



**MANITOK THOMPSON**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**INUIT BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

## INTRODUCTION

Ublaakkuut, my name is Manitok Bruce-Thompson. I am Aivilikmiut, or “People of the Walrus,” and I am a proud Inuk.

My fore-bearers grew up in a very isolated Hudson’s Bay trading post called Wager Bay, now known as Ukkusisalik National Park. My grandfather, Dick Wager, or Iqungajuq, after whom the trading post was named, was the company’s first unilingual Inuk manager. My mother was a clerk at the trading post when HBC wooden tokens were still used as currency in exchange for fox and other furs. The outpost served nomadic Inuit trappers from the Kitikmeot region.

My mother and father lived through the end of the nomadic generation when Inuit were moved into permanent settlements. My family was the last family to move into Coral Harbour after social housing was provided by the government in 1963. Before that, my siblings and I would walk the 5 km to school from SNAFU beach, where we lived.

So I grew up in Coral Harbour, which is still today a small community of about 900 people on the southern shore of Southampton Island. We lived there quite happily without radio or television until I was in my early 20’s.

I learned many skills from my parents, first of which was Inuktut, our Inuit language, along with skin preparation, sewing, hunting, harvesting, on the land survival skills and eventually with the federal government’s education system, and aren’t you glad, .....English.

I was also taught, not by my parents, but by the culture I grew up in, that white people, or Kablunaags, as we called them, were somehow, and in many ways, superior to us.

In my life experience, I have discovered that not to be accurate. Each and every culture has its successful and not so successful people. Some people I’ve met would not last more than a few hours on their own out in my arctic environment.

So, I have not been assimilated. I am fluently bilingual and functionally bi-cultural, and I can thrive, in both cultures simultaneously and comfortably. So evidently, resistance is not futile.

I have lived in Coral Harbour, Fort Smith, Saskatoon, Repulse Bay, Yellowknife, Kingston, Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet, Iqaluit, Canmore and now, Carleton Place. I have been a teacher, a director of medical interpreting services, an educational consultant, a politician, a private Inuit cultural consultant, an archivist and now the executive director of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation.

Because of my formative years in my Inuit environment, I perceive the world through my Inuk lens, with its inherent values, beliefs and practices; so, on occasion, I still struggle to make sense of the Kablunaaq way of life. But I believe we will all eventually get there as we continue together, our life long journey of individual and societal enlightenment.

Now I'd like to tell you a different story.

In 1845, explorer Sir John Franklin, set sail from England with two ships, the HMS Erebus and the HMS Terror. He was searching for the Northwest Passage, in what is now Canada's Arctic. The ships and crews vanished and dozens of expeditions set sail in search of them.

For almost 170 years, they were unsuccessful. In the early 1900's, my great grandparents, Tassiuq, & Tulugak and Malaki & Ujaralaaq were guides for some of these search expeditions. I know this, not from any history textbook, but from oral history that was passed along to me and my siblings, by my mother.

Recent expeditions brought together the Government of Canada, as well as other public, private and non-profit organizations. And on September 2, 2014, led by Parks Canada, using new technology and more importantly, Inuit knowledge and oral history, the wreck of the HMS Erebus was found in Queen Maud Gulf, to the south of King William Island, in Nunavut.

A second breakthrough took place two years later on September 12, 2016, when the HMS Terror was found in, ..... surprise, Terror Bay, a large body of water on the south shore of King William Island. It was named Terror Bay for a very specific reason, and this oral history had been passed down through generation after generation of Inuit.

I relate this story not only to draw your attention to the power and importance of oral traditional knowledge, but also because it is the preservation of this priceless Inuit oral and cultural/societal history that forms a significant part of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation's mandate and our archives.

## **THE CHALLENGE**

Since the early 1970s, IBC has been documenting through video, Inuit culture, oral history and the beginning of a new stage in our development. Many of the tapes are in original regional or local community dialects and portray beloved elders or children

many of whom have grown to adulthood. Many of the recordings demonstrate cultural skills that may be lost to younger generations and include stories, legends, memories of youth, and first contact with an outside culture. It is a cultural treasure of immeasurable historic value.

