

Kingulliit Productions presents

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MALIGLUTIT

(SEARCHERS)

PRESS NOTES

Director	Zacharias KUNUK
Co-Director	Natar UNGALAAQ
Screenplay	Zacharias KUNUK, Norman COHN
Photography	Jonathan FRANTZ
Editing	Norman COHN, Zacharias KUNUK
Music	Tanya TAGAQ, Chris CRILLY
Art Direction	Susan AVINGAQ
Costumes	Susan AVINGAQ, Atuat AKKIRTIQ
Producers	Zacharias KUNUK, Jonathan FRANTZ, Cara DI STAULO

with

Benjamin Kunuk as Kuanana

Jocelyne Immaroitok as Ailla

Karen Ivalu as Tagaq

Joseph Uttak as Siku

Joey Sarpinak as Kupak

Jonah Qunaq as Aulla

Running time: 94 minutes DCP - Dolby 5.1

Produced with the participation of the Canada Media Fund, Nunavut Film Development Corporation, Nunavut Independent Television Network and the Government of Canada Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit program.

Support from First Air, the exclusive airline for Kingulliit Productions.

Nunavut, circa 1913. Kuanana returns from a caribou hunt to discover his wife and daughter kidnapped, and the rest of his family slaughtered. His father's spirit helper, the loon Kallulik, sets him on course to overturn fate and reunite his family.

“My world was torn apart. When they want to get a wife, they become fearless and act without mercy.”

SYNOPSIS

A party in the family circle is disrupted when one of the men starts making moves on the wife of another. As the argument heats up, Kupak, the leader of four fierce hunters who resent providing for the others, affirms their right to do whatever they want with whomever they choose. But two elders intervene to banish the rowdy men forever. The four leave in a huff, and the festivities resume.

After supper the next night, grandfather Ituk asks for his diving stone to consult the oracle Apisaaq. The family watches intently as he pulls on a rope to lift the stone. It becomes lighter and heavier in response to each of his questions, until he has learned that caribou are to the east. He thanks Apisaaq for helping him, as always. The next morning his son Kuanana and eldest grandson Siku set out for the hunt.

Kuanana counts out his three remaining bullets, hoping to bag two caribou with one shot. Then he charges his son with keeping the dogs quiet.

Meanwhile, the four hunters are tired, frustrated and hungry when they stop for tea. A shot rings out. They pack up and take off toward it, convinced they will find women in that direction.

Kuanana’s parents, wife, daughter and younger son come to the end of a quiet evening, dreaming of the caribou they will enjoy the next day. As they settle in to sleep, the roar of a polar bear approaching the igloo frightens them. A hole breaks open and the four hunters rush in to kidnap Kuanana’s wife Ailla and daughter Tagaq and kill his son Anguti. They leave his parents for dead.

Kuanana arrives the next morning in time for his father to pass on his helping spirit amulet and urge his son to call on the loon Kallulik for guidance.

Kuanana sets off immediately with Siku to find his wife and daughter.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

INSPIRATION

When I took up the idea of making "Maliglutit (Searchers)," I wanted it to be a western genre movie made entirely the Inuit way.

After focusing for some years on documentaries, I felt it was the right time to return to narrative fiction. Staging drama is exciting but a lot more work. I couldn't imagine doing it all the time. But people have always encouraged me to do more.

As a child I heard stories of women being kidnapped. Albeit rare in our day, wife stealing may be as old as Inuit culture itself. We began by imagining what it would feel like to live through or witness a kidnapping then tried to find the emotional truth of the situation. Our intent was to always keep it real.

PREPARATION

From the start, I resolved to anchor the production in my home community of Igloolik. It was important to get the faces right. I brought on Natar Ungalaaq, who played the lead in "Atanarjuat – The Fast Runner," as co-director to work with the actors preparing their performances and to mentor a new generation of Inuit filmmakers. Our cast and crew included regular collaborators, but also a number of new people in training.

We resolved to shoot the film in March to capture the land as it is for most of the year – frozen. It was by far the coldest shoot I had ever worked on – but there again, there is no replacing the real thing. Despite inherent challenges, we were committed to depicting the land in winter as a major player.

Our production process blended conventional practices with a different approach rooted in Inuit values. No one was assigned the traditional set of tasks that production team members would normally assume. We brought together a group of people committed to getting the film done; and ready to do everything it would take to make it happen.

