation, pedagogy, preservation, restoration and exhibition of media works by artists and independents.

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The imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival is an international festival that celebrates the latest works by indigenous peoples on the forefront of innovation in film, video, radio, and new media. Each fall, the festival presents a selection of the most compelling, distinctive Indigenous works from around the globe. The festival's screenings, parties, panel discussions, and cultural events attract and connect filmmakers, media artists, programmers, buyers, and industry professionals. The works accepted reflect the diversity of the world's Indigenous Nations and illustrate the vitality and excellence of our art and culture in contemporary media.

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401 Richmond Street West, #452 Toronto, ON M5V 3A8

Tel: 416.351.1317 Fax: 416.351.1509

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