

Kiviaq versus Canada

A film by Zacharias Kunuk
Produced by Katarina Soukup



a presentation of
Kunuk-Cohn Productions, Inc
Igloodik Isuma Productions, Inc

P R E S S K I T

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KIVIAQ VERSUS CANADA – synopsis

46 minute documentary

Zacharias Kunuk, the award-winning director of *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* (Camera d'or, Cannes 2001), travels to Edmonton to meet Kiviaq, Canada's first Inuit lawyer, who was also a former Golden Gloves boxing champion, a City Alderman, and the only Inuk ever to play on the Edmonton Eskimos CFL football team.

Kiviaq's extraordinary life story bears testimony to the treatment indigenous people of the Canadian Arctic have endured for generations due to the government's inhumane colonial policies. Now dying of cancer, the life-long fighter is embroiled in the last and most important fight of his life, as he sues the Canadian government to secure for Inuit people something they deserve and have never had - the same official status as all the other aboriginal peoples of Canada. As his friendship with Kiviaq develops, director Zacharias Kunuk learns new ways to take a stand for his own rights as an Inuk.

An important political documentary about indigenous human rights, *Kiviaq versus Canada* focuses on Canada's colonialist policies in the Arctic over the last 100 years, Canadian law, and the current status of Inuit in Canadian society.



Kiviaq at home in Edmonton, December 2004

KIVIAQ – BACKGROUND

Born in 1936 near Chesterfield Inlet, Kiviaq spent his early years in the Arctic before his mother married a white RCMP officer who transplanted Kiviaq, his sister and his mother to Edmonton in 1939 (leaving two sisters and two brothers behind in the North). His stepfather changed Kiviaq's name to David Charles Ward, and forbade the family from talking about the Arctic, speaking Inuktitut, or even acknowledging their Inuit heritage.

Kiviaq grew up in an era of rampant racism, with vivid memories of running from white kids who shouted insults like "flea-bitten Eskimo." Fending off neighbourhood bullies honed his fighting skills, and he was soon training at a local boxing club, eventually becoming a Golden Gloves champion, winning 108 of 112 career matches. He later played briefly for the Edmonton Eskimo football club before a broken neck ended his career.

In the late 1960s, Kiviaq ran for and was elected to Edmonton City Council, where he became known for his outspokenness and for bringing the city international recognition through major sporting events such as the 1979 Commonwealth Games.

While a city Alderman, Kiviaq met an Inuit delegation from the Arctic, which included two Inuit elders. Through an Inuktitut interpreter, Kiviaq was stunned to learn from these women that he had a brother in Baker Lake. He was at last connected to his family in the North! He corresponded with his brother and sister-in-law, as well as their children, and several family members have even come to Edmonton to visit him. Following an unsuccessful bid for Mayor, Kiviaq moved onto hosting an open-line radio show (one highlight was the appearance of Mohamed Ali – in Edmonton for an exhibition match – who knew Kiviaq from his boxing days).

In the early 1980s, Kiviaq decided to pursue a law degree, and this is where he faced many obstacles as an Inuk that he is fighting today in his legal claim on behalf of all Inuit. As an Inuk (rather than an Indian), he was unable to have his education costs funded by the federal government and had to struggle to find his own financing. Despite this and other obstacles, however, he did obtain his law degree from the University of British Columbia, and after another series of battles was finally admitted to the Alberta Bar on February 14, 1983 as Canada's first Inuk lawyer. He received letters of congratulations from Prime Minister Trudeau on down.

In 2001, Kiviaq fought to change his legal name from David C. Ward to his original birth name. Vital Statistics argued he couldn't have just one name, as Inuit have traditionally used for millennia, but he appealed his case and won. Every federal and provincial department has since accepted his name change, he says, except one: the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

Today he lives a bachelor life in the modest house that once belonged to his stepfather with three cats and an old deaf dog named Suzy. Horses are his passion – he owns several and talks about them as if they were people. One is named after his mother Kumatnaq, and another is an "untrainable" mare no one wanted which he was able to gently coax into a champion horse. Every weekend Kiviaq makes the hour and half drive to a friend's farm outside Edmonton to ride and spend time with his horses.

Unlike many Inuit, whose traditional culture frowns upon confrontation, Kiviaq knows how to fight – he's a life-long scrapper, under-dog, shit-disturber, mover-and-shaker and bully-buster. Now 70 and battling cancer, he has entered the ring for perhaps the last time for the most important fight of his life: exposing the unequal treatment of Inuit in Canadian society and the scandal of

Nunavut, which Kiviaq argues is more about the federal government's abdication of responsibility than Inuit self-determination.