We engaged hunters, carvers, seamstresses, ski-doo mechanics, circus performers, and all sorts of people who had amazing skills, but for the most part had never worked on a film before. As we began creating props and costumes, we started an equally creative discussion about how we would be able to shoot in temperatures hovering around minus-40 Celsius.

ASSEMBLING CAST AND CREW

To cast the film, a wall in the production office was covered with headshots of potential actors. Every few days for about a month our key creative team would walk up and group different people together to see which ones fit best as a happy family, or a gang of wife-stealing marauders. Over time, as things came together, and there were fewer and fewer faces on the wall.

When it came down to making final choices, we examined two pictures of each person, showing their happiest and meanest looks. I took a black marker to the pictures and added long hair for the men and tattoos for the women, just to see which ones stood out best for the job.

Once we had cast the good guys and the bad guys, we set them up to live and camp in two completely separate groups on set. We felt that keeping them from one another off screen would accentuate tensions between them before the camera. Keeping the good guys and the bad guys apart on set might also have fostered the development of some kind of outlaw mentality among the bad guys, and an especially sweet disposition among the good.

The script was detailed enough to anchor the story but little more. One line read “Kuanana and Siku return from seal hunting.” In a conventional script, behavior and dialogue would appear on the page. But in our way of working, the one line was all we needed. The actors were thereby freed up to do everything they would normally do after returning from a seal hunt. This method delivered a good level of freshness and authenticity every step of the way.

There were only four non-Inuit crew members: Jonathan Frantz, the DOP and producer, was living in Igloolik for three years at the time of production, Guillaume Saladin has lived in Igloolik for the majority of his life, and then we brought in a Montreal-based sound recordist, and camera assistant. The rest of the crew were Igloolik-based Inuit. Others in the core team were long-standing Isuma collaborators who knew the routine: Susan Avingaq, Carol Kunnuk, Michilline Ammaq, and Lucy Tulugarjuk.

While Natar concentrated on performance, Guillaume Saladin, one of the founders of Artcirq, worked with actors on stunts, and prepared special effects. The camera team spent time testing cold weather camera gear and fine-tuning stabilization systems. And the igloo builders worked at placing the last blocks of snow in position. After the storm subsided, both literally and figuratively, we put script and plans aside and headed out onto the tundra to start shooting.

When it came time to think of the music for the film, Tanya Tagaq came to mind immediately. Her music covers such a range of emotion that we considered it a perfect fit for the film. We also wanted to work with Chris Crilly, who worked on our previous films. Pairing Tanya and Chris together resulted in a score that reflects a contemporary mix of Inuit and worldly sounds that we wanted for the film.

NOTES BY JONATHAN FRANTZ

We used our script and production plan as a blueprint to get us headed in the right direction and then took advantage of opportunities and adapted as we went along. We also placed a lot of faith in the competence of every member of the collective team to do everything that has to be done on all fronts.

Even with experienced dog teams and dog handlers, it was challenging to set up shots and have the dogs follow the plan. In one instance the dogs were tracking perfectly for a shot, but at the last minute one of them broke off and headed right for the camera. The dog managed to loop his line around and bring the camera crashing down with the operator. Thankfully, only a lens was broken.

We spent 30 days shooting this film in the middle of the winter in one of the coldest places on earth. The majority of the film consists of exterior shots, where the temperature fluctuated between minus-30 and minus-42 Celsius before windchill. Interiors were shot in igloo's where the temperature was a relatively balmy minus-20 Celsius.

The cold had a big impact on how we managed the equipment. At those temperatures wires and plastics become very brittle, batteries drain incredibly fast, and condensation can destroy electronics in seconds. We ended up having our very talented sewing team create fur jackets for all of the electronic equipment. The jackets worked well, but limited how much user control we had over the equipment.

Stylistically we adapted our shoot to the conditions. We kept the shooting style simple, going primarily hand held, using prime lenses, and a long depth of field. The approach was to put the emphasis on the actors and the landscape. The focus for the camera operator was to keep the actors in frame, and prevent himself and the camera from freezing. I think there is only one shot in the film where we used a focus puller. We also shot in 4K, and output in HD, so we had a little extra room to re-frame a bit, which was really nice option in post.

