

REVOLUTION MOOSEHIDE

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Abstract

Revolution Moosehide is a 47-minute documentary that follows Melaw Nakehko, a Dene moosehide tanner, activist, artist and actor, from the Northwest Territories. Nakehko's is an extraordinary journey of cultural resurgence and revitalization, as she learns the practice of moosehide tanning from Dene Elders across the Northwest Territories. Joined by several young women, the process of learning and practicing moosehide tanning leads to deeper realizations about Dene community, culture and identity, while also intersecting with an emergent wave of political action erupting from Indigenous movements across Turtle Island, otherwise known as Canada. This documentary and thesis situates Melaw's story within an era of responsive Indigenous activism, contextualized in a lineage which follows the Idle No More movement. I argue this is an era rooted in the important of forming grassroots organizations focused on leadership and rooted in cultural identity, with a political imperative to build vital visions of stable futures for and by Indigenous communities in Northern Canada.

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I would like to above all acknowledge all the efforts of all hide tanners revitalizing this essential practice, reflective of the beauty and strength in your nations.

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Introduction

Revolution Moosehide is a documentary film inspired from the 10 years I lived and worked in the Northwest Territories (NWT). I am of settler origin, originally from Ontario and of familial European ancestry. I moved to the NWT in 2005 because of personal curiosity and professional motivations. I stayed because I came to enjoy the sense of community I found and its connections to my shared sense of values. I began my career in the NWT as a biologist, an analyst and researcher, prior to becoming a filmmaker and working in the film and television industry. *Revolution Moosehide* draws inspiration from the activism that came to unfold around me as I lived and worked in the NWT, and the relationship I had to the territory and to *Denendeh* – translated to “the land of people” from Dene. While I was living in the NWT, I worked with many Dene communities who were undertaking conversations around the revitalization and resurgence of Dene cultural practices – conversations that continue today.

Melaw Nakehk’o had become a good friend of mine and had explained to me that in Dene culture, the newly created earth was made beautiful by a moosehide. Melaw had become interested in learning how to tan moosehides, a skill she lamented not learning from her grandmothers. *Revolution Moosehide* is the documentary project that ensued from her journey of learning about the process of moosehide tanning. It is a process that took her and several other women across the NWT, learning how to tan hides from various Elders, and eventually leading to the understanding of broader connective themes of decolonization from their work.

My central goal in making *Revolution Moosehide* was to make a documentary that disrupts the traditional power dynamic between the filmmaker and subject. The film presents circumstances where the main subject of a documentary and director collaborate on the presentation of story, to attempt re-write the traditional power imbalance, resulting in a stronger

and more intimate documentary that benefits each collaborator. Another core value behind the creation of this film was to explore a creation process that could bolster a possibility for greater Indigenous representational sovereignty. With *Revolution Moosehide* I also explore how settlers and non-Indigenous people can work respectfully within the Indigenous film landscape. To do this, I examine the existing sets of ethical guidelines that this project follows, consulting guidelines primarily issued by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the ImagineNATIVE Film and Media Festival. I focus and comment upon the best practices and circumstances for working with Indigenous people and communities on film and media projects issued in these guidelines. These include frameworks and protocols primarily revolving around respect, communication, consent, control, integrity and reciprocity. This project contributes to a growing concern within the Canadian film and media landscape regarding the question of who has the right to tell Indigenous stories, and how are they told.



Image 1. 'Moosehide Tanners Against Fascism' protest in Samba K'e, featuring *Golo Dheh* participants - Back; Melaw Nakehk'o, Tania Larsson, Jasmine Netsena, Lesley Johnson, Front; Helen Kotchea, Mandee McDonald, Maggie Jumbo, Julia McIntyre. Photo credit to Lesley Johnson and Exhea Nakehk'o.

Project Background Summary

I began filming content for what would eventually become *Revolution Moosehide* while I was living in the NWT. The project began in 2012 when Melaw Nakehk'oo sought Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) funding to learn the process of moosehide tanning from Elders in her home region, the Dehcho, in the NWT. Melaw was interested in having the process documented and asked me if I would be interested in recording it. She was awarded a CCA grant and I subsequently obtained funding through the NWT Arts Council to record the process. She decided to go to Sambaa K'e, a small Dene community, to work with Elder Maggie Jumbo for two weeks. A few other Indigenous women from her friend group joined the project, who were interested in learning, and they would eventually become other characters in the documentary: Mandee McDonald, who is Swampy Cree and Norwegian, living in Yellowknife, Tania Larsson who is Gwich'in and Swedish, living in Yellowknife, as well as two other participants, Jasmine Netsena who is Dene and Thaltan and living on the Fort Nelson First Nation, and Julia McIntyre who is Irish and Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw and was living in Yellowknife during that time. I accompanied them to film the "Moosehide Project" or the "Golo Dheh project" in Dene. *Golo dheh* translates into *moosehide tanning*. Melaw initially envisioned the filming process would be potentially important for future educational purposes for Dene youth and community members.

While we were in Sambaa K'e I recorded the moosehide tanning process and captured activist interventions by the moosehide tanners, as evidenced in Image 1., in the "Moosehide Tanners Against Fascism" protest. These actions were inspired by the "Black Out Speak Out" protests happening in other parts of Canada in the summer of 2012, in response to the Harper government's omnibus Bill C-38, a controversial budget bill that made changes to environmental laws, including the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the Navigable Waters Act,

which was considered to have overreached the boundaries of a typical budget bill.¹ When we returned from Smbaa K'e, Melaw continued her project in several other communities across the NWT and I joined her, continuing to film the bulk of the moosehide tanning process. As I began thinking about how to approach this material, I saw that all the women in the original project were continuing to think, not only about the hide tanning, but about the very process of political activism. They were forming a collective and speaking amongst like-minded friends and colleagues about their own rights as Indigenous people. These conversations turned into the formation of a group, who would be instrumental in organizing and supporting Idle No More protests across the NWT, in the winter of 2012 into 2013, and later an Indigenous activist and leadership collective, Dene Nahjo, focused on the resurgence of Dene land-based practices and rights.² In the North, Indigenous rights and land-based issues are at the core of many disputes with the Canadian and Territorial governments, which will be further explained in the next section.

¹ Olszynski, Martin. "Bill C-69's Detractors Can Blame Harper's Omnibus." University of Calgary Faculty of Law, *Alberta Law Blog*, September 25, 2018. http://ablawg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Blog_MO_Bill_C_69_Sept2018.pdf

² Rendell, Mark. "Dene Nahjo: After Idle No More." *Edge North*, November 14, 2014. <https://edgenorth.ca/article/dene-nahjo-after-idle-no-more>

Northwest Territories and Dene Activism; A Historic Context

It is important to situate the film geographically and historically to understand how the regional context influenced the story. The Indigenous inhabitants of the territory are mainly Dene, Inuvialuit, Métis, and the Northwest Territories is one of two jurisdictions in Canada where Indigenous people constitute the majority population at 52%, the other is Nunavut.³ Indigenous juridical sovereignty in the NWT is evidenced in resource co-management regimes, land-claim settlement regions and Indigenous self-governments, currently represented or under negotiation.

Revolution Moosehide was primarily shot on Treaty 8 and 11 territory, within the area known as Denendeh, a term that refers to traditional Dene territory within the NWT. The communities visited in the film were primarily in the Dehcho region and Akaitcho regions, straddling the southern part of the territory. Melaw's home community is in Fort Simpson (Lidlii Kue First Nation), on the west side of the territory, bordering the Dehcho (Mackenzie River) and the Mackenzie Mountains. Geography and Dene place names are important to the film, as they reflect the importance of Dene heritage, decolonizing processes and the reclaiming of cultural spaces in regionally specific contexts. I came to know many of the communities across the NWT and their struggles to be recognized by their own terms, geographic boundaries, languages, culture, and self-determined governing principles. For example, the 'Dehcho' is a Dene word that translated into English means 'big river' or river of great significance. It refers to the river, and the region within the southern NWT traditionally inhabited by the Dehcho Dene. Through

³ Statistics Canada. "Aboriginal Peoples: Fact Sheet for the Northwest Territories". March 29, 2016. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-656-x/89-656-x2016013-eng.htm>

Dehcho Dene philosophy and worldview, a river, a land and a people share a name, and this name-sharing process connects people to the land and to their environments.

The newly invigorated activism undertaken by the participants of *Revolution Moosehide* has a longstanding precedence in the NWT, where a rich tradition of Indigenous activism has existed in response to waves of colonial forces faced by the Dene since first contact. Settlers began to inhabit the area now known as the NWT in the late 1800s, coming first for the fur trade, and settling more permanently in the region from the discovery of precious metals, minerals, oil and gas.⁴ Prior to the creation of Nunavut in 1999, the NWT covered an area of 3,439,296 km². The area within the Northwest Territories was covered under Treaties 8 and 11, which were signed with the Dene, respectively 1899 and 1921.⁵ The Dene have disputed the intention of the Treaty, arguing the real intent of the Treaty was one of “peace and friendship,” sharing land and resources, not of extinguishment to land and rights. The dispute over the meaning of the Treaties has fostered grievances over land and sovereignty, exacerbated in the 1960s by the threat of industrial scale natural gas development on Dene and Inuvialuit lands, with the proposed Mackenzie Gas Pipeline.

In 1969, sixteen Chiefs from Dene communities across the Territory joined together to form the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT, to protect the rights of the Dene.⁶ They stood in opposition to Trudeau’s 1969 White Paper, a policy document which relinquished the Federal government of its historic responsibilities and constitutional duties to Indigenous people by abolishing the Indian Act, widely seen as an assimilation tactic by the government. The Indian

⁴ Wonders, William C., "Northwest Territories". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada. May 18, 2011; last modified January 21, 2019.