IBC also recorded the transition to a wage economy and the political evolution that led to the division of the territories. This included the creation of key national Inuit organizations, the development and signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, the creation of Nunavut and the evolution of a new political, socio-cultural environment. IBC's archived work represents a period of time that is absolutely unique in Canadian history.

By 2006, as IBC made the transition to digital production, IBC had some nine thousand (9,000) analog video tapes primarily on two outdated video formats, U-Matic and Beta Cam. These formats have not only become technologically obsolete, but because of their age and condition are quickly degrading.

To make an already challenging task even more daunting, the recordings were improperly stored in less than ideal conditions and scattered all over Nunavut's two million square kilometres in various production centres from Iqaluit to Cambridge Bay. The arctic is essentially, a desert and is extremely dry.

It was clear that action had to be taken, and taken quickly or this invaluable and irreplaceable historic video collection could be lost. And it is also critical to remember that any archival collection serves no purpose unless it is restored and more importantly, made readily and easily accessible to the public.

## **THE VISION AND THE SOLUTION**

IBC envisioned a state of the art facility where our collection and other collections of Inuit film and video could be:

- preserved and protected through digitization;
- catalogued, viewed in real-time and described in detail by trained bilingual archivists with knowledge of local and regional Inuktitut language dialects;
- promoted by an annual community event and through the use of social media;
- made publicly accessible through an internet platform;
- used for educational, research and public enjoyment.

In March of 2015, with a public, private, partnership including the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik, the Nunavut Construction Corporation, and a lot of hard work and planning, IBC opened the Nunavut Media Arts Centre, in Iqaluit, Nunavut. It is a state-of-the-art facility where IBC's Inuktitut language programming is now produced and is the new home of the Inuit Film and Video Archive. (IFVA)

I'm not a technocrat, but I understand this information is critical to the efficient operation of what IBC is attempting to accomplish so a full description of the time-line and the technical components of the building is contained in the appendix to this presentation.

Personally, I am far more invested in the actual content of the archives. There are so many wonderful stories, recollections and experiences of our elders, demonstrations of cultural skills that are being lost and of course, the maintenance, development and security of the Inuktitut language. And if all this technology helps in furthering these goals, then I'm on board.

I am also passionate about making this information known and available to all interested people through a publicly accessible platform, other social media and IBC's annual promotional events to communities in each of Nunavut's three regions.

The older videos often include cherished elders, many of whom have passed on making proper identification sometimes challenging. This is where social media is an amazing resource. We simply post a screen grab on Facebook and ask for the identity of the person. Within minutes we receive dozens of responses and the video descriptions become more detailed, personal, accurate and searchable.

If I may, I would like to take a moment to share with you a couple of these personal stories I experienced as an IBC archivist.

In 1949, my grandfather, Iqungajuq, Dick Wager and his extended family was living in Duke of York Bay, on the north shore of Southampton Island. His second wife, Therisie Tartak, was on the beach when she thought she saw a large bird with red wings that were stacked on top of each other. She kept watching and as it flew overhead she fell backwards onto the sand in shock. It was the first time she had seen an airplane. Now imagine that for a moment..... and how you might react if you had no concept of aerodynamics, mechanical flight or that such a device actually existed as one suddenly flew over you.

In another recollection, a group of Inuit were living near the Thelon River near Baker Lake. They saw strange looking humans across the river. When the strangers came across the river to greet them, they couldn't understand what they were saying. One of them gave one of the older ladies a triangle shaped piece of paper which she was not familiar with as she has never seen paper before.

After the strangers had left, she looked at what they had given her and threw it away as she saw no use for it. That fall the same group of Inuit were visiting the trading post in Baker Lake. When they went into the post, the trader showed them the same triangle shaped paper. This time, the trader opened it for them, and inside were steel sewing needles. She said that was the biggest regret of her life to throw away such a valuable and useful item as the Inuit were using bone needles at the time.

The IBC archives are full of these wonderful first contact and life experience stories and IBC staff remain dedicated to ensuring they are catalogued, restored and made publicly accessible.

## **FUNDING CHALLENGES**

Before division and the creation of Nunavut in 1999, IBC received substantial core funding from the Government of the NWT. Upon division, that situation changed and not for the better.

