

ABORIGINAL FILMMAKERS

tell their stories

Absoriginal filmmakers are leaving their mark on Canada's cultural landscape. Perhaps the best-known today is Zacharias Kunuk, director of *Atanarjuat* ("The Fast Runner")—the first feature film ever produced, directed and acted by Inuit. Inspired by an ancient legend, this work fascinated audiences from Australia to South Africa, and won awards at home and abroad, including the *Caméra d'or* for Best First Feature Film at the Cannes Festival in 2001 (see *Canada World View*, Issue 12, pp. 10–11). It also pumped more than \$1.5 million into Igloolik, an isolated community of 1,200 people in Canada's newest territory of Nunavut.

That success may be hard to match. But there are many other Aboriginal filmmakers in Canada producing experimental and animated shorts, full-length comedies and dramas, or provocative documentaries. They depict timeless legends, preserve language and stories, and chronicle challenges such as substance abuse and racism. These artists are garnering critical acclaim around the world. At the same time, they are preserving traditions, challenging stereotypes and fighting injustice.

Atanarjuat was unusual in being released commercially, but alternative showcases are proliferating for Aboriginal film. They range from prestigious events such as the Sundance Festival in the U.S. state of Utah to imagineNATIVE, an international Aboriginal media arts festival in Toronto, Ontario.

The small screen also offers big opportunities. The Aboriginal People's Television Network carries work of Toronto-based Big Soul Productions,

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photo: Associated Press AP

Natar Ungalaaq plays the title role in *Atanarjuat*, a co-production of Igloolik Isuma Productions and the NFB.

Inuit director Zacharias Kunuk with the *Caméra d'or* award for his film *Atanarjuat* ("The Fast Runner") at the 2001 Cannes Festival. This was the first Inuit film presented at Cannes.

Interns get "reel" world experience

Thanks to DFAIT's Youth International Internship Program (YIIP), young Canadians are getting the chance to travel in order to learn about the film industry and gain invaluable international experience.

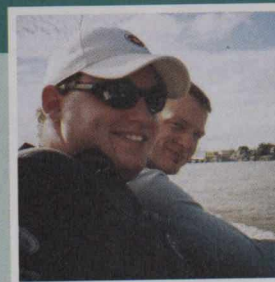
Part of the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy, YIIP helps around 400 Canadian interns per year have their first paid career-related international work experience. From office jobs to research to field work, the placements (now in some 115 countries) enable youth to acquire specific marketable skills.

With support from YIIP, the Canadian Film and Television

Production Association places interns with mentor companies for up to six months. During that time they learn about such activities as production, marketing, distribution and communications.

Michael Francis, for example, is interning as production manager for Coming Home Films, based on Mayne Island in British Columbia. From February to March, he travelled to Uganda to work on a documentary called *Sounds of Sunshine*. In previous years, Coming Home mentored four other interns, who worked on location in Cambodia, Thailand, India, Vietnam, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

While an intern with Trinôme Inc. of Montreal, Quebec, Bernard Larivière travelled from Mexico to the southernmost tip of South America and back again. It was all part of his job as production coordinator of the documentary series *Plein Sud: The Southern Journey* (2002). As often happens, after the internship ended Larivière was hired by his mentor company on contract. Other interns have gone on to find work at the CBC.



YIIP film interns Michael Francis (left) and Andrew Millard on location in Cambodia

For more information:
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/interns