⁵ Dene Nation, “History”. 2018. <https://denenation.com/about/history/>

⁶ Ibid.

Brotherhood of the NWT joined with other Indigenous organizations and bands in opposition to The White Paper, forcing Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to withdraw it in 1970. The Brotherhood continued to pressure the Canadian government to execute the original legal intentions of Treaties, leading to a review of the case by Justice W.G. Morrow. He determined the 1973 *Paulette* caveat, legally declaring the Dene to hold sovereign rights over their land and resources.⁷ Their work sought clarity around which bodies of government had rights to make decisions regarding industrial development on Dene lands, and who benefited from their use. In 1976, the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT released the *Dene Declaration and Manifesto* (see Appendix A), a historic document that declared Dene Nationhood and sovereignty, demanding Indigenous self-government in the Mackenzie Valley. Harshly dismissed by the government at the time, the document was a rallying cry for the Dene, and is considered a strong moment of unity that changed the course of history Indigenous Canadian history. The Indian Brotherhood of the NWT was instrumental in challenging the Canadian government's plan to allow the construction of Mackenzie Gas Pipeline, proposed to carry natural gas through the Mackenzie Valley to markets in Canada and the United States. The proposed pipeline route would have traversed through the heart of the territories where the Dene and Inuvialuit were asserting claims to their traditional lands. The pressure over land claims lead to the Berger Inquiry, held by Justice Thomas Berger, a unique consultation process with potentially impacted communities within the Mackenzie Valley, in 1976. In his final report, *Northern Frontier Northern Homeland; The Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry*, Berger concluded that a

⁷ *Paulette et al. v. The Queen*, Supreme Court of Canada. 1977, 2 S.C.R. 628. 1976-12-20.

moratorium of ten years be imposed on the construction of the pipeline to allow for settlement of Indigenous land claims.⁸ This was regarded as a major victory for the Dene and Inuvialuit.

In 1978, the Indian Brotherhood changed its name to the Dene Nation. The Dene began to negotiate a comprehensive land claim in 1981, which eventually split into regional areas, including the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, the Sahtu Dene and Métis, Dehcho, Tlicho and Akaitcho regions. Today the Dene Nation is active in lobbying and supporting the negotiation process on self-government issues. The history of the Indian Brotherhood and the Dene Nation shows the strong historic context for activism in Denendeh which has influenced a new generation of Indigenous youth activists. This historic context is important because these events were driven by young Dene who were being advised by Elders who had a direct connection to the land. Many of the children and relations of members of the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT, were the driving force behind the activism that precipitated the Idle No More movement in Denendeh. For example, Melaw's father Jim Antoine, was a member of the Indian Brotherhood and is a well known and respected, activist, Chief and politician.

⁸ Berger, Thomas R. "Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland : The Report of Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry" J. Lorimer in association with Pub. Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1977. p. 45

The Legacy of Residential School

The legacy of the residential school system in Canada has impacted the trajectory of contemporary Indigenous activism and was an important factor in the motivation behind the participants of the *Golo Dheh* project. Residential Schools were government sponsored religious schools established across Canada in the 1880s, to educate and forcibly assimilate Indigenous children into Christian Euro-Canadian society. The schools forcibly stripped Indigenous children from their language and culture. Indigenous parents were obligated to send their children to Residential School, or they faced legal repercussions or forcible removal of children via Indian Agents.⁹ Since the closure of the last school, the Gordon Indian Residential School in 1996 in Saskatchewan, former students and the families of former students have pressured the Canadian government to acknowledge and provide restitution for Residential School survivors for the devastating impact it on Indigenous people and cultures. In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), with the intention to document the history and lasting impacts of Residential Schools on survivors and their families.¹⁰ The TRC terminated public consultations with the publication of its final report in 2015. In the conclusion of its 2016 Report, the TRC declares Residential Schools as “cultural genocide”.¹¹ Residential Schools have had a multigenerational effect on families and communities, and their legacy has contributed to ongoing colonialism in Canada.

⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.60.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 130.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 55.

The legacy from the schools and the political and legal policies and mechanisms surrounding their history continue to this day. This is reflected in the significant educational, income, health, and social disparities between Aboriginal people and other Canadians. It is reflected in the intense racism some people harbour against Aboriginal people and in the systemic and other forms of discrimination Aboriginal people regularly experience in this country. It is reflected too in the critically endangered status of most Aboriginal languages.¹²

In the NWT, missionaries were part of the first colonial settlements in 1858. They took part in expansionist efforts into the territories, supported by the Hudson's Bay Company of Canada (HBC). These early religious institutions established themselves as precursors to Residential Schools. The NWT's first Residential School, Fort Resolution Indian Residential School, was established in 1867 in Fort Resolution, while the last to close down was Akaitcho Hall in Yellowknife, in 1996. The legacy of residential school in the NWT has rippled through generations, causing a divide. There are Elders who speak Indigenous languages and practice their traditional culture, who hold a very different cultural history than the generation of Residential School survivors who were forcibly severed from their connection with the land, culture, and language. There is now a generation of northern Indigenous youth who are now coming to terms with the struggles of the generations before them, attempting to reconnect to culture. As Melaw explained to me in 2016, moosehide tanning has impacted her relationship to knowing her culture more intimately:

¹² Ibid, p.135.

Well, at the very beginning I didn't think about the effects of colonialism and residential school on the moosehide tanning practice. It was just like, nobody in my family knows how to do this and I need people to teach me. And the amount of time it takes to go through an entire process, it's a lot to ask of somebody. So, I'm really fortunate there are so many rad Dene ladies around to teach me things when I ask. It was a few years after I started tanning moosehides that there was this similar story coming from other people talking about wanting to tan hides, but, 'nobody in my family knows how to hides – where do I go to learn this?'. And, I was like, this is a similar thing happening with other people my age, not having anybody in their family that knows how to do this. So, there's this whole generational gap in Denendeh, I think it was my parents' generation that went to residential school and the generation before that wasn't affected, through that generational gap of traditional knowledge not being passed down.¹³

Much of the action and activism in *Revolution Moosehide* is a direct response to learning cultural traditions and practices taken away as a result of Residential School. Each of the participants has been impacted by the intergenerational trauma of residential school, and moosehide tanning has become an important act of cultural reclamation, decolonization and part of a conscious effort of resurgence and revitalization.

¹³ Nakehk'o, Melaw. Interview by Lesley Johnson. Personal interview. Yellowknife, September 1, 2016.

Contemporary Indigenous Activism

As I situated the implications of the *Golo Dheh* project within a context of Indigenous political activism, I came to realize a new direction for the documentary, centred on Melaw's personal story. I began to think of the film as a potential personal narrative journey-film, rooted in Melaw's learning of land-based Dene practices tied inherently with larger trends in ongoing contemporary grassroots Indigenous activism. Through the conversations with the women of the *Golo Dheh* project, I learned how moosehide tanning had greater cultural meaning than simply learning a traditional process – it was an act that connected community members, Elders and hunters together with the land.¹⁴ Moosehide tanning became a motivating force for the participants to strengthen friendships, relationships to their communities and to establish to a deeper sense of identity and self-acceptance. In 2012, Mandee reflected upon how her experience with moosehide tanning had led her to deeper understandings of resurgence and revitalization.

You read things by Indigenous scholars and they're talking about decolonization and self-determination and cultural revitalization, and you read it and you're like, their arguments are towards our relationship with the land being re-strengthened. In order to do this, you read, you get the thesis statement out of it, you write it down on a paper, but you don't really get it, it's experiential. So that's what I feel like being here on the land and learning to tan moosehides, and learning some of the underlying lessons about moosehide tanning, and all these things that I'm starting to get at: what it means to reconnect to the land and re-strengthen my own relationship to the land. That has implications for how we think about revitalizing traditional models of governance and stuff like that. I'm actually starting to feel these connections happening here and my own understanding of what alternative governance models might look like.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ McDonald, Mandee. Interview by Lesley Johnson. Personal Interview. Samba K'e, 2012.

Tanning hides had become an influential part of the lives of each of the participants, which I made into a central focus of the film. The narrative arcs of the three central characters reflects their connections with moosehide tanning: Melaw continued to learn from Elders and community members to become a proficient instructor of moosehide tanning; Mandee incorporated the implications of learning moosehide tanning into her academic studies the University of Victoria's Indigenous Governance MFA program; and Tania used it as the basis of her jewelry and art practice at the Institute for American Indian Arts.

The participants and the themes of *Revolution Moosehide* live firmly within the efforts of Indigenous cultural revitalization and resurgence, rooted in the practices and traditions of Dene communities in the NWT. These efforts connected them to a growing movement of contemporary Indigenous activism that spread across Canada and the global Indigenous community in the Idle No More movement, largely driven by Indigenous youth. The new wave is shaped by demographic factors influencing the Indigenous community, as out of 1.7 million people in Canada who identify as Indigenous, almost half are under the age of 25.¹⁶ Led by women, Indigenous youth are seeking education in higher numbers, experiencing higher levels of income, and are recognizing and responding to the ongoing colonial injustices suffered in their communities.¹⁷

As evidenced in the recent example of the Idle No More movement, young, Indigenous women have been significant drivers behind contemporary activism and protest movements, a phenomenon documented in *Revolution Moosehide*. Idle No More is a protest movement originally founded in Saskatchewan by four women, three Indigenous women and one non-

¹⁶ Statistics Canada. "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit", July 25, 2018. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

¹⁷ Friesen, Joe. "What's behind the explosion of native activism? Young people" *Globe and Mail*, January 28, 2013.

