

British Columbia

Andrea Fatona

THE WEST COAST has witnessed an emergence of many First Nations filmmakers and filmmakers of colour over the past few years, working in a range of styles and with a variety of approaches to the question of identity. Issues of funding and access to media institutions remain at the forefront of the discussions, often as important as the production of images themselves.

Several artist-run centres and institutions have moved to reflect a broader range of Canada's cultural make-up, beginning by putting racial and gender equity programs in place. Video In's First Nations Access Program and Racial Equity Video Access Media Project are two of the more successful models. Other programs include the National Film Board Pacific Centre's Women's Equity Program, which assists in both skills acquisition (through an apprenticeship program) and financial awards for projects.

The general critique from media artists here concerns the profound lack of programs to enable an artist to see a project through from concept to completion. In addition, mentoring programs are needed. In Visible Colours, an organization for women of colour and Aboriginal women founded in 1989, is responding to the need to develop grant writing skills.

Filmmaker Mina Shum is set to direct her first feature, *Double Happiness*, funded by Telefilm, B.C. Film and the National Film Board. First-time filmmaker Karin Lee is completing *My Sweet Peony*, experimental filmmaker Dana Claxton is in post-production, and Selina Williams

(*Colour Corrected*) will have a new film ready by summer.

Again, I must stress the continuing difficulties in gaining access to the means of production and in getting the work out to the viewer. However, the level of optimism is growing, and with the increase in films by people of colour and First Nations people has also come a decrease in gender disparity.

Prairies

Marjorie Beaucage

THE ABORIGINAL Film and Video Art Alliance has just completed production on six public service announcements about self-government. The package is scheduled to be released at the Banff Television Festival this June. Three emerging directors (Angie Campbell, Ruby Marie Dennis and Joane Cardinal-Schubert) and senior director Gary Farmer, were able to put their vision forward through this project in partnership with the Banff Centre for the Arts.

Independent production remains a struggle for Aboriginal people. Still, new artists have found access to the



From Sea to

Angirag, from the series Nunavut, produced by ZACHARIAS KUNUK and NORMAN COHEN



tools of production at Shaw Cable. In Saskatoon, Dennis Jackson, Virgil Awasis, Vern Checkosis and Curtis Carter have created an Aboriginal Youth Show. The Calgary Native News group has also started a weekly current affairs show on cable tv.

Another home for Aboriginal production on the Prairies is the NFB's Studio One. Carol Geddes is completing her film on George Johnson, a Tlingit photographer who documented the life of his people in the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Marilyn Dumont of Edmonton is completing *Mary's Story*, about her mother from 1930-50. Doug Cuthand is completing a documentary on the Elders' Gathering in Waden Bay (in northern Saskatchewan). Evelyn Kennedy from Manitoba is beginning a documentary on Aboriginal sovereignty, and Robert Houle is "curating a film" called *Dangerous Visions*, asking Aboriginal artists to reflect on the problems of modern society. Also at

Studio One, Loretta Todd's *Native War Veterans* is scheduled for a June release.

Another recent spark for the Prairies is independent filmmaker Maria Campbell, who has just finished her screenplay entitled *Halfbreed*. This may be the first feature drama by an Aboriginal director. And ex-

pect films this year from Winston Moxam (*The Barbecue*), a Black Canadian director based in Winnipeg, as well as Edmonton-based Selwyn Jacob (*Home At Last*), who is making a film about the building of the first mosque in North America – Edmonton's own Al Rashid mosque.

Northwest Territories

Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohen

THERE ARE MANY highly trained Inuit filmmakers and television producers who are actively breaking new ground. People like Elisapi Davidee, Blandina Makkik and Paul Apak have all been important to the development of Inuit production. But Elisapi is now working for CBC Radio North, and Blandina, who pioneered Inuktitut-language children's programming, is now working for an Ottawa-based political organization. Of the three, only Paul Apak is currently working at the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), as an executive producer at the Igloolik Centre.

As for us, we call ourselves refugees from the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, which we feel is not evolving from its non-Inuit management system (the headquarters are still in Ottawa) to an organization that is self-governed by Inuit peoples. Outside of the IBC, there are few opportunities, so this update comes from our perspective as the only

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACHARIAS KUNUK

Sea to Sea