Not many Canadians know that Inuit pay income tax. Nor do they know that Inuit lack the same access to free education and health care that Indians enjoy. Indeed, many Inuit themselves actually believe they get these privileges. Kiviaq argues, however, that the federal government illegally transferred these responsibilities to the territory of Nunavut, which dispenses them to any resident of the territory, whether or not they are Inuit. When Inuit leave Nunavut, they lose these benefits.

Kiviaq has already anticipated the Federal Government's response – Canadian Indians get special rights and privileges because they signed treaties and live on reserves. He has a quick jab in reply: "My argument is that the Canadian Government never gave us the choice to live on reserves. They just moved into the Arctic and made it impossible for us to live anywhere else but their hamlets and towns and gave us NOTHING in return – not even the courtesy of defining us a people."

ZACHARIAS KUNUK — Director's Notes

I was born in 1957 in a sod house at Kapuivik, my family's winter campsite in our life on the land. We were living happily like my ancestors waking up with frozen kamiks for a pillow. In 1965 Government workers told my parents, 'You should send your kids to school or you could lose your family allowance.' I was nine years old getting ready to be like my father. The next summer I was on the boat to Igloolik with my brother. While my parents lived on the land I stayed in town and learned the English language. Most weeks they showed movies at the Community Hall. They cost a quarter to get in. That's when I started carving soapstone to get money for the movies. I remember John Wayne in the West. He spearheads the US cavalry and kills some Indians at the fort. One time the scouts didn't return, we go out where there's arrows sticking out of dead soldiers and horses and one soldier says, 'What kind of Indians did this!' I was shocked too. That's what I learned in my education, to think like one of the soldiers.

When I began to see myself as an aboriginal person and a filmmaker I learned there are different ways to tell the same story. People in Igloolik learned through storytelling who we were and where we came from for 4000 years without a written language. Then foreign missionaries preached Paul's Epistles to my parents in Inuktitut saying, 'Turn away from your old way of life.' These days Igloolik young people are suiciding at a terrible rate. 4000 years of oral history silenced by fifty years of priests, schools and cable TV? This death of history is happening in my lifetime. How were shamans tied? Where do suicides go? What will I answer when I'm an elder and don't know anything about it? Will I have anything to say? Lately I want to write to the Bishop and say 'Let my people go!'

In the 1970's Igloolik voted twice against TV from the south since there was nothing in Inuktitut, nothing in it for us. But I noticed when my father and his friends came back from hunting they would always sit down with tea and tell the story of their hunt. And I thought it would be great to film hunting trips so you wouldn't have to tell it, just show it. In 1981 I sold some carvings and bought a video camera. When I watched my videos I noticed kids gathered outside my window looking in to see the TV. That was how special it was at the beginning.

In 1985 I received my first Canada Council grant to produce an independent video, *From Inuk Point of View*, on my summer holiday. I was director, Paul Apak editor, Pauloosie Qulitalik the cultural narrator, and Norman Cohn, cameraman. This became our Isuma team.

Can Inuit bring storytelling into the new millennium? Can we listen to our elders before they all pass away? Can we save our youth from killing themselves at ten times the national rate? Can producing community TV in Igloolik make our community, region and country stronger? Is there room in Canadian filmmaking for our way of seeing ourselves?

To try to answer these questions we want to show how our ancestors survived by the strength of their community and their wits, and how new ways of storytelling today can help our community survive another thousand years.

Our name Isuma means 'to think,' as in Thinking Productions. Our building in the centre of Igloolik has a big sign on the front that says Isuma. **Think**. Young and old work together to keep our ancestors' knowledge alive. We create traditional artifacts, digital multimedia and desperately needed jobs in the same activity. Our productions give an artist's view for all to see where we came from: what Inuit were able to do then and what we are able to do now.

KIVIAQ VERSUS CANADA – Biographies

Director, Co-Writer [CANADIAN/INUIT]

ZACHARIAS KUNUK, president of Igloolik Isuma Productions, Inc, was nine years old when his family gave up their nomadic lifestyle and settled in the new government town of Igloolik. In 1981, Kunuk sold three sculptures in Montreal and brought home the Arctic's first video camera to a community that did not yet have television. As a co-founder and creative member of the Igloolik Isuma Productions team, Kunuk's credits include the 1 x 60 dramas *Qaggiq* (1989), *Nunaqpa* (1991) and *Saputi* (1993); the 13 x 30 drama series *Nunavut* (1995); documentaries *Nipi* (Voice, 1999) and *Nanugiurutiga* (My First Polar Bear, 2001); and the internationally acclaimed feature film, *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* (2000). Recipient of an Aboriginal Achievement Award in 2000 and a National Arts Award in 2001, Kunuk was chosen *The Globe and Mail's* Man of the Year in the Arts for 2002 and appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada. This fall, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, the feature film he co-directed with partner Norman Cohn, opened the Toronto International Film Festival. Kunuk still lives full time in Igloolik where he hunts as often as he can.