An important part of our approach was to immerse the cast and crew in the experience of the film. So not only did we shoot in the cold, but we lived and slept in the cold. All of us camped near set and slept in igloo's, tents and wooden shacks. One day, after shooting 12 hours on the land, the camera assistant and I returned to our tent and turned on the diesel heater. As the tent heated up we unpacked the cameras, charged the batteries, did the data wrangling, and got ready for the next day's shoot. But just before we went to sleep, the heater stopped working. We fumbled with it for a bit and then resorted to using a hair dryer to keep the tent warm for the night.

ABOUT THE CAST

BENJAMIN KUNUK (Kuanana)

Ben spent the majority of his youth in outpost camps outside the Hamlet of Igloolik. During these formative years he learned how to hunt, fish and live off the land as his forefathers have for thousands of years before him. Ben is currently living in Igloolik with his young family.

JOCELYNE IMMAROITOK (Ailla)

Jocelyne had her first appearance on the big screen in *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*. As an extra, she was introduced to being on set, and discovered the transformational power of film. Jocelyn is living in Igloolik with her daughter.

KAREN IVALUT (Tagaq)

Karen is the granddaughter of Madeline Ivalu, a long-standing leader in the Igloolik film network. Karen has been exposed to film production throughout her young life and aspires to participate in future productions. She is attending Ataguttaaluk High School and is a member of the soccer team.

JOSEPH UTTAK (Siku)

Joseph is attending Ataguttaaluk High School in Igloolik. In addition to his school based knowledge Joseph is actively learning land based skills from his grandfather and has become a very capable hunter.

JOEY SARPINAK (Kupak)

Joey is an experienced hunter and dog musher. He has completed the Nunavut Quest several times and raises and sells dogs to other mushers in the North Baffin region. Joey is also a guide for hunting expeditions, where he takes people from around the globe hunting by dog team.

JONAH QUNAQ (Aulla)

Jonah is living in Igloolik where he is a regular member of the touring hockey team, and a competitive dog musher. Jonah has two dog teams and uses them to hunt and fish to provide food for his young family.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Producer | Director | Writer | Editor

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*, codirected with Norman Cohn, which opened the Toronto International Film Festival in 2006. His latest documentary film, *Angirattut* (Coming Home) was shot entirely in Inuktitut and successfully premiered at the imagineNATIVE film festival without English subtitles. Zach is the winner of a National Arts Award, the National Aboriginal Achievement Award and was named an Officer of - the Order of Canada in 2005. Zach is currently shooting a new 7-part documentary series following an ancient way of life in one of the harshest environments on earth in *Hunting With My Ancestors*. Zach is also executive producing a first feature film by the Haida Nation entitle *Edge of Knife*, as part of an initiative to reproduce the "Isuma" model in other indigenous communities.

Writer | Editor

NORMAN COHN developed, with Zacharias Kunuk, the late Pauloosie Qulitalik and the late Paul Apak, the "Isuma" signature style of cultural drama, combining the authenticity of modern video with the ancient art of Inuit storytelling. While living in Igloolik and Montreal, Norman was producer and director of photography for *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*, *Nunavut (Our Land)* and the rest of Isuma's collective videography. Before coming to Igloolik, Norman was a widely exhibited video artist. The solo exhibition, *Norman Cohn: Portraits*, opened in 1983 at Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario, National Gallery of Canada, Vancouver Art Gallery and other Canadian museums, and Cohn's 1987 experimental feature documentary *Quartet for Deafblind* was selected for *Dokumenta 7*. Winner of a 1990 Guggenheim Fellowship and numerous Canada Council Awards, Norman was co-winner with Zacharias Kunuk of the 1994 Bell Canada Award for Outstanding Achievement in Video Art.

Co-Director

NATAR UNGALAAQ is an award-winning actor as well as filmmaker and sculptor. He is best known for is starring roles in *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* and *The Necessities of Life*. In 2009, he received an award of distinction by the Nunavut Film Development Corporation to recognized the body of his work and his contribution to Nunavut's film industry. We will also star in Benoit Pilon's up coming film *Iqaluit*, on which Natar also worked on casting and research.