Indigenous ally. Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Sheelah McLean, Nina Wilson formed the group in reaction to a number of omnibus bills including Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, put forward by the Harper conservative government in 2012.¹⁸ The bills stripped environmental protection from forests and waterways without Indigenous community consultation, posing a threat to Indigenous and Treaty rights. The women held a teach-in in Saskatoon entitled “Idle No More.” It was an action that catalyzed a series of rallies and protests to coincide with protests in other communities across Canada on December 10th, 2012, also known as Amnesty International’s Human Rights Day.

Following these grassroots efforts, Idle No More went on to become one of the largest Indigenous protest movements in Canadian history and the impetus for hundreds of Indigenous-led protests and rallies across Canada. During December 2012 and January 2013, protests took place all across Canada. Activists employed tactics such as flash mobs, round dances, blockades, teach-ins, sit-ins, round-dances, rallies and pickets. The protests were held in public places such as shopping malls, city squares, and were used to block streets, bridges, border crossings, rail lines, and multiple border crossings. Idle No More came to national attention during the hunger strike of Theresa Spence, Attawapiskat’s First Nation former chief. From December 2012-January 2013, Spence resided in a tipi on Victoria Island with other protestors, calling attention to concerns over the Harper government omnibus bills and the housing crisis in her community of Attawapiskat. While Idle No More began as a protest movement responding to the lack of consultations within the omnibus budget bill, it eventually evolved into a rallying call for a broader examination of Indigenous rights in Canada. It succeeded in bringing together

¹⁸ Caven, Febna. “Being Idle No More: The Women Behind the Movement” *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine*, March, 2013.

organizers, protestors and activists, and sparking a new wave of connectivity amongst Indigenous communities across Canada.

As documented in *Revolution Moosehide*, Idle No More protests in the NWT were driven by the participants of the *Golo Dheh* project, along with a group of their friends and colleagues. In early December 2012, Melaw and a small protest group of Indigenous activists and allies heard of the country-wide protests through social media. They decided to stage a protest in communities throughout Denendeh. One small protest in Yellowknife snowballed into several larger protests, shutting down the Dehcho bridge at Fort Providence and a main intersection on Franklin Avenue in downtown Yellowknife.

In the years following Idle No More, the goals of movement have continued forward through community-based grassroots movements, focused on environmental justice and Indigenous rights issues. In the third act of *Revolution Moosehide*, for example, we see the formation of the Dene Nahjo, populated by many of the same people involved in organizing the Idle No More protests. Dene Nahjo was founded by Melaw Nakehk'ó, Tania Larsson, Mandee McDonald, Deneze Nakehk'ó, Heather Nakehk'ó, Amos Scott, Kyla Kakfwi Scott, Nina Larsson, Eugene Boulanger and Daniel T'seleie. The organization provides learning opportunities for cultural practices such as hide tanning and tool making, organizes leadership workshops forums, Indigenous women's initiatives, engages in research and lobbies for advancement in Indigenous-centred arctic policy. The core values of the organization recognize the connection between land, language and culture, while promoting activities that support their mission to "advance social and environmental justice for northern peoples while promoting Indigenous leadership by fostering emerging leaders."¹⁹ Other Indigenous grassroots youth

¹⁹ Dene Nahjo. "What we stand for". Accessed November 21, 2018. <https://www.denenahjo.com/>

leadership organizations across Canada and in the North have also proliferated since the Idle No More movement. In Nunavut, for example, a group of young Inuit leaders have founded the Qanak collective, prioritizing families and community empowerment.²⁰ In the Yukon, the Our Voices Collective focuses on inspiring youth to engage with culture. These groups centre Indigenous voices, foster leadership opportunities, and are instrumental in creating opportunities for cultural practices to flourish.

²⁰ Qanak. “Qanak manifesto”. Accessed November 21, 2018. <http://qanak.com/>

Moosehide Tanning, Resurgence and Identity

*“I am thinking of young moose-hide tanners in Denendeh whose work might start out as individual everyday acts of resurgence but then grow as they connect with hunters, expert hide tanners, tool makers, story, and Ancestors and as they embody and generate theory.”*²¹

- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Indigenous resurgence pursues cultural, social and spiritual rejuvenation in response to historic and ongoing colonial actions premised on Indigenous elimination.²² Leanne Simpson takes a holistic approach to the idea of Indigenous resurgence that includes, “an embedded and interwoven spiritual, emotional, and social system of intelligence that fosters independence, community, and self-determination in individuals.”²³ Resurgence has focused on critical discourses around rights-based awareness, and the renewal of everyday Indigenous practices, which has profound implications for realizations of identity. Mande McDonald, who is of Swampy Cree ancestry from Churchill, Manitoba, but a long-term resident of Denendeh, describes the experience of moosehide tanning as transformative. In her chapter essay “Moosehide Tanning and Wellness in the North” from the book *Visions of the Heart: Issues Involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada 5th Edition*, she describes how tanning hides impacted her on a multifaceted level.

²¹ Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017, p. 194.

²² Elliot, Michael. “Indigenous Resurgence: The Drive for Renewed Engagement and Reciprocity in the Turn Away from the State.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 2018, Vol. 51 Issue 1, pp. 61-81

²³ Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. “Indigenous Resurgence and Co-resistance”, *Critical Ethnic Studies*, University of Minnesota Press, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Fall 2016), p.23.

I started learning to tan hides with the support of my friend and hide-tanning mentor Melaw Nakehk'o, a Dehcho Dene/Denesuline artist from Liidlii Kue First Nation, almost ten years ago. Since then, a resurgence of hide tanning has been steadily growing in the north led by Indigenous women. The impacts of this resurgence have been and continue to be amazing to experience and witness. For myself, tanning hides has been a source of strength, grounding, sobriety and community. It's been the genesis of many positive, healthy intergenerational relationships with people older and younger than me. As hide tanners, we have initiated new and strengthened existing relationships with hunters and harvesters that provide us with skillfully skinned hides. I've witnessed the sense of cultural pride and community belonging that Indigenous people feel when they're learning to work a hide for the first time, and this can be applied to learning other land-based and cultural practices...²⁴

Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel describes resurgence as rejuvenating practices grounded in community and nation-based actions, premised in the question: "How will your ancestors and future generations recognize you are Indigenous?"²⁵ Such a question is reflected in the ethos of the *Golo Dheh* project. Melaw expresses the importance the hide tanning practice has to the revitalization of cultural practices disrupted by the intergenerational impact of residential school. By the end of the project, for Melaw, learning moosehide tanning had become a larger act of resurgence and resistance, while the act of hide tanning within the urban space of Yellowknife became an act of cultural reclamation. As Melaw points out:

²⁴ Dickason, Patricia Olive, and Long, David. "Moosehide Tanning and Wellness in the North", *Visions of the Heart: Issues Involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada 5th Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2019

²⁵ Corntassel, Jeff. "Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, Vol.1 No. 1, 2012, pp. 86-101.

It's a huge respect for everything. The land provides everything that you need, and so being here, reclaiming this area, it feels really good to do this work here. For urban hide tanning in urban centres, even any type of cultural practice that would have been done in an urban centre, like taking over a park, and putting up a hide camp, it's like this is what we use to do in this spot so let's keep doing it in this spot. I think it's a pretty cool act of resistance and for people to see it, and that this is a living culture and people are continuing to do this. At one point it was a normal thing to see people tanning hides, it could be normal for people again. For myself, it's a healing thing, it was a struggle get the knowledge and have the knowledge.²⁶

As evidenced in Melaw's statement above, resurgence, identity and resistance are important themes in *Revolution Moosehide*. Each character in the film expresses the desire to learn practices they were unable to learn as a result of colonial dispossession of land and culture. For Melaw, her search for identity through the learning of cultural practices leads to self-acceptance and love for her community, which she discusses at the end film.

²⁶ Nakehk'o, Melaw. Interview by Lesley Johnson. Personal interview. Yellowknife, September 1, 2016.

Situating Myself and My Work

I began my filmmaking career in the NWT, a place instrumental to my development as an artist. My collaborators in this community consist of a new generation of filmmakers, lobbying for territorially-centred stories to be told. In the Canadian media landscape, the voices and histories found within the NWT, of Northerners, of Dene, Inuvialuit and Métis, have been marginalized from the collective storytelling fabric, which has left a gap in equitable representational narratives. The lack of media representation for and by Indigenous peoples stands in opposition to the large demographic of Indigenous communities who live in the NWT.

Unlike the media landscape, Northern Indigenous communities have largely influenced the structure and mandates of many of the Territory's institutions and businesses. This distinction is important because Indigenous-led work environments are more commonly instituted than in southern Canadian regions. I have worked for Indigenous-led organizations and businesses, such as for Dehcho Dene communities responding to concerns from the resource extraction industry, the Native Communications Society of the NWT, and Adze Studios. I became accustomed to upholding Dene principles, values and mandates. I upheld Dene principles in my earlier work as a biologist and my later work in the media arts. Often placed in situations where I was involved in discussions concerning Indigenous rights, self-determination, and other Indigenous issues, working alongside these Dene institutions shaped my level of understanding behind certain Dene decolonial practices and protocols, which influenced my understanding of the goals defined for *Revolution Moosehide*.

