



# UMIAQ SKIN BOAT



A Film by Jobie Weetaluktuk

## PRESS KIT

*CatBird*  
PRODUCTIONS

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# UMIAQ SKIN BOAT

## BRIEF SYNOPSIS

*Umiaq Skin Boat* is a beautiful and poetic 30-minute film about a group of Inuit elders in Inukjuak, Quebec who decide one summer to build the first traditional seal skin boat their community has seen in over 50 years. Once an essential vessel for travel and for hunting large prey like bowhead whales, the umiaq has been replaced in modern times by canoes powered with out-board motors. Over the course of working together on the boat, the elders recount astonishing stories of survival while navigating volatile and unforgiving Arctic waters, and of dangers both natural and man-made. Shot against the magnificent backdrop of the northern landscape, *Umiaq Skin Boat* bears witness to the resilience of the Inuit spirit in changing times.

## DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

**Jobie Weetaluktuk** is a writer, editor, broadcaster and filmmaker who originally hails from Inukjuak, Quebec, and is now based in Montreal. His first documentary film, *Urban Inuk* (Igloodik Isuma Productions, 2005), follows the spiritual and practical struggles of three Inuit who have left their ancestral homeland in the Arctic for the concrete jungle of Montreal. *Urban Inuk* aired on Aboriginal People's Television Network in 2005 and played in over 20 festivals and venues across Canada, the USA and Europe. In 2006 the documentary won the **Grand Prix, Rigoberta Menchu Community Award** at the Land-in-sights First People's Festival in Montreal, and toured various Maisons de la Culture in that city as part of the Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montreal (RIDM)'s *Coups de Coeur* programming.

## DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY

*Umiaq Skin Boat* (Catbird Productions), 2008, 31 minutes, documentary  
(Official Selection Hot Docs 2008, Closing Film – First Peoples' Festival 2008)  
*Urban Inuk* (Igloodik Isuma Productions), 2005, 46 minutes, documentary  
(Grand Prix, Rigoberta Menchu Award, Land Insights First People's Festival, Montreal)

## **PRODUCTION DETAILS**

<b>Title</b>	UMIAQ SKIN BOAT
<b>Duration</b>	31 minutes
<b>Production Company</b>	Catbird Productions, Inc
<b>Language</b>	Original Inuktitut (with French or English subtitles)
<b>Format</b>	4:3 letterboxed
<b>Creative Team</b>	<i>Producer</i> Katarina Soukup  <i>Writer/Director</i> Jobie Weetaluktuk  <i>Camera</i> Jobie Weetaluktuk Caroline Oweetaluktuk Lineas Kasudluak  <i>Editor</i> Marie-Christine Sarda  <i>Sound</i> Éric LeMoyne  <i>Original Music</i> Jean-François Caissy



## DETAILED SYNOPSIS

*Our planet has really changed... My mind is saying that  
either the moon or the earth has changed.*

– Daniel Inukpuk



**Umiaq Skin Boat** is a beautiful and poetic 30-minute film about a group of Inuit elders in Inukjuak, Quebec who decide one summer to build the first traditional seal skin boat their community has seen in over 50 years. Once an essential vessel for travel and for hunting large prey like bowhead whales, the *umiaq* has been replaced in modern times by canoes powered with out-board motors. Over the course of working together on the boat, the elders recount astonishing stories of survival while navigating volatile and unforgiving Arctic waters, and of dangers both natural

and man-made. Shot against the magnificent backdrop of the northern landscape, **Umiaq Skin Boat** bears witness to the resilience of the Inuit spirit in changing times.

Our planet and the moon are changing, but they always have. More dramatically, it is we who have changed. As a global society we have become profoundly disconnected from the earth in our world of modern conveniences. For Inuit, still nomadic hunters and gatherers even sixty years ago, this transition was compressed into the space of a single generation. Once-essential knowledge about surviving in the harsh Arctic environment became regarded as an old man's tale.

Whatever the climate conditions, Inuit survived for thousands of years by being resourceful and adapting through careful attention to their natural surroundings. A connection to the land and water remains essential to the continued existence of future generations. By reviving lost traditions, this group of elders ensures that in the wake of great changes, their culture will remain afloat, firmly anchored in the knowledge of the past – their *umiaq* a richly symbolic vessel for the community's history, memory and pride.

## PEOPLE IN THE FILM

Inukjuak is a small, remote Inuit community in Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and the hometown of director Jobie Weetaluktuk. In 2007, the Pukkik Cultural Group of Inukjuak, which was established to preserve Inuit culture and language at the community level, embarked on an ambitious project to build an *umiaq*. The goal of the group is to make traditional culture *visible*, and in the past they have built a *qammaq* (sod house) and seal skin *tupiq* (tent).

**Daniel Inukpuk** is the chair of the Pukkik Cultural Group in Inukjuak. In the film he recalls his mother's stories of traveling inland by *umiaq*, and remembers several dramatic escapes from death while on the open waters. He is a well-known soapstone carver, whose sculptures have been exhibited in galleries in Europe and Japan. Daniel was born on the King George Islands in the Hudson Bay. Daniel often talks about his childhood, and vividly remembers life on the land as a nomad. He is also a hunter.



