



YUPIIT: EYE OF BOTH WORLDS

Directed by Stephanie Alton
Featuring- Byron Nicholai and Priscilla Jimmie

TRT: 29 mins
LANGUAGE: English, Yupik
CATAGORORY: For all ages

PRESS CONTACT

Raven's Eye Productions
Stephanie Alton steph.alton@gmail.com

LOGLINE

Alaskan Native Byron Nicholai, rapper-singer/songwriter engages a new generation by song; retelling traditional stories, and bonding young people to their heritage and values.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Filmed in his Native Alaskan village, rapper-singer/songwriter Byron Nicholia engages a new generation with his retelling of traditional tribal stories through the use of his music

and personal wisdom. To the young, he has become a source of bonding with the culture they were born into, and their heritage and values.

MEDIUM SYNOPSIS

In a remote village in Alaska, local singer/songwriter Byron Nicholai engages a new generation of Yupik natives using rap and beatboxing. Retelling traditional stories, he is helping young people forge a stronger connection to their cultural heritage and values, including music and dance, subsistence hunting and fishing, and protection of the environment. These life-sustaining lessons long passed down by the elders of the village, are now passed down by Nicholai.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker Stephanie Alton offers a breath-taking visual expression of these messages and stories, and reveals an intimate look into village life in remote Alaska, where tradition and modernity exist side by side. It is often this conflict of traditional ways and the modernity of the outside world that brings emotional conflict into the lives of many young who are struggling with hopelessness, and often take their own lives. Nicholai's music also addresses these problems of coping with such societal conflicts, using his inner wisdom and personal experiences to help the members of his audience through those troubling and emotional years.

Byron Nicholai, despite his youth, is wise beyond his years, and has in many ways, been an ambassador for his people, entertaining and meeting a number of leaders around the world. However, it is the modern means of communication that has introduced Byron to the world at large and to his avid fan base. It is via the Internet that he has become a superstar to those that have devotedly followed and look up to him during these times of change.

Yupiiit: Eye of Both Worlds

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DIRECTORS STATEMENT

Yupiiit: Eye of Both Worlds is a documentary about the Yupik people of Alaska, but shares a universal message. I first met the Yupiiit when I was working in the fishing industry in Alaska. Priscilla Jimmie, my roommate at the time, introduced me to her relatives from her village and I was welcomed into their culture. That was the beginning of a long lasting friendship.

While researching Toksook Bay, AK I became aware of Byron Nicholai and his incredible story. Byron was using YouTube to share his music with his friends. He was a sensation with the younger generation in Alaska and had a growing audience. I was impressed with his musical talent and the message he was passing down from his elders, through his singing and songwriting. He found a way to inspire his peers, with his inner wisdom and insight into the conflicts of being a youth at this time.

In Yupiit I wanted to show how tradition and the modern conveniences such as the cell phone have brought the outside world into the lives of its youth, and with this has come an emotional conflict and internal struggle. Living and teaching in an Alaskan Native village, I saw first-hand how life was changing in these close-knit communities, and the growing hopelessness among the youth.

The night before I was to arrive in Toksook Bay to shoot, I received a text message from the dance leader saying Byron's best friend (1st cousin) had committed suicide that night, and didn't know if it would be a good time for me to come to the village. I talked it over with Byron the next morning, he still wanted to go ahead with the filming. I arrived in Toksook Bay on my own and was met by a friend of a friend to show me around. That week the village was in mourning and it became part of the story which I never intended. I shot the film over nine days, I used a Canon 5 Mark D III and a gimble to shoot my footage. I had a couple of people from the village to help with sound recording, it was a bare bones production crew. Everyone wanted to help out, and made sure I was taken care of and had plenty to eat!

It's my hope that in sharing this tribes story, it will bring greater understanding to the Alaskan youth but also to those of us living outside the Alaskan Native villages. And that we can build a better understanding of people that are different from ourselves and give the youth a greater level of awareness, compassion and empathy.

DIRECTORS BIO



Stephanie Alton was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, but for a number of years has resided in Montana. She received her MFA from Pratt Institute. She also studied film at New York University. Alton's work is in the State of Alaska Permanent Collection. Her documentary "Ridin' for the Brand" is distributed by Dark Hollow Films and has been shown on PBS. She is an award winning filmmaker and her films have been at numerous film festivals.