I became aware of the themes of around revitalization and resurgence through conversations with Indigenous friends and through my work both in film and television, and in biology. Prior to working in film and television, I had worked as a biologist, and researcher. In

the NWT there is a strong discourse around supporting and upholding Traditional Knowledge along with scientific studies. From about 2007-2009, I worked in several Dene communities in the Dehcho region who would have been impacted by the renewed proposal for construction of the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline. Much of the work I did was with Dehcho communities, where much of *Moosehide Revolution* was filmed. I began incorporating video, recording statements from Elders and community members as a tool for dissemination. This exposed me to the benefits of working with film. At around the same time, I became the co-founder of the Yellowknife chapter of Cinema Politica, where I screened activist documentaries about the North and global social issues. The direct form of activist documentary influenced the beginning of my film and practice. It became a natural way for me to communicate environmental and social justice ideas I became exposed to.

In 2010, I began working in the small media arts community in Yellowknife, mainly in producing, but also in creative roles. I worked with, Amos Scott, who is Tlicho Dene, on his reality documentary television series, *Dene A Journey* (dir. Amos Scott, 2011-2016), for the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN), as a producer. The series, which began filming in 2011, was premised on providing Dene youth, who had grown up outside their home community, with the opportunity to have a cultural reconnection experience with mentors on the land. In each episode, the main character would undertake learning a cultural land-based activity from an Elder and cultural mentor in their family's home community. The bulk of the episodes were shot in remote wilderness areas, and featured activities such as hunting, harvesting, and learning a range of traditional skills. The series' central theme was that of youth reconnection with Dene culture and identity. My role on the series became was to support the director/exec-producer on the creative decision-making process (casting, locations, cultural activities, episode

structure), and on the execution logistics. I was often also a b-camera operator and field producer. *Dene A Journey* had a large influence on *Revolution Moosehide*, in terms of how the story was framed and how the themes were developed.

My work in film and media in the Northwest Territories was heavily influenced by place, and the multiple identities that surround it. While *Dene A Journey* spoke to themes of Indigenous cultural reconnection that were specifically Dene, I also worked on projects that reflected broader themes of environmental justice linked to resource extraction inescapably present in the region. In 2012, I was a co-recipient of a Canada Council for the Arts grant, for filmmaker Clark Ferguson to do a film residency with the Western Arctic Moving Pictures Film Cooperative (WAMP), a project that I would produce. The project, later named *Shadow of a Giant*, was proposed as an interactive web documentary to maximize viewing accessibility. It was based on Ferguson's previous media work *Boom Town* (dir. Clark Ferguson, 2008), about Saskatoon.

Shadow of a Giant (dir. Clark Ferguson, 2015) applied techniques of 're-imagining place' through animation to the story of Giant Mine, a defunct gold mine in Yellowknife. In 2012, the government held public hearings concerning the remediation of the site, which had become one of Canada's largest environmental disasters. The mine holds 237,000 tons of arsenic trioxide buried in collapsing chambers underneath the ground within Yellowknife's municipal boundaries and within a few kilometers of the Yellowknives Dene communities of N'Dilo and Dettah. *Shadow of a Giant* allowed community members the chance to re-imagine what the site could be once remediated using animation. Individuals were interviewed about their connection to Giant Mine to unravel its complex story and were asked to imagine what Giant could be like in the future. Along with the interactive doc, the project was turned into a 27-minute short documentary, distributed digitally through the National Film Board's (NFB) educational

screening room, Campus and also through Vtape. My involvement with Ferguson's project helped me see more creative ways to express heavy ideas and concepts around the impact of resource extraction and activism.

I began the MFA in Film Production at York University in 2014 and focused my work to Toronto-based subject matter. During my time in York's MFA program, I directed and produced *Princess Jack* (2016) which became a short documentary for CBC Short Docs, and *Charlie* (2018), a fiction that premiered at BFI Flare. In 2017, I was invited to direct a documentary project based in the NWT, which eventually became *I Hold the Dehcho My Heart - Sedze Tah Dehcho E'toh* (dir. Lesley Johnson, 2018). It was filmed during the post-production phase of *Revolution Moosehide*. The film also featured mainly Dene and Indigenous participants in the NWT, on a paddle trip on the Dehcho river, run by the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, an Indigenous-led University accredited institute in the NWT. Working on that project allowed me to think once again about the role and responsibilities of settlers and non-Indigenous filmmakers working within the Indigenous storytelling landscape, carrying forward the lessons I had learned from filming *Revolution Moosehide*. For *I Hold the Dehcho in My Heart*, I was asked to direct specific philosophies and guiding principles, decided upon by an Indigenous-led team. They were outlined to me at the inception of the project and upheld during the production and post-production phases. Although *Revolution Moosehide* originated from a smaller team and a smaller-scale production, I valued the same principles I was asked to deliver in *I Hold the Dehcho in My Heart*: I was driven by the spirit of collaborative co-creation, observant of the intention, and guided by the values of its collaborators.

Indigenous Histories and Resistance in the Canadian Documentary Landscape

Revolution Moosehide is rooted in traditions of social justice activist and Indigenous resistance films. There is a tradition of films related to Indigenous resistance within Canada, directed and produced by Indigenous filmmakers and allies. It is important to acknowledge that even in allyship efforts, settler-driven narratives about Indigenous stories have often perpetuated negative stereotypes and advanced self-interested, inaccurate and harmful narratives about Indigenous lives.²⁷ Until recently, the representation of Indigenous culture in documentary was largely created by settlers who were informed by the very same colonial views they often purported to challenge. This has created attitudes that have been influenced by colonial stereotypes and reinforce racialized generalizations, perpetuating racist beliefs and systems.²⁸

Early representations of Indigenous life in Canada were almost exclusively depicted by colonial agents. With regard to the NWT, for example, the earliest media representations of the Dene and Inuvialuit were captured by missionaries and priests, and government films surveying development and encouraging settlement of the North. These documentations showed the time of first contact for the Dene and Inuvialuit from a settler-colonial point of view, of Indigenous life in relation to the first settlements in the territories, driven by the resource industry. Many of these images and films are available in the national and territorial and the National Film Board (NFB) archives. The NFB, a branch of Heritage Canada, is worth examining as a seminal institute of the Canadian documentary and social justice filmmaking, as its legacy of filmmaking presents many

²⁷ Loppie, S., Reading, C., and de Leeuw, S. "Social Determinants of Health; Aboriginal experiences with racism and its impacts" National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2014.

²⁸ Ibid.

of the tensions I worked through during the production process of *Revolution Moosehide*. Founded in 1939, in part to create war propaganda for the Canadian government by John Grierson, following World War II, the NFB shifted focus to examine social and political issues across Canada. The NFB produced many early 20th century iterations of film representations about Indigenous lives but as a branch of the government it fostered the colonial values of the government when it began producing these works in the 1940s.²⁹ These films were often paternalistic and infantilizing representations. Pulling ethnographic cues from Robert Flaherty's 1922 silent documentary, *Nanook of the North*, the NFB continued to hold an exoticising lens upon Inuit communities and cultures within the Eastern Arctic. Some prime examples of NFB films that echo Flaherty's work can be seen within the works of amateur anthropologist Laura Bolton in the series *Peoples of Canada* (1944). This series included the films *Eskimo Arts and Crafts* (1944) and *People of the Potlach* (1944), and later films by Douglas Wilkinson, *How to Build an Igloo* (1949) and *Angotee: Story of an Eskimo Boy* (1953). These films notoriously mischaracterize Inuit and First Nations communities and have contributed to a legacy of harmful depictions about Indigenous cultures and peoples in Canada.

Although much of the NFB's early work focused on the Inuit, representations of non-Inuit Indigenous peoples and communities in the NWT, such as the Dene, appear in some of these works. Within this small collection of films, John Howe's *Our Northern Citizen* (1956) documents the decision to move the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit settlement of Aklavik to Inuvik. Additionally, James Beveridge and Margaret Perry's *Land for Pioneers* (1944), explores life in settlements and industrial development in the NWT and the Yukon, and Hector Lemieux's *Down North* (1958) remains a report on sub-Arctic developments in communities such as Yellowknife,

²⁹ NFB. "Indigenous Filmmaking at the NFB: An Overview" 2017.

Hay River and what was then Port Radium. These films, told from a settler-colonial perspective, document a society emerging from the early onslaught of resource development which is often equated with progress and inevitable assimilation.

It was not until 1967, when the NFB initiated the Challenge for Change (CFC) program that it began to confront its colonial lens. The CFC program was mandated to use media as an instrument for social change, and many of the program's early films were used as tools of social justice. During this time, a crew of all Indigenous filmmakers was formed to create films that were the first to document Indigenous life from an Indigenous point of view. In this period, some of the most important early contributions were made to films of Indigenous resistance, including *The Ballad of Crowfoot* (1968) by Mi'kmaq filmmaker Willie Dunne, and the *You Are on Indian Land* (1969) by Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell. These were some of the first films in Canada to be made from an Indigenous point of view, challenging mainstream colonial historical narratives and systemic injustice.