**Daniel Oweetaluktuk Kasudluak** is a member of the Pukkik Group and one of the umiaq builders. In the film he tells the poignant story of his escape by boat from abuse at the hands of his foster parents. As a great hunter, he has provided for his family and his neighbours through his ability to catch game. His generosity is well known throughout the community.



**Josephie Nalaturuk** is a son of the late Alaku, a great adventurer and explorer of Nunavik and Nunavut around the Hudson Strait. Nalaturuk has been a leader in traditional qajaq-making and dog-teaming. He was commissioned to build an Inukshuk for the McCord Museum in Montreal. Nalaturuk is also a hunter and a carver.

**Elisapie Inukpuk** is co-chair of the Pukkik Group, and the matriarch of the sewing group which prepared and stitched together the bearded seal skins covering the umiaq frame. She is a master seamstress and doll-maker, whose magnificently detailed figures wear miniature caribou and sealskin clothing and have faces carved from soapstone. Her dolls have been acquired by collectors and museums world-wide.

**Nelly Nastapoka** is a wonderful and respected elder of Inukjuak. She has been a widow for many years, a tireless worker and skilled seamstress. She is well-known for dressing her family in the exquisite works of her own hand. She comes from the large and competitive Nivixie family.

## **ABOUT CATBIRD PRODUCTIONS**

[www.catbirdproductions.ca](http://www.catbirdproductions.ca)

Catbird Productions, Inc was founded in spring 2006 by independent producer Katarina Soukup, who brings with her almost ten years of experience working with award-winning, internationally acclaimed Inuit filmmakers Igloodik Isuma Productions, the creative team behind the Canadian cinema classic **Atanarjuat The Fast Runner** (2000), winner of the Camera d'or at Cannes 2001

Among her award-winning producing credits is **Urban Inuk** (2005) directed by Nunavik writer Jobie Weetaluktuk. This documentary follows the spiritual and practical struggles of three Inuit who have left their ancestral homeland in the Arctic for the concrete jungle of Montreal. **Urban Inuk** aired on APTN and played in over 20 festivals across Canada, the USA and Europe. It won the **GRAND PRIX - Rigoberta Menchu Community Award** at the Land-in-sights First People's Festival in Montreal in 2006, and toured various Maisons de la Culture in that city as part of the *Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montreal (RIDM)*'s **Coup de coeur** programming.

Soukup's last film for Isuma as producer, **Kiviaq Versus Canada** (2006) is also directed by *Atanarjuat* director Zacharias Kunuk and co-written by both Soukup and Kunuk. This documentary traces the extraordinary life story of Canada's first Inuit lawyer and examines the reasons why he is suing the Canadian government for Inuit rights. *Kiviaq* had its world premiere

at the Edmonton International Film Festival in September 2006, and was broadcast on History Television in March 2007. It received a *Special Jury Mention (Séquences Documentary Award)* at the 2007 Land-in-Sights First People's Festival. **The Globe and Mail** described **Kiviaq** as a "powerful documentary.... beautifully made and angry, it is a startling and cogent story".

Soukup founded Catbird Productions with a desire to produce exciting, socially-relevant independent documentaries which push the boundaries of the genre. As a producer, she seeks out film projects that tell powerful human stories and reveal the extraordinary in the seemingly ordinary. She is particularly interested in films about music, art, culture, and human rights. To that end, she recently completed the short documentary **Umiq Skin Boat** by *Urban Inuk* director Jobie Weetaluktuk (which had its *World Premiere* at Hot Docs 2008), and is currently developing projects with innovative directors such as Caroline Martel (director of the award-winning **Phantom of the Operator**). She is currently producing documentary about Kent Nagano and the Orchestre symphonique de Montreal's first tour of the Arctic in the company, directed by young filmmaker on-the-rise Félix Lajeunesse. Soukup is also developing a documentary project she herself will direct on the life of pioneering Inuk photographer, artist and historian Peter Pitseolak. She holds an MA in Media Studies from Concordia University, Montreal.