IBC receives funding support from the Nunavut government, with its various departments and agencies, Culture and Heritage and Nunavut Film, as well as Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the land claims organization and the three regional Inuit organizations, Kitikmeot, Kivalliq and Qiqiqaani Inuit Associations.

And of course, there is the federal government, through Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Heritage Canada and Library Archives Canada, but you can understand our challenge. IBC is now dependent for its very survival, on a multitude of smaller grants and contributions from a long, diverse list of funding sources.

As a not-for profit organization, IBC is subject to exacting application processes, semi-annual and year-end reports on deliverables, statistics and financials. Many of these submissions and reports are in prescribed and distinctly user-unfriendly formats.

Please do not perceive this as a complaint. IBC is extremely grateful to all of our funding benefactors and fully understand the stewardship required for public funding. I simply wish for you to understand the challenging environment in which IBC now exists.

And here's an even greater challenge. From the 2016 census, of a Canada-wide population of sixty-five thousand who identified as Inuit, only thirty-six thousand respondents claimed Inuktitut as their mother tongue and yet only twenty-nine thousand of those reported Inuktitut as the language most often spoken in the home.

This difference of is understandable as it includes Inuit who reside in locations other than the Nunavut Territory and where Inuktitut language material may not be readily accessible.

Here's a more alarming trend. From a Nunavut-wide population of thirty thousand residents, and where twenty-two thousand identified Inuktitut as their mother tongue, only seventeen thousand reported the use of Inuktitut most often in the home.

This is particularly disturbing because the percentage decline of Inuktitut used most often in the home is actually greater in the Nunavut Territory where there exists the Inuit Languages Protection Act, larger amounts of spoken, written and multi-media Inuktitut language material as well as Inuktitut first language school programs.

A more detailed analysis of Inuktitut language decline was recently released on July 9, 2019, by Statistics Canada entitled "Evolution of the Language Situation in Nunavut, 2001 to 2016," and can be found on the Stats Can website. A link is provided in the appendix.

Of course, covid-19 had a significant impact on IBC operations over the past two years. All of IBC's original Inuktitut program location production schedules were impacted with lockdowns and travel bans. IBC is still working through this challenge.

Our annual archival project Iqqaumavavut: "We Remember Them" promotional tours were cancelled and replaced with live local radio presentations and local distribution of "Best Of" compilations DVD.

And many staff had to manage and balance work from home productivity challenges.

## **THE FUTURE**

- Our partnership with SSI Canada is working very well. IBC's new website is in its final stages of development and will soon be operational. The host server to house IBC's archives will be located in Ottawa. Additional servers will be placed in each of Nunavut's twenty-five communities providing a publicly accessible platform for all of our digital content to be accessible in all communities at a reduced data cost and eventually for live broadcasts and content sharing. IBC is in the process of cataloging our productions to be shown on the website.
- IBC has partnered with ROSS Videos to start cataloging all our productions in the CATDV system. This partnership has received funding to relocate the CatDV hardware and software from Iqaluit to Ottawa. IBC will be hiring staff to start training for the cataloging of all productions and archives. This will also prepare IBC to be ready for an all Inuktitut TV channel.

## **IBC's CHALLENGES**

So, in closing IBC must:

- timely digitize, view, describe and make publicly available a substantial collection of degrading archival material;
- continue to create and produce new quality Inuktitut language programming;
- survive in a not-for-profit financial environment;
- assist in addressing the maintenance and revitalization of the Inuktitut language that is constantly under siege and that despite all current efforts, continues to decline;
- develop and implement a succession plan to ensure IBC productions remain by Inuit, for Inuit and in Inuktitut as many of our current technical, production and support staff near retirement.

On behalf of Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and our team, we happily and enthusiastically accept this challenge.

Qujanamiik, thank you.

I'd be happy to take any questions you may have.

## Appendix A

### Inuit Film and Video Archives Timeline

2006

- Territorial meeting to develop a strategy to digitize and protect the IBC video collection;
- risk assessment is conducted at all five of IBC's production facilities with the assistance of a motion picture conservator at Library and Archives Canada;
- Findings: the videotape preservation must be done as soon as possible with the intent to be made publicly accessible;
- organizations with audio/video tape archives will be faced with having to transfer information from these formats to digital media or risk permanent asset loss.