One of Canada's most celebrated and influential documentarians, Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, is significant as her body of films represents a negotiation between both working for and against state-sponsored filmmaking, within the NFB. Obomsawin began her career with the animated short film *Christmas at Moose Factory* (1971), a film she co-collaborated on with Indigenous youth. She has directed 50 films to date, including her most well-known films *Incident at Restigouche* (1984), *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), *Is the Crown At War With Us* (2002), and the *People of the Kattawapiskak River* (2012). Her large body of work has consistently advanced Indigenous self-determination, while challenging Canadian ideas around nationhood and national identity. Obomsawin's films are often modest in their approach to visual storytelling, favouring the voices of her characters and the message in

her story. Jerry White (1999) sums up the link between her political ethos and aesthetic practice in stating:

Obomsawin, especially in her most famous film, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, offers a substantial, biting critique of the way in which nationhood is defined, which is an especially important point of dissent in a country like Canada, which prides itself on the looseness and diversity of its national identity. Overall, these are complex, critical works, which balance the needs of a utilitarian, educational cinema with the larger political project of native self-determination, and this balance of priorities, both of them totally removed from a production/consumption idea of cinema, constitutes a radically revisionist film practice.³⁰

Obomsawin's work is critical to Indigenous self-representation in documentary, paving the way for the works of Indigenous filmmakers and documentarians such as Tasha Hubbard, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, Lisa Jackson, Elle-Maija Tailfeathers, Neil Diamond, Tracey Deer and Helen Haig-Brown, to flourish. Obomsawin's approach to creating space for her films to be driven by the main narrative and the voices of her subjects is an approach I took to heart in the creation of *Revolution Moosehide*. It was important to synthesize the main ideas from the interviews with Melaw and the other characters, which spoke of Indigenous resurgence and of direct challenges to Canadian nationhood, to create the main narrative of the film. These ideas are most prominent in *Revolution Moosehide* in the third act, during the urban hide tanning camp.

For the creation of *Revolution Moosehide*, it was essential for me to examine the history and influences of Denendeh's own self-representation. In 1981, the newly formed Native Press became one of the first presses to outwardly challenge colonial narratives in the NWT's media. The Native Press, a newspaper run by Indigenous journalists from the NWT, provided images

³⁰ White, Jerry. "Alanis Obomsawin, Documentary Form and the Canadian Nation(s)" *CineAccion*, No. 49, 1999.

and perspectives on news and events from local communities. The paper was active for two decades prior to its dissolution and reformation as the Native Communications Society of the Northwest Territories (NCSNWT). It currently focuses on radio broadcasts. In an interview with the CBC, former board member JC Catholique remarked that the Native Press existed “at time when leaders were great storytellers who spoke their traditional language and lived on the land.”³¹ In his statement, Catholique is referring to the time of the formation of the Indian Brotherhood the NWT, the Berger Inquiry, and the start of land claim and self-government negotiations.

While Native Press was predominantly based in the medium of photography, they worked (both directly and indirectly) alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmakers and journalists working from Indigenous and/or de-colonial perspectives. The Berger Inquiry was a watershed moment, not only for Indigenous rights, but for visible representation of Dene and Inuvialuit communities across Canada. A camera crew followed Berger throughout the community hearings, capturing life in the communities and the hearing process, which was broadcast through the media. An independent documentary by Arthur Pape and Jesse Nishihata, *The Inquiry* (1977) was also created from the testimony. In 1982, the NFB produced a seminal Dene film, from Sahtu Dene filmmaker Raymond Yakeleya, the documentary *The Last Mooseskin Boat*. The film documents Gabe Etinchelle’s construction of a traditional boat, made out of moosehides from several Shutagot’ine Elders, as he retraces the route of his ancestors on the Keele river. In the film, a group of women tan eight moose hides for the exterior of the boat, while another group of men prepare the frame and oar from spruce. This film is an essential representation of the cultural importance of moosehide tanning. Later, the NFB produced

³¹ CBC North. “ ‘Treasure Trove’ of Native Press photos donated to N.W.T Archives”, October 26, 2018.

Gwich'in filmmaker Dennis Allen's documentary *CBQM* (2009), capturing the spirit and importance of community radio in the NWT, with a look at Fort MacPherson's local station, CBQM. Allen won Best Documentary at the ImagiNATIVE Film Festival for the documentary that year. I looked to these films as inspiration for *Revolution Moosehide*, as rich and nuanced depictions of culture and people in NWT's Dene communities. For me, these two films have very accurate, subtle, and often humorous representations of Dene life. *Dene A Journey* is another critical documentary intervention about Dene lives from a Dene point of view, created by Amos Scott. The series was created out of the NCSNWT produced show *Our Dene Elders*, broadcast on APTN. It featured Dene Elders speaking about their lives and histories, often from before or just after the time of first settlement in the NWT. Amos had created *Dene A Journey* to acknowledge the importance of learning from Dene Elders while addressing some of the issues the younger generation was experiencing in terms of cultural reconnection. Explaining some of his philosophy behind the series, director and producer Amos Scott explained,

The idea is not necessarily to get back. It's just to realize that as modern people today, we don't have to give up the modern things about life, in order to be connected to our culture, in order to be connected to our past. And that's what I'm hoping to accomplish with this show, is to stop thinking about it, and stop desiring it and just start living it. And to me it's just this simple mind switch, but there are other elements that I've learned through the course of this work and by some of the people. I've been exposed to in the last couple years about the political history of Indigenous people in Canada and how that has changed as a motivational factor for our current generation of Indigenous people.³²

Looking at some of the works I have mentioned above, there were a few key narratives that were important to thread across *Revolution Moosehide*. Most importantly, integrating reflections on local and international forms of Indigenous resistances and resurgences, specifically through the experiences of Indigenous women, remained central. I wanted the film to show a portrait of

³² "Work in progress: Amos Scott" *Edge North*. Interview with Edge North, June 1, 2012.

Northern community life as I had often experienced it, in a positive manner filled with culture, humour, and connectivity to the land. Remote Northern and Indigenous communities can often be reduced to bleak representational portraits that perpetuate dysfunction narratives. These representations are not only highly reductive, but lazy, inaccurate and harmfully. Insidious stereotypes against Indigenous people are rooted in colonial ideologies and are pervasive in societal attitudes. I wanted the film to provide a more nuanced portrait of Indigenous lives in the North and to carefully articulate the acute motivations behind their acts of cultural resurgence, documenting stories of joy and resistance by Indigenous women and Northern communities. The women in *Revolution Moosehide* hold strong family and community and land-oriented values. They also demonstrate femininity, a sense of humour and operate from a strong work ethic, inspired by traditions that connect culture with traditional knowledge.

Collaborative Modes of Filmmaking; Isuma and the Arnavit Collective

The history I have begun to document in this thesis follows in a long-standing Canadian lineage of cultural appropriation, perpetuations of mischaracterizations and negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and reinforcements of colonial storylines. Such a violent film and media representational history has fuelled an urgent call within Canada for Indigenous filmmakers to be in control over their own stories. In the TRC's final report, one of the 94 Calls to Action concerns "Media and Reconciliation." The Media Call to Action speaks of the importance of Indigenous representation, language and perspectives in the media.³³ On how reconciliation has changed objectives around the telling of Indigenous stories, Ojibway broadcaster, media critic and activist, Jesse Wenthe stated;

That means centering Indigenous voices and artists in our own stories. As some of us are fond of saying: nothing about us without us. If we want to reconcile, we have to understand that consultation is not consent, and this notion applies not just to pipelines and mining operations, but to our stories as well.³⁴

While some modes of documentary have been extractive, new models are emerging that employ more collaborative methods that centre on the idea of 'nothing about us without us'. In an era of reconciliation, Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmakers are more directly asking: what does "filmmaking allyship" look like? Several models of Indigenous-led collaborations and co-directorships have led to successful, more reciprocal filmmaking. Looking to Nunavut, for example, I can point towards a number of collaborative filmmaking collectives aimed primarily at serving Inuit storytelling and capacity building within the film and television

³³ Truth and Reconciliation Canada. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015. pp. 9-10.

³⁴ Wenthe, Jesse. "Canada needs to give Indigenous stories the platforms they deserve" *Globe and Mail*, April 14, 2017.

industries. Isuma Productions and the Arnait Collective are Nunavut- based examples that demonstrate effective collaborative filmmaking approaches under Indigenous-led scenarios.

In 1990, the artist collective Isuma Productions was formed in Igloolik. Isuma is a production company that is 75% Inuit owned, founded by Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn, Paul Apak and Elder Pauloosie Qulitalik. Their objective is to produce independent video art from an Inuit point of view. Isuma went on to produce *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (dir. Zacharius Kunuk, 2001) filmed entirely in Inuktitut, and one of the most critically acclaimed works that has come from Canada this century, winning the Camera D'Or prize at Cannes. Isuma filmmaking methods are non-hierarchical and rooted in the Inuit voice. Explaining the Isuma style of filmmaking during the creation of *Atanarjuat*, Kunuk remarked,

We spent six months shooting, from April to September. We went to the actual location where the story happened. We did it in the Inuit style. Of course, actors had to learn their characters. Following a script in all kinds of weather presents special challenges. The sun is always changing. For food, we hired hunters to hunt for us so we could eat because we had no catering trucks in the Arctic. The Inuit style of filmmaking takes lots of teamwork. We work horizontally but the usual Hollywood film work in a military style. Our team would be talking, “how are we going to shoot this?” with my art directors down to my sound man. We put the whole community to work.³⁵

Following *Atanarjuat*, Isuma produced the 13-part TV series *Our Land* (2002), the feature *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (dir. Zacharius Kunk, 2006), which opened TIFF, and in 2008 launched IsumaTV, billed as the world’s first website to stream exclusively global Indigenous content, hosting over 6000 films and videos in 84 Indigenous languages. Isuma recently completed *Maliglutit* (dir. Zacharius Kunuk and Natar Ungalaaq, 2016), a feature drama that premiered at TIFF, the TV series *Hunting with My Ancestors* (2017), and produced the first Haida-language feature film *Edge of the Knife - Sgaawaay K'uuna* (dir. Helen Haig-Brown and

³⁵ Kunuk, Zacharius. “The Public Art of Inuit Storytelling” Transcript of the Vancouver lecture. Fonds Graham Fry Fund. November 25, 2002.

