

HANDMADE FILM • PROFILE

Reviving Traditions In Film

**EXPERIMENTAL FILMMAKER
LINDSAY MCINTYRE TAKES
THE TIME TO TRACE HER
INUK ROOTS ON FILM**

BY PIOTR GRELLA-MOZEJKO

Bloodline

Lindsay McIntyre is so intelligent, knowledgeable, outspoken and at the same time so modest, one cannot but feel immediate admiration, respect and amity for her.

She's received a number of fairly important honours for her work in experimental film, but she won't volunteer much about her accolades, just a terse statement: "That was then, and this is now. Awards are fine, but I'm not after those, I'm after making my work better."

From her, these words have more weight than if spoken by others. Born and raised in Edmonton, McIntyre is largely self-taught, but eventually earned her BFA from the U of A before enrolling in the MFA program in film production at Concordia University in Montréal. Being self-taught and achieving strong position among peers is not unheard of. Unlike the almost impossibly formalistic Europe, North America is still open to grassroots artistic innovation and many people still begin by looking at the actual work rather than a resume. For McIntyre, getting degrees is the icing on the cake, the official papers nice, but not necessary to have.

Known for her uncompromising work ethic, McIntyre's obsessive commitment to the highest artistic standards goes hand in hand with obstinate self-criticism.

"I've always needed to see my work done as best I can," McIntyre confesses. "This is why there've been long periods when I wouldn't show my films anywhere for a couple of years or more. I'd revisit them over



Local filmmaker Lindsay McIntyre's latest project traces her Inuk roots. | PHOTO SUPPLIED

and over again. I'd assemble and reassemble bits and pieces ... I just can't accept a work as finished when I have even a slightest doubt as to its quality."

One might say, in today's artistic world where vicious competition is becoming a norm, she's her own worst enemy. And her technique of choice, handmade film, doesn't help.

"I don't work in digital medium," McIntyre stresses forcefully, "because I like things analogue. To me, the quality of the materials informs the quality of the experience and there is nothing better than working with film. I don't work with computers much and because of that, everything takes longer. Digital editing is pretty much trouble-free, but with film, it's all done by hand. It's harder, but that's the way I like it."

Only with reluctance does McIntyre speak about a project, which is possibly her most important, most soul-searching to date: a study of her great grandmother's life.

"She was Inuk. Her name in Inuktitut was Kumatnaq. She arrived in Edmonton around 1936 with her

husband, an RCMP officer whom she had met up North, in Chesterfield Inlet. Although she lived past 90, there wasn't much I was able to learn of her. My project – I call it *Bloodline* – is a series of vignettes into the context of her life. Altogether, they are intended to result in a sort of imaginary portrait of this mysterious and remarkable woman, made through the memories of those who knew her and objects that still remain, a set of caribou teeth here, her ulus and some old photos there. Very little remains, which makes it a frustrating process. I'll always want to know more."

When creative push came to practical shove, McIntyre spent six months in the North, gathering information and filming right where the woman she wants to immortalize came from.

"It was all worth it," she says, "difficult, but worth it. What she must have gone through during her life was extraordinary, painful ... Her story needs to be told, but what I'm after is more of a personal sense of truth. I owe it to her."