Producer | Director of Photography

JONATHAN FRANTZ is a producer and director of photography working with Igloolik based, Kingulliit Productions. He moved to Igloolik, Nunavut with his family in 2012. Jonathan is being mentored by Isuma founders Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, and studying their style of film production. Jonathan has a background in community planning, where he uses video and multi-media to support community development. Jonathan produces independent community-based media in ways that support local economic development, retain cultural integrity, and entertain audiences. *Maliglutit (Searchers)* is Jonathan's first feature film, as producer and director of photography. Prior to this film he produced *Angirattut (Coming Home)* a 90-minute documentary directed by Zacharias Kunuk. Jonathan is producing *Innarijatini Unikatuat (Stories of our Elders)*, an animation series, which will be completed by the end of 2016. Jonathan is currently producing *Edge of the Knife*, an Isuma style feature made in collaboration with the Haida Nation, executive produced by Zacharias Kunuk.

Producer

CARA DI STAULO first traveled to Igloolik in 2008 as part of the production team for the Artcirc Inuit Performance Collective's short film *Pitaqangittuq*. She continued to work in various roles and travel to Igloolik with the first Inuit circus Artcirc, the women's video collective Arnait Video Productions, and Isuma Distribution International. She was production coordinator for 2012 feature film *Uvanga* and Network Manager for IsumaTV. In 2015, she joined the producer teams for *Innarijatini Unikatuat (Stories of our Elders)* and *Maliglutit (Searchers)*. With a Bachelors degree in Communication from the University of Québec in Montréal (UQAM), she has also worked in television production and festival coordination for Apartment 11 Productions and the Cannes film festival. She is currently Line Producer for Zacharias Kunuk's new documentary series *Hunting With My Ancestors* as well as for the first Haida language feature film, *Edge of the Knife*.

Music

TANYA TAGAQ is an internationally-celebrated Inuk throat singer from Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Her unique vocal expression may be rooted in Inuit throat singing but her music has as much to do with electronica, industrial and metal influences as it does with traditional culture. She has collaborated with an array of like-minded artists from all musical genre's such as Bjork. Tanya's albums make for complex listening, but her string of Juno nominations attests to her ability to make difficult music speak a universal tongue. Her latest album *Animism* received major critical praise, winning the 2014 Polaris Music Prize and the 2015 Juno Award for Aboriginal Recording of the year. These wins and Tanya's outspokenness on several important Inuit issues have marked a turning point in Canadian music and culture.

Music

CHRIS CRILLY is an Irish musician and composer now living in Montreal. He worked with Zacharias Kunuk on the score for *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*, for which he won a Genie Award for Best Original Score in 2002. He has also composed music for television series, animation and documentary films, including: *Strings/Cordes* (Wendy Tilby, 1991), *The Boys of St. Vincent* (John N. Smith, 1992), *Short Infinity* (Kun Chang, 2003), *Frank the Wrabbit* (John Weldon, 1998) and *Eckhart* (John Collins 1992). Crilly is also a former music editor at the National Film Board of Canada, and a part-time professor in the Departments of Communication Studies and Cinema at Concordia University.

Art Direction | Costumes

SUSAN AVINGAQ is renowned Inuit seamstress and artist. Since 1991, she is also an active member of Arnait Video Productions and Art Director for both of *Uvanga* and *Before Tomorrow*. Susan was nominated for three Genies as screenwriter (adapted screenplay), composer (original song) and art direction for her work on *Before Tomorrow*. She is also active locally in teaching sewing traditions to younger women in the community. Born on the land, Susan moved into town in Igloolik in the mid-1970s. Her family still hunts and camps on the land part of the year.

Costumes

ATUAT AKKIRTIQ was nominated for a Genie Award in the Best Costume Category for *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* in 2007 and she won the Best Costume Category Genie Award in 2009 for her work in *Before Tomorrow*, in which she was also a supporting actress and cultural consultant. 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. She lives in Igloolik and works all over Nunavut.

KINGULLIIT PRODUCTIONS: An Inuit-style Production Team

Kingulliit Productions Inc (in Inuktitut, the next generation) was created to build on the foundation of Igloolik Isuma Productions as the industry evolves toward multi-platform digital future. In association with Isuma Distribution International's online distribution platform, IsumaTV [www.isuma.tv], Kingulliit's new productions are developed simultaneously for TV and the Internet answering the urgent need of more Inuktitut content in both platforms.

Past productions by Kingulliit Productions include the documentary films *Inuit Cree Reconciliation* (2013, imagineNATIVE Best Short Documentary), *Angirattut* (2014, imagineNATIVE Official Selection).

In 2015, Zacharias Kunuk became the sole owner of Kingulliit Productions and continues to work towards the safeguard and promotion of Inuit language and culture.

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