Graham Edenshaw, 2018). Isuma is widely known for cultivating high quality work under Inuit led production, for a primarily Inuit audience. They are also known to work under a highly collaborative process involving all of its members, both Inuit and non-Inuit. Norman Cohn summarized Isuma's collaborative style in the following manor:

For four millennia Inuit have refined co-operation as a medium of production and survival, valuing consensus and continuity over individuality and conflict. As a collective, Igloolik Isuma Productions arrives at the millennium practicing respectful co-operation as a formal element in our media art. We implant these values - our collective process - in our filmmaking practice; community support and participation are qualities of production we make visible on the screen.³⁶

The Arnait Collective holds similar values to Isuma. In 1991, a video workshop in Igloolik for women resulted in the formation of The Arnait Video Productions Women's Collective, a women's video and art based collective, established by Madeline Ivalu, Marie-Hélène Cousineau, Julie Ivalu, and Marie Kunuk, and more recently Lucy Tulugarjuk, Susan Avingaq and Atuat Akkitiriq, amongst others. The group was founded to create work that values the unique point of view of Inuit women. Like Isuma, Arnait has also produced trans-media work including, dramatic, feature and experimental films, and created the award-winning narrative films *Before Tomorrow* (dir. Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu, 2008), *Uvanga* (dir. Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu, 2013), and the feature documentary *SOL* (dir. Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Susan Avingaq, 2014), which was selected for TIFF's Canada's Top Ten. The women of Arnait work within a collective format, often alternating roles and working together to produce many aspects production. Arnait reflected their collective values rooted in the Inuit perspective with the following quote,

Our production values reflect the cultural values of the participants: respect for community events, for Elders, for hunting and fishing seasons, for certain

³⁶ Pearson, Wendy, and Knabe, Susan. *Reverse Shots: Indigenous Film*. Wilfred Laurier Press, 2014, p. 205

traditions belonging to particular families, among others. We work as a team to write the scenes of each script, to make the costumes and accessories, and to shape the interaction and performances of the actors.³⁷

Both these collaborative organizations are important because they draw on the specific backgrounds of each member for production. Isuma and Arnait are committed to non-hierarchical, culturally relevant workflows, where many people's ideas are valued.³⁸ While their productions are a reflection of the values and skill sets of all collaborators, they are also specifically formed to uphold the unique language, culture and storytelling of the Inuit. *Revolution Moosehide's* production values follow in the lineage of the Arnait and Isuma models, as the goals of production were negotiated to mutually benefit the collaborators and uphold Dene values, practices and knowledge.

³⁷ Arnait Video Productions. "Our Style". Accessed April 2, 2019. <http://www.arnaitvideo.ca/our-style.html>

³⁸ asinnajaq. "Isuma is a Cumulative Effort", *Canadian Art*. Features, April 22, 2019.

Ethical Considerations

Although Canada does not have formal legislation to protect the Intellectual Property of Indigenous people, *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Article 31, states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.”³⁹ This is a legal acknowledgment of the collective rights Indigenous peoples have to their Traditional Knowledge and greatly impacts the execution of culture and sovereignty. The prescient issue of Indigenous representation, consultation and consent are currently crucial issues within the Canadian media landscape. Therefore, as a settler working within an Indigenous storytelling space, I consistently consider the ethical implications, protocols and principles of my practice. Recognizing that academic research has been a place of colonial practice, the Social Studies and Humanities Resource Council (SSHRC) has provided guidelines *Indigenous research: Ethics, knowledge, systems and methods* for decolonizing academic research.⁴⁰ My project adheres to the SSHRC guides, in particular, by honouring and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge systems. *Revolution Moosehide* was premised on respecting Dene knowledge systems which were established in the goals of the project by the Indigenous collaborators. Following from these guidelines, I determined that participation and collaboration were the forms of best practice. In this section and the following sections on Production (‘Framing *Revolution Moosehide*’, ‘Negotiating the Collaborative Process of a Personal Moosehide Journey’, and ‘Post

³⁹ The United Nations General Assembly. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*. 2007. pp. 22-23

⁴⁰ Social Studies and Humanities Research Council of Canada. *Towards a Successful Shared Future for Canada; Research insights from the knowledge systems, experiences and aspirations of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples*. August 2018.

Production; Shaping and Structuring the Story’), I detail the methods of collaboration that were followed in this project. I also resolved to examine my own ‘ways of knowing’ and to reflect deeply on the distribution of power in all my relations. In the process of *Revolution Moosehide*, I came to reflect often on my own principles behind filmmaking and how those changed in the collaborative process - by altering the traditional balance of power between filmmaker and subject.

In Canada, the ImagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival recently commissioned a protocol of working with Indigenous peoples in Canadian Media, released in April 2019. The report, called *On Screen Protocols and Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories*, overviews cross-national consultation meetings with Indigenous media makers and outlines best practices for working with and alongside Indigenous stories and peoples.⁴¹ The guide aims to serve primarily as an educational tool for First Nations, Metis and Inuit media creatives and their potential collaborators. Section One of the report, *Using Protocols*, reflects best practices for working with Indigenous content, concepts and communities in a mutually beneficial capacity. The protocols identified in the report that were reflected in the filmmaking process *Revolution Moosehide* include: working within cultural and jurisdictional protocols, ensuring proper consent and permission, using collaborative approaches, valuing Intellectual Property, ensuring individuals are onboard with their representation or portrayal, being mindful of sensitive subject matter so as not to re-traumatize individuals, and conducting meaningful collaboration. The rest of this section and following sections on ‘Production’ contain specific details of how those protocols were achieved.

⁴¹ ImagiNATIVE. *On Screen Protocols and Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories*. 2019.

In *Revolution Moosehide* the guiding principles of the project were determined primarily with Melaw and informed by the other participants from the beginning, and the collaborative process would be to allow multiple points of discussion for input and consent during production and post-production. When I began filming *Revolution Moosehide* in 2012, it was important to reflect on how the documentary came about, who the documentary served and how the Indigenous collaborators retained narrative control. These reflections guided me to establish further ethical protocols throughout the process. Primarily, I recognized the documentary as a collaborative project between myself and Melaw. Ultimately, the project's outcomes had to serve her goals and she would retain rights to the documentary. In order for her to maintain control over the documentary process and outcome, we established parameters from the outset, and had multiple points of open and collaborative dialogue during the production process, which is detailed in the following paragraph and throughout the 'Production' sections of this thesis.

Melaw and I had discussions at the beginning of the process to determine how the film would be framed. This collaborative framing became a key element of our collaboration and an essential element informing my boundaries as a settler filmmaker working in an Indigenous space. We talked about what could and could not be filmed, which was crucial to informing my approach. There were two main parameters that Melaw and I, and the other participants decided to avoid recording: the first was traditional Dene women's knowledge, and the second was specific community-based Traditional Knowledge. I was informed that there are Dene teachings on womanhood that belong to the moosehide tanning process that are only meant to be shared in person through the presence of cultural teachers, not disseminated through recordings. It would have been inappropriate for me to record and interpret that information in the film. With regard to recording specific community-based knowledge, I had previously worked within these set

boundaries during my previous projects with Dehcho communities. I came to understand the protocol in terms of the importance of not allowing any singular piece of media or individual to claim expertise on behalf of community-based Traditional Knowledge. I understood that collecting and claiming specific local knowledges was outside the scope of the film project. I was specifically mindful of what I would ask Elders to share with me and on camera with regard to broader historic and cultural knowledge. While recording the moosehide tanning, I came to understand that I could film the process through a participant's learning experience. I filmed the Elders interacting with participants, teaching young or new tanners how to build their skills.

Framing *Revolution Moosehide*

The original project of *Revolution Moosehide* was conceived in the spring of 2012, when Melaw received funding to embark on a moosehide tanning revitalization project. Relearning the practice of moosehide tanning was something she had been inspired to do because it is an essential practice in Dene culture and the skill had never been passed down to her. During that period of time, there was a growing number of young Dene adults who were seeking cultural awareness and reconnection through land-based practices, and a desire to learn these practices became urgent among Dene youth.

As mentioned previously, in the 'Introduction' section of this thesis, as Melaw began attempting to tan moosehides in 2012, she quickly understood it would be too difficult a process for her to learn on her own. She began looking for someone with time and resources to teach her. When she was awarded a travel grant to visit the community of Samba K'e and learn from her relative Maggie Jumbo, we decided to co-create a film out of her moosehide tanning project, and I sought funding through the NWT Arts Council for creation of the documentary. The film process was largely motivated by the difficulties Melaw had in finding a mentor. To help rectify this lack of educational resources, Melaw felt it was important to record her journey and to potentially repurpose it into educational video. Initially, the conversations around what the project would be and its intended outcomes were very loose. Many factors were unknown, such as how long the tanning would take.



Image 2. Participants of the Golo Dheh project in Samba K'e. Back Row; Jasmine Netsena, Mandee McDonald, Maggie Jumbo, Melaw Nakehk'o, Tania Larsson, Front Row; Helen Kotchea and Julia McIntyre. Photo credit: Lesley Johnson.

The process of recording footage for this documentary was long and episodic. I began to film some initial pre-footage with Melaw in her home community of Fort Simpson (Lidlii Kue), in early spring 2012. During that same spring and summer, we took several trips into Fort Nelson First Nation, Samba K'e, Lidlii Kue, Jean Marie River and Lutsel k'e. The central location for execution of the *Golo Dheh* project was in Samba K'e, a remote fly-in Dene community close to the British Columbia border, where Melaw had committed two weeks for moosehide tanning collaborations between herself and a number of Elders. Melaw also started an online blog in the spring of 2012 to capture her moosehide tanning journey. Other young women began to hear about the project from the blog and from other forms of social media. This is how several of the other women, including Mandee McDonald and Tania Larsson, would become involved in the project and would come to be main characters in the film. Melaw did not have a lot of resources,

but she believed that anyone who was interested in learning about moosehide tanning should have the opportunity, a gesture that follows Dene laws of teaching cultural practices.

