LISTAHÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
Iceland University of the Arts

THE FORBIDDEN SONGS

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Final thesis for a M.MUS-degree
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Department of Music
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“THE FORBIDDEN SONGS”

Conveying Cultural Heritage through film

Varna Marianne Nielsen

Final thesis for a MA-degree in Music

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NAIP

Department of Music

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Traditional East Greenlandic garment

An image from the black box studio at University of Arts, Laugardalur, added blur effect.

Varna is wearing the traditional garments, the The dress is made of sealskin, sewn with 2 colors of the skin, to make the brodery.

The pants made of seal and hare.

Boots are made fully of sealskin, that are processed differently to give the different colours.

The pearls would be made of fishbones, before we were introduced to beads.

The headgarmet would be made of sealskin, before we were introduced to fabric.

Abstract

This practise-based research project aims to convey the traditional Greenlandic social, spiritual, intellectual, and artistic practice, drumdancing and drumsinging, from the perspective of a practitioner, through a film.
Secondary, to create a website, to gather my portfolio, of current and future research projects. (www.qilaat.org.)

Categorised as a performative documentary, the film “The forbidden songs” is based on the filmmaker´s ethnographic research and artistic experience combined with qualitative studies of multiple Greenlandic Inuit drumdancers, cultural knowledge keepers weaved into archival material.

This is the first of four chapters, which focuses on the historical aspect of drumdancing, beginning from the pre-colonial times citing the colonial era up until today. The film emphasizes the importance of revival of a cultural tradition, the once forbidden songs and its significance to the Inuit in Greenland.
In this reflective report I will engage you in the process of gathering and assembling the pieces to convey and contract a broad amount of information while bridging personal narratives with archival material.
I am grateful to Inukitsoq Sadorana (Qaanaaq), Mikkel Bianco (Tasiilaq) Tukummeq Qaavigaaq (Qaanaaq), James Ignatiussen (Tasiilaq), Aanganni Mikaelsen (Tasiilaq) and Vittus Mathiassen (Tasiilaq) and Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (KNR) for their contributions to this film.
I learned a lot through their individual stories, and most important how the changes and loss of heritage in Greenland, affected everyone. It made the purpose of finding new ways of sharing our traditional practice, even more relevant and urgent. Furthermore, we articulated the purpose of the ancient tradition, consequences of colonization/danization and re-introduced the traditional way to heal through the practice of drumdancing and drumsinging.

The film is in Greenlandic, with English subtitles.

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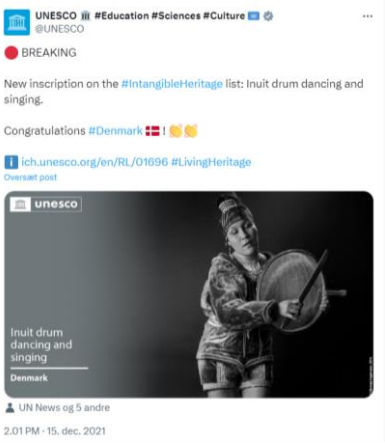
1) Introduction

I am a Greenlandic artist and practitioner of our immaterial cultural heritage, drumdancing and drumsinging. Music have been a fundamental part of my life for the past 25 years and the last decade I have dedicated my artistic practise and research into reviving our cultural heritage and passing it on to both children, youth, and adults. When I began this process of researching and conveying our traditional practice, drumdancing was merely used as entertainment, which is obviously a fraction of its origin. I actively began to revive the deeper knowledge and meanings of the practice and took initiative to gather some friends and share my purpose of creating a union. We named the union Peqatigiiffik Inngertartut and it is still an active today with members performing and promoting our tradition.
During my further research, I collaborated with the National Museum regarding an inclusion of drumdancing and drumsinging to UNESCO´s list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. The conflicting part of this process was, it needed to go through the Danish cultural Minister due to the fact that Greenland still is not independent. When it finally succeeded in 2021, this post was published on UNESCO´s page along with the greeting "Congratulations Denmark". The same government that was the reason for our loss in the first place. I felt so ambivalent, but at the same time "had to feel grateful", in anticipation that this could create a bigger shift in the cultural politics and awareness of the importance of our tradition and cultural identity.