2009

- Based on the recommendations of the risk assessment, IBC commissions Rosaleen Hill Conservation Services to prepare a report outlining preservation processes and activities;
- the first ninety-six (96) videocassettes are digitized and uploaded to the internet in partnership with Isuma Distribution International Limite using their public web platform at [Isuma.tv/ibc](http://Isuma.tv/ibc).

2014

- Construction begins on the Nunavut Media Arts Centre.

2015 (Spring)

- The Inuit Film and Video Archives portion of the construction is finalized and specialized archival equipment installed.
- 2011-2016 – each year, parts of the collection were shipped from IBC's five regional production centres to IBC's Iqaluit production headquarters and finally to the Ottawa administrative office to facilitate and speed up digitization.



- 2013-2021 – portions of the collection are digitized annually in Ottawa and commencing in 2015, in Iqaluit. To date approximately 6,000 digital videos have been completed, representing 33% per cent of the collection. Digitized copies of the archives are currently stored at IBC's Ottawa office, in the IBC Iqaluit Media Arts Centre and for additional security, at the Ottawa-based digitization facility.
- 2014-2016 –the collection clean-up began in 2014 in preparation for the move to the Nunavut Media Arts Centre. The majority of the cataloguing was completed in early 2016, resulting in approximately 11,000 catalogue records. Videocassette retention focused on master tapes, so approximately 13,000 working tapes, copies and damaged videocassettes have been removed from the collection.
- 2015 – A digital media specialist from the Canadian Conservation Institute conducts an on-site assessment of the Inuit Film and Video Archives infrastructure and procedures. They provide a comprehensive report, which IBC will use as a blueprint for improvements in the coming years. While in Iqaluit, IBC partners with the Archives Council of Nunavut to deliver a CCI workshop for interested organizations.
- 2016 (February) – IBC staff and a Kitikmeot Inuit Association participant from KIA's Channel 51 team complete the Multi Media Archivist Training Program in Iqaluit. Other training activities for IBC's multi-media archivist continue through 2017.
- 2016 – A number of administrative databases are developed and preparation of a procedures manual begins. Discussions also begin regarding the storage and preservation of digital versions of IBC's more recent material.
- 2016 (Fall) – The IFVA Policies are completed and approved by the IBC Board of Directors.
- Ongoing - Applications to federal and territorial funding programs and to Inuit organizations continue in an effort to sustain the IFVA through project funding. Unfortunately, the IFVA does not fit a lot of the criteria for funding programs that support existing libraries and institutions. Efforts to search for sources of longer-term funding continue.
- Videocassette storage shelving was constructed and an air quality monitoring system installed was installed 2016-17.

## Appendix B

Supporting the work areas is a sophisticated server-based technology cluster on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor in the central equipment room. The key functions of the system include:

- loading, digitization and transcoding to 128 terra bytes of online and shared storage servers;
- robotic data tape library system to support 24 LTO cartridges;
- bar-code identification and retrieval for physical media assets;
- expandable media management software tools to control all archival processes including loading, proxy creation, asset search and retrieval;
- internal high-speed connections between all parts of the production, archivist and storage sections of the building.

The central equipment room contains:

- the server;
- obsolete videocassette players (U-Matic and Beta Cam;)
- digitization hardware;
- software for digital file storage capacity.

The archives room contains:

- workstations for the multi-media archivists;
- the videotape storage vault housed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

To facilitate long-term preservation our storage vault has:

- archival quality humidity and temperature climate control;

- counter space for tape & digital media sorting, processing and labeling;
- track-mounted high-density storage system for archival mediums;
- the vault's storage system is not intended for IBC's videocassette assets, but for the digital media on hard drives and LTO tape backups. Elsewhere in the building, there are storage cabinets for new stock, LTO data cartridges, hard drives and optical media;
- to make the Nunavut Media Arts Centre fully accessible, IBC received support from several funding programs and was able to install a chair/wheelchair lift system so the entire building is fully accessible.

## **Appendix C**

### Statistics Canada

- Study: Evolution of the language situation in Nunavut, 2001 to 2016
- July 9, 2019

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190709/dq190709b-eng.htm>