Producer, Co-writer [CANADIAN]

KATARINA SOUKUP has collaborated with Inuit filmmakers in the Canadian Arctic for almost 10 years as part of Igloolik Isuma Productions, the artist collective behind the internationally critically acclaimed feature film *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner* (winner of the Camera d'or at Cannes 2001). She was producer, technical director, and audio reporter for *Live from the Tundra*, a website which streamed audio and video dispatches from a remote Inuit outpost camp in Nunavut with a high-speed-data satellite telephone. In 2004, she produced the documentary *Qallunajatut – Urban Inuk* (winner of the Grand Prize – Rigoberta Menchu Community Award, Montreal First People's Festival) and SILA, a Telefilm-supported educational website about Inuit culture. She is currently producing *Kiviaq versus Canada* a documentary by Atanarjuat director Zacharias Kunuk. As a media artist, her sound and radio art has been presented in Austria, Japan, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic. She and Inuk artist Jayson Kunnuk presented *Arctic Phonographies*, a series of experimental audio portraits based on field recordings of the north, at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2004. She holds an MA in Media Studies from Concordia University, Montreal.

Executive Producer [CANADIAN]

NORMAN COHN is secretary-treasurer of Igloolik Isuma Productions, Inc, and was also producer/cinematographer of *Atanarjuat*. In addition to his role at Isuma, Cohn is secretary-treasurer and co-founder of Kunuk Cohn Productions. Cohn was a widely exhibited video artist before coming to Igloolik. His solo exhibition of sixteen videos, *Norman Cohn: Portraits*, was presented in 1983-84 at the Art Gallery of Ontario, National Gallery of Canada, Vancouver Art Gallery and other Canadian museums; while the feature-length *Quartet for Deafblind* (1987) was selected for *Dokumenta 7* in Kassel, Germany. Winner of three Canada Council Senior A Awards and a 1990 Guggenheim Fellowship. With Zacharias Kunuk, he is co-producer, co-writer, and co-director of *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*.

Director of Photography [CANADIAN]

FRANÇOIS BEAUCHEMIN has been a director of photography since 1971. He has experience in fiction feature film and documentary production. He is familiar with a variety of formats, including 35mm, Super-16, and professional video equipment. His recent credits include *Vue du sommet*, 2001, director: Magnus Isaacson (Productions Erézi), and *Ni rose...ni bleu*, director, 2003, Joël Bertomeu (Productions Adobe)

Editor [CANADIAN]

A fortuitous meeting with the award-winning editor André Corriveau brought AUGUSTIN RIOUX from the theatre world into editing. As a theatre artist, he has been stage designer (lighting, costumes, sets) for theatre, dance and opera. He also directed several theatrical productions. As an editor, Rioux has worked in animation, documentary as well as fiction. He has collaborated with filmmakers such as Jean-Claude Lord, Giles Walker, John L'Écuyer and, most recently, Zacharias Kunuk. Rioux is currently pursuing several film projects as a director.

CORPORATE PROFILE – IGLLOOLIK ISUMA PRODUCTIONS, INC

Founders Zacharias Kunuk, Paul Apak, Pauloosie Qulitalik and Norman Cohn incorporated Igloolik Isuma Productions Inc. in January 1990 as Canada's first Inuit independent production company. Our mission is to create a distinctive Inuit style of community-based filmmaking that preserves and enhances Inuit culture, creates needed employment and offers a uniquely Inuit point of view to the global media audience. Since 1989 Isuma's twenty-five films have won awards and critical acclaim in Canada and worldwide.

Isuma's 13-episode TV series, *Nunavut (Our Land)*, uses contemporary actors to recreate ordinary daily life of five Inuit families on the land through the fictional year 1945-46. *Nunavut* was featured at the 2002 Rotterdam Film Festival, Hot Docs and Documenta 11, the prestigious once-every-five-years contemporary art exhibition in Kassel, Germany. In 2003, Bravo! broadcast *Nunavut* nationally in Canada.

In 2001 Isuma released Canada's first Aboriginal-language feature film, *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*, a \$2 million historical thriller based on a legend of love, jealousy, murder and revenge in 16th century Igloolik region, a co-production with the National Film Board of Canada, with support from Telefilm Canada and the Canadian Television Fund. *Atanarjuat* went on to win the Camera d'Or at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival, similar awards at Edinburgh, Flanders, Toronto, San Diego and other international festivals, and six Genie Awards (Canadian Oscars) including Best Picture and Best Director. In 2002 *Atanarjuat* went on to successful commercial release in France, UK, Canada, the U.S., Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark and the Czech Republic and was named by over sixty international film critics as one of the Ten Best Films of 2002.