There is still a long way to go, therefore I founded Center for Qilaat, an organization, that focuses on practicing, preserving, developing, conveying and researching about drumdancing and drumsinging.
This leads me forward to my final project, in which I produced a film, that emphasizes the pressing need of reviving the once forbidden songs, of the Greenlandic traditional drumdancing and drumsinging. Since colonization, the loss has been significant.
We need new ways of conveying the knowledge and with our distances in Greenland, film is an accessible and entertaining medium, to inform large groups of people that will not necessarily practice it, but could benefit from having general knowledge about their

cultural heritage, such as educational, or cultural institutions etc.
I managed to complete the first of four chapters. This chapter of the film, focuses on the historical aspect of drumdancing, from the pre-colonial period into the colonial era towards the post-colonial period.
“Inngerutit inerteqqutaammata / The forbidden songs” is introduced from an indigenous practitioner’s perspective, in Kalaallisut (Greenlandic), to make it accessible for Inuit in Greenland, added English subtitles which opens the reach even further.
In this reflective report I will engage you in the process of gathering and assembling all the aspects to convey and narrow down, broad amount of information and bridging individual experiences with archival material.

2) Reflections on the process

Prior to this, I had no experience in film production and as I was busy learning at the same time as I was doing, the end goal was not always obvious. So this is my opportunity to re-examin and disclose some of the thoughtprocess and years of research behind the decisions that led to the this first chapter of „Inngerutit inerteqqutaammata / The forbidden songs“

1.1 Theory/Film studies/Indigenous Knowledge

The definition of the genre for this film is a documentary. A non-fiction film that is used to show the reality, in attempt to portray the world as it is. There are various branches of documentaries, each different in the way they depict their topics. The film critic Bill Nichols first presented the various branches and characterized the types of documentaries as; Expository, Participatory, Observational, Performative, Reflexive and Poetic (Nichols 1991)

The initial plan was to make an expository documentary, which would be similar to the documentaries we know from TV, where the focus is to inform the viewer about a particular subject, through a combination of different types of footage along with a of calm and clear narration (impactcreative.com 2023).

My novice experience in filmmaking, reflected the way I approached the project. It had to be clear and simple. It turned into everything, but that. One day as I was talking to a friend about the project, she mentioned, that it would “uninteresting” and something anyone else could do, if I was not in it. Understanding her point of view, I still didn´t want to take up space from all the years of research I was planning to share. What finally sticked with me, was how I related more to film, where people were narrating their own stories. (See

contextualization review)
This eventually led me to change it and include my own journey as a practitioner in the process of reviving a tradition.

That changed the category to a performative documentary. What is unique about this style of documentary is that a performative documentary details the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject and highlights the filmmaker's role in the story and makes it personal and subjective (impactcreative.com 2023).

Apart from navigating within the category of Performative Documentary, the main purpose with this film, was to narrate within our Indigenous paradigm. As Indigenous people, we are used to foreigners depicting our culture, ways of living etc. Why it was important to me, that it was all edited and narrated from a Greenlandic perspective. I wanted to include the Inuit´s own experience of the historical eras we were focussing on, and this was how we ended up with reflections on colonization/danization and emphasis on the current decolonization process. Indigenous practitioners are calling for change and the revival of our traditional practices will no longer be silenced.
During the film, it became evident, even after 300 years since colonization, influence and assimilation, the Inuit ways of knowing are still essential. We trust our oral tradition, traditional practices as an important part of our cultural identity.

1.2 Archival research method

In addition to my previous collected material, I continued the archival research.
This brought me back Greenland, more specifically to the National Radio and TV broadcasting station KNR, where I found more content, vital for the historical aspect of the story.

> Archival research methods include a broad range of activities applied to facilitate the investigation of documents and textual materials produced by and about organizations. In its most classic sense, archival methods are those that involve the study of historical documents; that is, documents created at some point in the relatively distant past, providing us access that we might not otherwise have to the organizations, individuals, and events of that earlier time. However…archival methods can also be applied to the analysis of digital texts including electronic databases, emails, and web pages (Mohr 2002).

I specifically searched for titles related to drumdancing, drumsongs and the last drumdancers and shamans in my family lineage.
Following are the selected titles became significant to the film for various reasons:

- “Nunatta oqaluttuassartai – Ammassallup eqqaani/ Our history, near Ammassalik” depicted the influence of the danization in East Greenland.

- “Ukiuunerani Tasiilami Angalaneq/Winter travels in Tasiilaq 4:4 1962” showed the various ways of drumdancing, how it was used in the past and how it connected to the old Inuit belief system.

- “KNR news Qilaatersorneq/Drumdancing UNESCO” showed Inukitsoq and his wife Genoveva drumdancing, after sharing that he was no longer shy to sing the songs that he had inherited.

- “Kulturi Tunu/Culture East – KNR december 2006” included the interview of priest James Ignatiussens opinion on how people reacted to the chances in culture, beliefs etc. after introduction of Christianity in East Greenland.

- “Kultuuri – Aasuutit/Culture – stars of winter solstice KNR 2006”, showed us the Kaperlak/“darkness period” in Qaanaaq/Thule area during winter, as Tukummeq Qaavigaaqs was retelling the story of her ancestors experiences with the first missionaries in Qaanaaq.