SUBJECT BIOS



Byron Nicholai (Yup'ik) of Toksook Bay, Alaska learned traditional Yup'ik drumming at the age of 12 and then became a YouTube sensation with thousands of followers who liked his "I Sing, You Dance" fan page. Byron Nicholai is a musician and dancer from the Yup'ik community in Alaska. His music blends his indigenous Yup'ik language with modern tools such as hip-hop beats and social media. Byron, who has been called the "Justin Bieber of Alaska," has performed for United States Secretary of State John Kerry and President Obama in Washington D.C. at the Arctic Council United States Chairmanship. In 2015 he released his first album, "I Am Yupik". The album was a best seller in world music for New Zealand and Australia on Amazon Music. He was also the subject in ESPN 2016 documentary short "I am Yupik" that was shown at Sundance Film Festival. His style has evolved into Yupik rap, hip hop, and R&B. He released the EP's "Still Here" in 2019 and "Assirtua (I'm Good)" in 2020. His awards include 2014 Alaska Federation of Natives President's Award. In 2015, Nicholai was awarded an Alaskan Spirit of Youth Award.



Priscilla Jimmie grew up in Nunakauiaq (Toksook Bay) in Western Alaska, a village in Qaluyaq (Nelson Island)

near the Bering Sea. The Yup'ik traditional values that were taught to her growing up have always been very important to her and her family. Priscilla keeps that tradition alive by subsisting and gathering food from our land and the sea. She believes in teaching Yup'ik values to the younger generation so they in return can teach their children the importance of their culture.

FILMMAKER BIOS

Director, Writer, Producer and Camera: Stephanie Alton

Stephanie Alton was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, but for a number of years has resided in Montana. She received her MFA from Pratt Institute. She also studied film at New York University. Alton's work is in the State of Alaska Permanent Collection. Her documentary "Ridin' for the Brand" is distributed by Dark Hollow Films and has been shown on PBS. She is an award-winning filmmaker and her films have been at numerous film festivals.

Executive Producer: Priscilla Jimmie

Priscilla Jimmie grew up in Nunakauiaq (Toksook Bay) in Western Alaska, a village in Qaluyaq (Nelson Island) near the Bering Sea. The Yup'ik traditional values that were taught to her growing up have always been very important to her and her family. Priscilla keeps that tradition alive by subsisting and gathering food from our land and the sea. She believes in teaching Yup'ik values to the younger generation so they in return can teach their children the importance of their culture.



Editing Consultant: Bea Geller

Bea Geller is a digital media artist, photographer, and educator. She is a creative consultant and has mentored film, photography, and painting artists. Currently, Bea is the owner of Rebeca Rocket Studi-O, where she sells fine art and exhibition prints. Geller has exhibited in over seventy national and international juried exhibits, forty invitationals, and published in several art catalogs. Her artwork is in the collection of the George Eastman House, Pierce County Portable Public Arts, Tacoma, WA, Pacific Lutheran University, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Museum of Modern Art in New York. Her awards include the Oregon State Arts Commission public art Award CAP's (Creative Artist Project) Award in New Jersey and is an alumna of Weir Farm artist

residency and Pen and Brush Club in Manhattan. Her earliest recognition was to have collaborated on a "Birth Film" shown at the Whitney Museum in New York City. During the past 35 years, she has been an associate professor of Photography and digital imaging at Pacific Lutheran University. She has also taught Photography and film at Stockton State College in New Jersey, Mercy College in the Bronx, and Wagner College in Staten Island, New York.



Editing and Story Consultant: Pam Roberts

Pamela Roberts over the past 26 years Roberts has produced and directed award-winning documentary films and videos for public television and national and international theatrical distribution. These include "Butte: America", "Backbone of the World: The Blackfeet", "Ishi, the Last Yahi", a one-hour documentary nominated for an Emmy Award by the National Academy of Television Arts Sciences, and broadcast nationally on American Experience; and "Contrary Warriors: A Story of the Crow Tribe", nationally broadcast on A&E and PBS and winner of the John Grierson Award for Best Film for First Time Director.



Executive Producer and Technical Supervisor: Cyrus

Smith Cyrus Smith when not working with Stephanie Alton on documentaries, is Montana PBS's Chief engineer. Cyrus is involved with Station Transmitters, Microwave links, and

Remote integration production projects for ESPN+. Cyrus has worked in the defense industry as a software/systems engineer during the 80's but in the 90's moved to Pasadena to work in the emerging computer graphics industry for a software company, Electric Image that develop a rendering application for film and video. Electric Image has been used in many films including Star Wars Episode 1, T2, MIB and many others. He also was involved with software that supported onscreen graphics for film that included pictures like Congo, Twister and Dante's Peak.