Although I had received funding from NWT Arts to film the project, I remained financially limited in terms of supporting crew, and thus did all of the cinematography and sound recording in the summer of 2012 myself. While this amount of labour was a limitation, it also helped to develop a higher level of trust between myself and the moosehide tanning group. I was also able to feel out a filmmaking approach without negotiating a crew, guided by the terms Melaw and I had decided. At that time, I began to capture the process in a verité style - another member of the group, existing on the inside of what felt to me like a badass girl gang. The participants often spoke directly to me while I held the camera, at times disregarding the camera entirely. Because most of the participants were already friends of mine, we had built a strong level of trust and while I was not filming, I would spend my days helping with the hides, tending to the kids, doing some cooking and chores and many other tasks that were involved in cohabitation. Picking up the camera and filming became only one of my daily activities. For the rest of the time, we were simply living together. Sharing space had a profound influence over the look and feel of the film. My approach to shooting had become mainly observational, collecting scenes in a loose verité style. Outside of the formal interviews, the recorded footage resulted in very little from my interventions or prompts. For the most part, I recorded participants doing and saying things as they were experiencing them.



Image 3. Melaw Nakehkka softening a hide. Photo credit: Lesley Johnson.

I maintained Melaw as a central figure, and primarily filmed through her point of view and her experience. The central objective was to document the hide tanning process, so I focused on capturing the tanning steps and on instructions provided from the two Elders, Maggie Jumbo and Helen Kotchea. I also began recording the dynamics among the group, particularly focusing on them working together and becoming closer friends. This gave way to an exploration of the world outside the hide camp, the imagery of the community, people entering in and out of the camp, and the children playing around hides. I often shot Melaw's sons simply to document a source of where the kid noises were coming from (for future editing purposes), as Melaw and the other participants were working with the hides. I realized the boys had also become an integral part of the story. When I interviewed Melaw in Sambiaa K'e, she spoke about her philosophy of teaching her children about Dene culture simply by ensuring they accompanied her while she

worked. As filming progressed, the presence of Melaw's sons struck me as one of the most profound elements of the film: here they were, growing up surrounded by a culturally nourishing environment in Dehcho communities, and becoming an intrinsic part of the hide camp.

The interviews I did with the participants were very simple and followed a documentary traditional aesthetic. I found this interview mode to be emblematic of the modest roots of the *Golo Dheh* project and the film. Initially, the interviews revealed very straightforward information about the participants and their intentions to join the project. Each of the participants spoke about their inability to learn hide tanning from their families and about how learning the process was important to obtain hides for future projects, which is difficult to come by and expensive. For example, Melaw spoke about wanting to finish her grandmother's hides, which had been left to her. Tania wanted to learn how to tan hides because she wanted to learn how to make moccasins.

In later interviews, the participants spoke of deeper themes, connecting moosehide tanning to the important implications of revitalizing land-based practices. These ideas began to surface in Smbaa K'e in the summer of 2012, when the participants decided to hold a small protest in solidarity with other protests against Bill C-38 across Canada, the Black Out Speak Out protests, and later during the winter of 2012-2013 in the Idle No More protests. We had discussions at that time about how all parts of moosehide tanning were so intrinsically connected to land-based relationships. The understanding of the hunt, for example, and knowledge of where to gather materials from the land is a larger part of the hide tanning process.

The scenes I chose to shoot for the remainder of the film, beginning in 2014 were purposefully selected to show the progression of the skill levels related to the hide tanning practice, and how each character's personal growth was connected with learning moosehide

tanning. Tania Larsson and Mande McDonald had emerged as characters in the film, as they had continued their-own moosehide tanning journeys, intertwined with Melaw's, reinforcing the growth they had all taken together. As I continued working on the project from 2015-2017, I was not living permanently in Yellowknife and I had to occasionally rely on filmmakers to film events and moments for me, as the stories unfolded. Amos Scott, a Yellowknife-based Tlicho filmmaker, and frequent collaborator, helped by shooting some scenes. He was already familiar with the project and all of the participants. Amos later helped me workshop the film during the editing process. Pablo Saravanja, another Yellowknife based-filmmaker, also shot a few scenes.

In 2014, Melaw was cast as one of two female leads in the 2016 film *The Revenant* (dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu) after attending an open casting call in Yellowknife. Although being cast in the *The Revenant* became a major event in Melaw's life, it was unrelated to moosehide tanning. I remained uncertain with how much of this journey to pursue in the film. Several industry mentors suggested I should forgo the moosehide element and to follow her experience on *The Revenant* exclusively, as it was Alejandro Iñárritu's follow-up to his Academy Award winning film, *Birdman* (2015). These conversations helped me revisit the original intentions for the film. I decided it was not relevant to directly pursue that element, but the premiere and Red Carpet would be an opportunity to contrast Melaw's and subsequently the other characters lives outside of the NWT. I was interested in their ability to navigate these opposing spaces. I wanted to show the seamless ability Melaw had to maintain her true to herself in different worlds. She was at ease being on the land, tanning hides in Dene communities and was equally comfortable in the glitzy streets and cinemas of Beverly Hills and Hollywood.

At the film's premiere, Melaw wore an haute-couture Valentino dress, designed in collaboration with Métis artist, Christi Belcourt. On the red carpet, Melaw took the opportunity

to discuss how cultural appropriation in the arts was very different than appropriate collaboration. *The Revenant* gave Melaw a platform to discuss important themes present in the film related to moosehide tanning. She understood it as an opportunity to bring national and international attention to issues important to her – such as cultural appropriation, the ongoing effects of colonization and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Upon reflection, she recognized the experience as a major accomplishment in her life, but always maintained that it never held near as much importance or significance as her work in Dene cultural resurgence and revitalization.

The ending of the film was not clear until the establishment of Dene Nahjo, and their urban hide camps located in Yellowknife in 2016-2017. The urban hide camps were an ideal place to explore the synthesis many of the ideas and personal stories of the group which had culminated over the past six years. Establishing Dene Nahjo within Yellowknife demonstrated how the participants of the *Golo Dheh* project had formed a community in Samba K'e that now encouraged them to jointly to do cultural revitalization projects and activism. While the camp was premised on community learning for both Indigenous and settlers, it also acted as a political act in relation to the reclamation of space. The camp demonstrated a continued commitment to Indigenous activism and cultivating awareness from the original tan hiding group members. Ending the film at the hide camp showed the extent of how much moosehide tanning had impacted their unique, personal journeys, and how they moved forward together, as a collective.



Image 4. Melaw Nakehk'o standing in front of a hide on the frame. Photo credit: Lesley Johnson.

Negotiating the Collaborative Process of a Personal Moosehide Journey

The unfolding nature of the *Golo Dheh* project and subsequent activism proved one of the most difficult storytelling aspects to negotiate. I asked myself several questions to determine the direction of the story. These would become my guiding questions for shaping the film. The first question became: is this strictly a story about the mechanics of moosehide tanning, or is it part of another, larger story? The narrative was clearly influenced by the political evolution of the participants, leading me to interrogate the original intention of the project. I then asked myself, if I were to widen the scope of the film to address wider themes of activism, could it be done in such a way that maintained the original integrity of the project? I had to talk this question of scope through with Melaw, as she was a co-originator of the project. If she agreed to widen the film's scope, how would she feel if the film became centred more around her, as the main character or subject of the documentary? Finally, I came to ask myself: how would centring this film around Melaw as a character shape the narrative and where would the story begin and end? These questions helped me to determine what I would need to shoot to complete the story.

Melaw and I discussed these questions at length. We spent a considerable amount of time discussing her comfort level with becoming a central character in the film, following the evolution of the *Golo Dheh* project. We discussed whether she was comfortable sharing her personal journey, in order for the film to address bigger themes around moosehide tanning and contemporary Indigenous activism. During the time of these discussions, Melaw was also going through her own personal transitions (some difficult), but she was in agreement with expanding the scope of the film to centre around her life. Our conversations addressed the recognition she was receiving for her work as a moosehide tanner, being celebrated with cultural awards, press and requests to teach moosehide tanning workshops. For her, there was benefit of having a

documentary that explored the process of how she learned moosehide tanning knowledge, and how it played a significant role in forging important relationships in her life. She felt her personal journey spoke to the positive benefits of revitalizing cultural practices. As shown in *Revolution Moosehide*, Melaw discussed her struggles of self-acceptance many Indigenous people from small communities face. She wanted to show the benefits of learning Dene cultural practices had taken on her life.

In order to explore the personal journey themes more fully, I decided to delve further into Melaw's history. This exploration led to many discussions between the two of us over the course of the project regarding what she felt comfortable sharing and where her boundaries would lie. One of the most interesting, rewarding, and challenging parts of negotiating this process was navigating the multiple levels of our relationship: as friends, as collaborators, and sorting through dynamics between director and subject positions. Although our conversations were not often very formal, they addressed issues and parameters of interviewing, storytelling and recording.