1.3 Qualitative research method

In 2022 I did video interviews of drumdancers and cultural knowledge keepers among them, were Tukummeq Qaavigaaq, Inukitsoq Sadorana and Mikkel Bianco.
The interviews were conducted, while we were participating in “Katuarpalaaq”, a drumdance gathering in Nuuk, which I was Artistic Director of.

We all knew each other beforehand, when I shared my research process, and offered to interview anyone that could be interested.
I personally prepared and did the semi-structured interviews.

“Semi-structured interviews lie between structured and unstructured interviews. The interviewer prepares a set of same questions to be answered by all interviewees. Additional questions might be asked during the interview to clarify or expand certain issues.” (Olivia Guy-Evans 2024)

Furthermore, the preparation included considerations of:

Location:	Same place as the gathering took place
Form	One-on-one and face-to-face
Language:	Interviewees choice

Ethics and Agreements: Everyone was informed of the purpose of the interview beforehand and signed an agreement/consent to use the information in my further research.

My intention behind the interviews was to hear the practitioners' stories, progress, mentors, and hopes for the future. This material became a needed with the decision of producing a film.

Furthermore, I did semi-structured self-interviews. It was not as simple as it sounds. I found myself very distracted from the process of setting up the camera and light and did not feel "in the moment." Another time, I will write down questions and let myself interview, to give "space" to reflect and resonate.

1.4 Quantitative Research method

During the process, I wondered if had missed anything? What would Inuit in Greenland want to know? This led me to make a one open-ended question, on social media.
My question: "If you should want to know anything about drumdancing, what would that be?" The replies were inspirational and helpful; therefore, I will share them as they were written.

- What does "the stick" the opponent hold during drumdancing, represent?
- How can modern drumdancing help children and youth in their development?
- What does drumdancing provide spiritually?
- How did drumdancing begin?
- What are the various parts of the drum called?
- Will drumdancing survive the future?
- Your ancestry (varna), their experiences traditions and beliefs
- How important is drumdancing for our history? (for example, the judicial system) we use to have, when was it lost? How it connects spiritually and is the essence lost when we keep using it for entertainment?
- The history, the present and development, how can drumdancing be used in the future?
- Writing about how banned it was, and how bad it was look upon?
- Ethics, can we sing other people's songs (the opinions of the owners)
- What was the purpose and effect of the collective use? Today we see one person, as if they are acting in a theatre.

These responses were useful, and while some where already answered, others will be incorporated in the following chapters.

1.5 Practice-based research method.

Film production, was completely new to me and I was constantly in a learning process, also referred to as practice-based research. This methodology is when knowledge is gained via the doing of something, rather than reading about it, or other more traditional models of research such as case studies and ethnographies (Schrag 2019).
It was important to me, to be capable of narrating this story, from the very beginning to end, with the practical technicalities that comes with. Editing is storytelling. Summed up, the film gave me a chance to execute all from audio to visuals through a practice-based research methodology. Learning by doing is my favourite way of learning, which to me is useful and a satisfying process of achieving more freedom as an artist and create with my hands. Furthermore, I had continuous supervision, which was vital, as I had no experience at all. Supervision helped me through problem solving and kept me motivated during the entire process.

1.6 Autoethnographic research method

As I decided to include my personal journey, I needed to go back and recall and review my past experiences and focus on how to narrate it, which is refered to as autoethnographic research methodology. This qualitative methods draws upon several qualitative traditions, including narrative research, autobiography, ethnography, and arts-based research. Describing autoethnographers as one type of narrative researcher, Butler-Kisber (2010) states, “Individually or collaboratively they use narrative dialogue, self-study/autobiographical and memory work to construct stories of their own experiences” (p. 65). Autoethnographies that draw upon this narrative tradition emphasize story and pivotal experiences in one’s life (Cooper 2022).

I found that the autoethnographic methodology matched with the genre of performative documentary, due to the emphasis on the subjective perspective.
This was in fact the most difficult part of the process. Not only to revisit a tragic experience in my life, but to process in which way to communicate the experience to an unknown audience. This is a part of my life; I usually only share with people close to me, but maybe it can give hope to someone that also has experienced loss.

1.7 Video editing method:

The challenging thing about this practice-based research project, was that every minute became an exploration. I constantly tried to find the right images, chose the right order, make transitions smooth, in attempt to create a cohesive and comprehensive story, while balancing the amount information given. I often found myself telling the story too fast and it was a challenge to slow it down and give room for reflection. Once that was in place, I needed to learn using various effects and compose background music, add English subtitles or narrate it in Greenlandic.