In 2004, the Art Gallery of Ontario mounted an exhibition of the *Nunavut Series*. That year, Isuma's documentary *Kunuk Family Reunion* premiered on History Channel and APTN in the fall. Over 2003-2005, with Telefilm support, Isuma developed SILA <http://sila.nu>, an educational website about Inuit culture based on our films and video products. In 2005, the documentary *Qallunajatut (Urban Inuk)* aired on APTN, and won the Grand Prize-Rigoberta Menchu Community Award at the Land-in-Sights First People's Festival in Montreal. The documentary *Kiviaq versus Canada* will premiere on History Channel in winter 2007, after its world premiere at the Edmonton International Film Festival in September 2006.

The company's most recent feature film, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, had its world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2006, with Alliance Atlantis/Odeon Films distributing in Canada. In summer 2006, a new feature film *Before Tomorrow* went into production.

CORPORATE PROFILE – KUNUK COHN PRODUCTIONS, INC

Incorporated in 2001, Kunuk-Cohn Productions, Inc is owned by Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, co-founders of Canada's most successful Inuit independent production company, Igloolik Isuma Productions, Inc. Kunuk and Cohn have a twenty-year history of collaboration on film and television projects, and together won the Bell Canada Award for Outstanding Achievement in Video Art in 1994. Among the many award-winning programs they made as part of the Isuma collective is the internationally acclaimed Inuit feature film *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*, which Kunuk directed and Cohn produced and shot. Kunuk-Cohn Productions, Inc in collaboration with Igloolik Isuma Productions, Inc, produced the documentaries *Canz* (2002), *Kunuk Family Reunion* (2004), *Qallunajatut (Urban Inuk)* (2005). Forthcoming co-productions with Isuma include the feature films *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (world premiere at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2006), *Before Tomorrow* (in production) and the documentary *Kiviaq versus Canada* (premiering at the Edmonton International Film Festival September 2006).

KIVIAQ VERSUS CANADA – Credits

Directed by
ZACHARIAS KUNUK

Produced by
KATARINA SOUKUP

Written by
ZACHARIAS KUNUK
KATARINA SOUKUP

Executive Producer
NORMAN COHN

Director of Photography
FRANÇOIS BEAUCHEMIN

Edited by
AUGUSTIN RIOUX

A Production of
KUNUK COHN PRODUCTIONS
& IGLOOLIK ISUMA PRODUCTIONS

Produced with the participation of the



Canadian Television Fund

created by the Government of Canada
and the Canadian Cable Industry

Telefilm Canada: Equity Investment Program
CTF: Licence Fee Program



The Canadian Film or Video
Production Tax Credit

Canada 

SODEC

Société de développement des entreprises culturelles- Québec

Québec 

Film and Television
Tax Credit

Gestion
SODEC

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF



HistoryTelevision.ca

NITV

*Nunavut Independent
Television Network*

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Zacharias Kunuk
Sebastian Lange
Kenneth Rasmussen

interviewers
Paul Irngaut
Zacharias Kunuk

location sound
Marcel Fraser
Mélanie Gauthier
Jamie Kidd
Philippe Scultety

Kiviaq versus Canada

production manager
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production assistants
Katharine Irngaut
Jayson Kunnuk

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Rhoda Kayakjuak
Zacharias Kunuk
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post-production services
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Post-Production Pico, La Prairie

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Éric LeMoyne

sound mix
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boxers
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Gaston Robitaille

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Philippe Gauthier

thank you
Mathieu Boulanger
Sylvain Bourgault
Annick Charlebois
George Cherry
Bernadette Dean
Akesuk Joamie
Carmen Kumanaq Idlout
The Lasso Family
Aaju Peter
Paul Quassa
Derek Rasmussen

Rosco and Laetitia Latulippe
Michelle Soucy

thank you

Martha Talirjuk Elders Centre
Iqaluit Elders Centre
Iqaluit Airport
Edmonton International Airport
First Air
Club de Boxe Champion

archival footage and photographs

Diamond Jenness Bernard Harbour NWT (George Wilkins), 1916
Canadian Museum of Civilization

Parki Parka (Albert Tessier), 1951
Bibliothèques et archives nationales du Québec

The American Philosophical Society
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
Library and Archives Canada

music

"Shaman"
written by
Michael Reinhart
performed by
Michael Reinhart and Rhonda Uttak

"Guitar Solo"
written and performed by
Solomon Uyarasuk

"Nunavut Kuviasuni"
written and performed by
Sam Tutanuak

"So You Say"
written by Elisapie Isaac, Alain Auger and Michel Pépin
performed by Taima

produced by
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& Igloolik Isuma Productions, Inc

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