Melaw and I spent a considerable amount of time negotiating barriers. During production, it was important to recognize the demand on her time, particularly since she is a single mother of three children. The production schedule had to stay mindful of her responsibilities. This meant for shorter production sessions over a longer period of time. In terms of including Melaw's story, there were parts of her past and present life that was privileged knowledge between friends. Together, we evaluated what was relevant from her life story for the goals of the film, which was important to understand how she wanted certain parts of her life to be represented. Sometimes it became a difficult process for Melaw to consider how she would feel broaching certain subjects. We established a rule: if there was a difficult topic that she was uncertain about or unsure how

she would express herself around it, we would create the opportunity for multiple interview attempts, until we arrived at a place where she was comfortable. Ultimately, Melaw put a lot of trust in me as a filmmaker to navigate this complex process and to make decisions for her representation. Melaw also knew that she would have further opportunity to make decisions in the edit process. As we approached the material, I always circled back to the questions: Why was this film being made? How should it be framed? And, what did we want its outcome to be?

Having a process that allows the subject of a film to veto and editorialize material is not often a desirable situation in documentary filmmaking. However, when the project is born out of collaboration and has an outcome driven by the subject, it is not only important, but completely necessary. In our specific dynamic, with me being of settler ancestry and taking narrative responsibility for sharing the story of a Dene woman, it was crucial for Melaw to have control over that process. In the end, as a filmmaker, I learned significantly from this mode of filmmaking. I learned how in working towards Melaw's storytelling comfort, a deeper, more intimate story emerged, based on a mutual level of trust.

Post Production; Shaping and Structuring the Story

During the post-production phase, I sought input from all of the participants about whether they had any concerns over their representation, their interviews, and any other visual content. This step was important for allowing participants to have control and insight into the process. It allowed for a necessary amount of time and space for them to reflect on scenes and interviews, and to bring to my attention things that had not come up before. Throughout this feedback process several issues were brought up, mainly concerning visuals. For example, some of the participants raised concerns over individuals who may have appeared in the background of scenes or imagery. The solution to this issue was easily solvable by removing certain shots. I found this process critical, for the allowance of feedback during post production. It made participants feel safer and more empowered by their representation.

The post-production process was a particular challenge for this film project, as I had amassed many years of footage on different formats. In the winter of 2016, Rebecca Gruhn took on the role of the film's editor and became an integral collaborator. My biggest challenge was to understand what kind of documentary I was making and how narratively structured it would be around the tanning process. As much of the story revolved around moosehide tanning process, I decided to edit the story chronologically in order to accurately trace the steps.

I also had many discussions over how much of the story would be told from a 'how to' perspective. I decided that, while it was important to have a sense of each step to honour the original educational intention of the project, it would be more natural to let the steps unfold in verité scenes that show what the participants were doing, rather than to explain it in laboured voice over or text. This was difficult to do as the hide tanning process was difficult for me to capture in a cohesive way. Moreover, there are many ways to tan hides, and the processes are

regionally-specific. I mostly captured processes from the Dehcho Dene style, but I struggled with how to show the steps of the process, because they often changed depending on the community and Elder. Lastly, as Melaw brought to my attention during the editing process, I had filmed the bulk of the project when the participants were still learning, and in retrospect, they noticed many mistakes as they were still novices. Due to these points of consideration, it became more appropriate to edit the participants as learners, rather than frame the film as a definitive 'how to' guide.

As I came to decide how to structure the film, I also had to evaluate how often voice-over and voice would drive the story through its verité scenes. In the edit process, I wanted the voice of the participants to act as a vehicle of their expressions, rather than as passive and observational portraits of hide tanners. I selected interview material that provided a synthesis of their ideas, experiences and back stories. This again, was related to the idea of who does the documentary serve - I felt a responsibility to convey certain ideas I knew were important to Melaw and the other participants.

During the edit process, I also consulted with Amos Scott on the direction of the story because of the comfort level we had built on working together on *Dene a Journey*. I trusted the direction he would give me because of his intimate knowledge of the subject matter and participants. Working on *Dene a Journey* influenced how *Revolution Moosehide* was framed, centring the story on the experience of participants going through a personal cultural revitalization journey while grappling with issues of identity and self-acceptance, and empowering the main characters in their communities. As we workshopped different story threads, it became easier for me understand how I would frame the personal journeys of the

participants in relation to the larger narratives such as their activism, and how much weight I would give to different parts of the story.

I structured the narrative arc first around the story of the moosehide, and then worked into Melaw's personal journey, and let the other characters unfold around her. It took several passes to strike a balance between running voice over from the characters and leaving space for the verité style to unfold naturally without expositional elements. Initially, I front-loaded much of the voice over in the first ten minutes of the film. I soon realized there was too much information for viewers to digest from the outset, so instead I decided to interweave it more throughout the body of the film. I also used this technique to link the scene transitions together in a way that made them feel less episodic. As a result, the periods of time the documentary covers feel more natural.

The sound edit and design for the documentary was done by Travis Mercredi, a resident of the NWT of Métis descent, and one of my long-time collaborators. It was essential for me to work with Travis on the soundscape because he had a deep understanding of *Revolution Moosehide*'s story and its characters. He also has a trained ear for specific Northern sounds, such as what ice sounds like when it hits the side of a transport ferry, and what rain droplets sound on a tarp tent. I also depended on him to give me guidance on the creation of the score. He introduced me to Moe Clark's music, a Métis artist working in Montreal. I was inspired by the deeply feminine quality of her vocals. Her 'looping' vocals drew obvious parallels to *Revolution Moosehide*'s core story about a woman bringing other woman together to create a beautiful movement. Having Leela Gilday, who is a powerhouse, Dene musician, provide vocals helped to root the score in place, with Dene specific vocals and drumming. The collaboration on score was a very meaningful part of the film.

Conclusion

Revolution Moosehide captures the journey of Melaw Nakehk' o, along with Mande McDonald and Tania Larsson and the other participants of the *Golo Dheh* project, in their efforts to revitalize Dene culture. It is a testament to their efforts of cultural resurgence, and the rise of a resurgence movement rooted in land-based practices. Reflecting on the impact of the *Golo Dheh* project, Melaw explained in an interview after screening of the rough cut of the film at the Yellowknife Film Festival,

It just really created a good foundation for our relationships for us to work together and continue to work together, not only tanning hides but also putting up camps and helping to teach other people and also that goes into the other work that we do, through Dene Nahjo and our emerging leadership workshops.⁴²

She went on to reflect how the film's original intent was to strictly capture the process of moosehide tanning, but she valued how it showed the importance of the friendships formed, the activism, and broader range of resurgent activities they had taken on in the years after the original moosehide workshop in Samba K'e.

My questions had been around the role of settlers making a film with Indigenous stories, and effective modes of collaboration during the process. This film serves as an example of a collaborative process where the initial goals of the film were established between an Indigenous subject and myself, a non-Indigenous filmmaker. The process established several points of input during the production process that revealed directions that were unexpected to me. It was absolutely critical to receive this input to fulfill the project's goal of achieving a representation where the subjects felt empowered by the portrayal and I feel that, based on the feedback I have

⁴² Nakehk' o, Melaw. Interview with Charlotte Morrit-Jacobs. Media interview for APTN, October 3, 2018.

received from my collaborators, that I succeeded in meeting those goals. This process had many lessons that will be valuable to other filmmakers who are wishing to work in more meaningful collaborative based film methodologies.

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Appendix

The Dene Declaration and Manifesto

We the Dene of the N.W.T, insist on the right to be regarded by ourselves and the world as a nation.

Our struggle is for the recognition of the Dene Nation by the Government and people of Canada and the peoples and governments of I the world.

As once Europe was the exclusive homeland of the European peoples, Africa the exclusive homeland of the African peoples, the New World, North and South America, was the exclusive homeland of Aboriginal peoples of the New World, the Amerindian and the Inuit. The New World like other parts of the world has suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism. Other peoples have occupied the land —often with force —and foreign governments have imposed themselves on our people. Ancient civilizations and ways of life have been destroyed.

Colonialism and imperialism is now dead or dying. Recent years have witnessed the birth of new nations or rebirth of old nations out of the ashes of colonialism.

As Europe is the place where you will find European countries with European governments for European peoples, now also you will find in Africa and Asia the existence of African and Asian countries with African and Asian governments for the African and Asian peoples.

The African and Asian peoples — the peoples of the Third World — have fought for and won the right to self-determination, the right to recognition as distinct peoples and the recognition of themselves as nations.

But in the New World the Native peoples have not fared so well. Even in countries in South America where the Native peoples are the vast majority of the population there is not one country which has Amerindian government for the Amerindian peoples.

Nowhere in the New World have the Native peoples won the right to self-determination and the right to recognition by the world as a distinct people and as Nations.

While the Native people of Canada are a minority in their homeland, the native people of the N.W.T., the Dene and the Inuit, are a majority of the population of the N.W.T.

The Dene find themselves as part of a country. That country is Canada. But the Government of Canada is not the government of the Dene. The Government of the N.W.T. is not the government

of the Dene. These governments were not the choice of the Dene, they were imposed upon the Dene.

What we the Dene are struggling for is the recognition of the Dene Nation by the governments and peoples of the world.

And while there are realities we are forced to submit to, such as the existence of a country called Canada, we insist on the right to self-determination as a distinct people and the recognition of the Dene Nation.

We the Dene are part of the Fourth World. And as the peoples and Nations of the world have come to recognize the existence and rights of those peoples who make up the Third World the day must come and will come when the nations of the Fourth World will come to be recognized and respected. The challenge to the Dene and the world is to find the way for the recognition of the Dene Nation.

Our plea to the world is to help us in our struggle to find a place in the world community where we can exercise our right to self-determination as a distinct people and a nation.

What we seek then is independence and self-determination within the country of Canada. This is what we mean when we call for a just land settlement for the Dene Nation.