Awards, Distinctions, Filmography

Yupit: Eye of Both Worlds Short Documentary

" You created a really beautiful, poetic and authentic film. I love all the characters, the dancing, music and the of the Raven. It's awesome." – Former NBC producer Lloyd Fales

Santa Fe Film Festival 2022: Best Short Documentary

Dreamz Catcher International Film Festival 2022: Best Documentary

The IndieFest Film Awards 2021: Best Native American Film

Western Canadian International Film Festival 2022: Best Original Music

Red Dirt Film Festival 2022: Official Selection

Video Art and Experimental Film Festival 2021: Official Selection

Anchorage International Film Festival 2021: Official Selection

American Indian Film Festival 2021: Official Selection

Ridin' for the Brand Documentary

PBS Montana 2014-present.

Phillips Exeter Academy New Hampshire 2014.

PBS Montana 2014-16.

Livingston Film Festival Shane Center Livingston, MT 2014.

Myrna Loy Theater Helena, MT Oct. 2013 and May 2014

Emerson Theater Bozeman, MT 2014.

Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering Elko, NV 2014.

Choteau Community Center, Choteau, MT 2014.

Big Timber Theater, Big Timber, MT 2013.

Raven's Flight Short Film

Culture Unplugged www.cultureunplugged Maharashtra, India, Menlo Park, CA, Auckland, New Zealand 2001.

Woodstock Film Festival, 2001.

Anchorage Film Festival, 2001.

Denver International Film Festival, 2001.

Festival Arcipelago, Rome, Italy 2001.

Tresses En Vues "Land Insights", Quebec, Canada 2001.

Martha's Vineyard Film Festival, MA 2001.

Earth Day Celebration, San Fran., Vancouver, Mexico, City, Los Angeles, Madrid 2001.

Florida Seminole Film Festival, 2000.
Santa Fe Film Festival, 2000.
New York Native American Film Festival, 2000.
Global Visions Film Festival, 2000.

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Raven's Eye Productions

Raven's Eye Productions is a Bozeman, MT based production company founded by director and producer Stephanie Alton. We make films that are character-driven and about the diversities in all walks of life and cultural differences. Their work addresses retelling narratives anew to enhance and broaden understanding among communities and cultures.

FILM CREDITS

directed and produced by **Stephanie Alton**

music by **Byron Nicholai**

executive producer **Priscilla Jimmie**

editor **Stephanie Alton**

editing consultant **Bea Geller**

story consultant and editing consultant **Pam Roberts**

director of photography **Stephanie Alton**

written by **Stephanie Alton • Sharon Hansen**

technical consultant and executive producer **Cyrus Smith**

sound and boom operators **Priscilla Jimmie • Andrea John**

production assistants Tracey Fairbanks • Priscilla Jimmie • Andrea John

translator Piiyuuk Qungurkaq-Shields

appearances Joe Asuluk • Joe Felix • Priscilla Jimmie • Byron Nicholai • Stanley Shields

dancers Raymond Chanar • Logan Charles • Nolan Charles • Teddy Charles • Wilton Charles • Faith Charlie • Nicole Charlie • Tracy Fairbanks • Beatrice Friday • Catherine John • Priscilla Julius • Brennan Lincoln • Catherine Lincoln • Alaina Mute • Jason Nelson • Byron Nicholai • Mark Pitka • Serena Simons

special thanks Cathy John • Tom Gorai • Dianne Hammer • Ruth Jimmie • Linda Washington • Maria Alirkar • Joe Asuluk • Pauline Asuluk • Nellie Jimmie • Teressa John • Sean Jimmie

special thanks Nunakauyak Traditional Council • Nelson Island School • Village of Toksook Bay, Alaska.

promotional writer Dianne Hammer

stock footage Archive.org • Census.gov • Film Connections • Pond 5 • Shutter Stock • Story Block

film “Nanook of the North” film by Robert J. Flaherty 1922`

author “There There” Tommy Orange 2019

thanks The Conference on Global Leadership in the Arctic • The White House Tribal Nations Conference • KTOO Public Media Alaska • National Public Radio • Vigdis Finnbogadottir Institute of Foreign Language • United States Arctic Youth Ambassador Conference • YouTube • The Associated Press • Arctic Circle Assembly Chairmanship • U.S. Embassy in Iceland • KYUK Public Media Alaska Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta • Toronto Star Newspaper • The Conference on Global Leadership in the Arctic • KDLG Public Radio for Alaska’s Bristol Bay • Mat-Su Valley Alaska Frontiersman • Indianz.com (News outlet) • Voice of Strength Inuit Circumpolar Council – Canada

thank you to everyone that appeared in the film