## **PRODUCER FILMOGRAPHY**

**Peter Pitseolak Time-Traveller** (dir. Katarina Soukup/Catbird Productions), documentary, in development

**Stravinsky in the Land of the Inuit** (dir. Félix Lajeunesse/Catbird Productions), documentary, in development

**WaveMakers** (dir. Caroline Martel/productions artifact), feature documentary, in production

**Umiq Skin Boat** (dir. Jobie Weetaluktuk/Catbird Productions), 2008, 31 min, documentary

**Kiviaq versus Canada** (dir. Zacharias Kunuk/Igloolik Isuma Productions), 2006, 46 min, documentary

**What Belongs to Inuit** (dir. Zacharias Kunuk & Bernadette Dean/Igloolik Isuma Productions), 2005, 49 min, documentary

**Urban Inuk** (dir. Jobie Weetaluktuk,/Igloolik Isuma Productions), 2005, 46 min, documentary

## **CREATIVE TEAM**

### **MARIE-CHRISTINE SARDA - EDITOR**

Marie-Christine Sarda has worked extensively as a freelance documentary editor, as well as working for the CBC, Radio Canada and the National Film Board. In 2001 she won (along with co-editors Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn) the **Genie for Achievement in Editing** for the feature film **Atanarjuat The Fast Runner**. In addition editing many of Isuma's productions since *Atanarjuat*, Sarda has also edited films by Magnus Issacson (**Hellbent for Justice**), Elisapie Isaac's debut documentary **If The Weather Permits** (Sundance Film Festival 2004) and Jobie Weetaluktuk's documentary films **Urban Inuk** (Grand Prix Rigoberta Community Award, Land In-Sights Festival 2006), and **Umiq Skin Boat** (Official Selection Hot Docs 2008).

## **CAROLINE OWEETALUKTUK – ADDITIONAL CAMERA**

Caroline Oweetaluktuk is director of photography for Kativik School Board Educational Videos, and also works on independent film projects. She lives in Inukjuak.

## **LINEAS KASUDLUAK – ADDITIONAL CAMERA/SOUND**

Lineas Kasudluak was one of the young filmmakers involved in the making of ***Inuuvunga: I am Inuk, I am Alive*** (2004), an innovative NFB documentary project in which eight Inuit teens document their final year at high school. Kasudluak learned the basics of filmmaking with filmmakers Daniel Cross and Mila Aung-Thwin, along with fellow first-time directors Bobby Echalook, Sarah Idlout, Laura Iqaluk, Willia Ningeok, Caroline Ningiuk, Dora Ohaituk and Rita-Lucy Ohaituk.

## **ÉRIC LEMOYNE - SOUND EDITOR**

Having been nominated for Canada's top television awards, the Gemini's, in both music and sound, Éric LeMoynes enjoys all aspects of sound postproduction. From doc soundtracks to feature scores, from Studio Morin Heights to his personal facility, Eric has worked with the best people in the business for 25 years. His credits for sound editing include ***Skin, Flesh & Bone*** about Carbone 14 (Gemini nominated arts/entertainment feature), ***Kiviaq versus Canada*** (documentary), and ***Apocalypse 10.5*** (Drama). As a composer, he has contributed to ***Faith & Fortune: The Reichmann Story*** (Gemini-nominated documentary), ***The Tree That Remembers*** (an award-winning documentary) and ***Double or Nothing: The Rise and Fall of Robert Campeau*** (Gemini-nominated feature documentary).

## **JEAN-FRANÇOIS CAISSY – ORIGINAL MUSIC**

Jean-François Caissy is a photographer, filmmaker and musician. He completed his studies in photography at the CEGEP de Matane in 1998, after which he participated in numerous group exhibitions and mounted the sound and photo installation ***Mon doux camping***. He has developed a career as a filmmaker in parallel to his work in photography, and his films have been presented at various festivals and galleries in Canada and abroad, notably at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Colima and the *Festival International du Film Francophone de Namur*. In 2003, he founded his own production company (Maria Films). Through Marie Films, he produced his first feature documentary ***La Saison des Amours*** (2005), which was screened at the *Rendez-Vous du Cinéma Québécois* and theatrically at the Cinéma Parallèle (Ex-centris) in Montreal. He composed the original music of two documentary films in 2007, and is currently in production on ***La belle visite***, his second feature documentary.

## **COMPLETE CREDITS**

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Catbird Productions  
presents

UMIAQ SKIN BOAT

a film by  
Jobie Weetaluktuk

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*Pukkik Cultural Group*

*Umiaq Builders*  
Daniel Inukpuk  
Daniel Oweetaluktuk Kasudluak  
Josephie Nalaturuk

*Skin Sewers*  
Elisapie Inukpuk  
Jeannie Inukpuk  
Nellie Nastapoka  
Lydia Elijassiapik  
Caroline Elijassiapik

*Helpers*  
Johnny Kasudluak  
Moses Nowkawalk  
Simon Makimak

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*Writer, Director*  
Jobie Weetaluktuk

*Producer*  
Katarina Soukup

*Camera*  
Jobie Weetaluktuk  
Caroline Oweetaluktuk  
Lineas Kasudluak

*Sound*  
Rita Lucy Ohaituk  
Lineas Kasudluak

*Editor*  
Marie-Christine Sarda

*Original Music*  
Jean-François Caissy

*Sound Edit*  
Éric LeMoyne

*Sound Mix*  
Jacques Comtois

*Post-Production Supervisor and On-line Editing*  
Alexandre Domingue

*Photographs*  
*Library and Archives Canada*

*Nakurmik (Thank You)*  
Pukkik Cultural Group of Inukjuak  
Avataq Cultural Institute  
Nancy Palliser Kalai  
Betsy Weetaluktuk

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PRODUCTIONS

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