"Video editing is one of the most crucial steps of the post-production process. The process combines all motion video production footage, special effects, and sound recordings to create a compelling visual story… ("Chapter 1 The Silent Period - The Technique of Film and Video Editing 2023) Using video footage, a director can communicate non-fictional and fictional events. The goal of editing is to combine video and sound to communicate to the audience and allow them to feel emotionally connected to the story. It is a visual art." (University" 2012)

Challenges I did not consider before way into the process, was managing files and file-types. The gathered footage all came in different filetypes. During the production in DaVinci, the video editing software could not manage all these different file types and kept freezing. Forcing me to convert all my files and re-build the whole film in another video editing software called Adobe Premiere Pro. This was quite a setback after I spent so much time learning DaVinci.
I managed to learn the Premiere Pro and edited everything by intuition. There was no prewritten manuscript for the film, just a clear vision. Once the files were edited and arranged, adding visual effects became the next task. Visual effects can be applied to change the appearance of the visual according to the message you want to send.
Following I will share what effects I applied more than once:

Blur

Blur is an effect that lower details in an image. I chose the blur effect to shift the attention towards the narration in a scene that was quite serious. The story started with a different topic but ended focussing on drumdancing. Therefore, I thought, it was suitable, in order to make the story flow to put a blur in the beginning of the image and as the narration shifts towards drumdancing, enhance shift, by making the image of the drumdancer clear. A part from that, I applied blur in another scene, where the people in the background was irrelevant to the story.

Colour grading.

Colour grading is an effect that changes the colour tones in the images. Colour grading was applied to the raw footage from the self-interviews. Also, I colour graded other images to black and white, to let it stand out or appear clearer.

Speed

The introduction to the film with the drone footage over the graveyard, was slowed down, to keep the focus on the land before the graveyard.
Halfway into the visuals with the dogsleds, the speed was slowed down to mark a shift and enhance the experience of the journey and bring focus to the narration.

1.8 Additional footage:

The introduction with the graveyard, was in fact the first image envisioned. That was how I started collaborating with my cousin Vittus Mathiassen that lives in Tasiilaq (East Greenland) whom is a self-taught drone photographer. This image was particularly important to me, as a way to honour, the land and my ancestry that paved the way for us, before anything else.
My other cousin Aanganni Mikaelsen who is a great dogsled keeper often share his journeys from dogsled rides in East Greenland. One day I came across one clip, that I really liked, I asked if I could use it in this film, to which he agreed.

1.9 Languages

The purpose of the film was to first and foremost, to convey information about drumdancing for Inuit in Greenland, why our native language Kalaallisut/Greenlandic naturally was the language it was narrated in. Luckily, most of the archival material was in Greenlandic and the one film that was in Danish was muted, translated and simultaneously narrated in Greenlandic. English subtitles were added as layer in the aim of reaching a broader audience.

1.10 Music compositions/voice over

The entire background music compositions were produced in Ableton Suite. The main the efforts lied in creating subtle ambient vibes, to enhance the atmosphere around the narrated topics. Prior to my studies, I composed electronic music, but taking individual lessons in electronic music composition, Methods II etc. helped me develop my skills.
Even though it was ambient background music, there were places that varied from that, of which I will point out a few:

A cappella

In the introduction to the film, as the drone flies in over the graveyard, I composed an improvised drum song, specifically for this take. I decided not to have any background music with it, to keep it traditional. I intentionally aimed for a strong, yet calm song, to try to match the visuals and my sonic interpretation of loss, vast landscape, history, and a distinct connection to our ancestors.
Only when the title appeared I added a riser composition with synths and drums, to build up tension, before the beginning of the story.

Field recordings

Audio recordings of sled dogs, I did 8 years back, were added to the background music composition where the dogsled in East Greenland appear, to connect the audience to the specific culture and create a closer connection to the visuals. The original sound of the sled sliding through the ice, were mixed in a few places to create a sense of shift in the narration and interpret emotions from objective to subjective.

Sound effects.

Reverb is an effect that assimilate audio reflections in large rooms, which can create a distant and floating texture, which were useful to blend the visuals and background music. This effect was applied to all vocals.
Delay is an effect that creates an echo and prolongs the length of the audio, this was used on the ambient instruments to make them feel more spacey.

Voice overs

The narrations in Greenlandic were recorded on my phone, and transferred to Adobe Premiere, from where I edited parts of the sounds. My supervisor and I tried to make recordings with good microphones and compare the sounds, but since the recordings on the phone were just as good, I kept them. Where after I used the audio editing options in Premiere Pro, to give it some more warmth/bass. Otherwise, I worked with a noise reduction software called Izotope, to clean up noise from the older audio files.

Sound for cinema.

Some of the many things I did not consider was sound for cinema, which requires 5.1 surround sound mix and consideration in use of panning. I did not dive too far, but I got an idea of what is important to be aware of, in terms of the channels for both music and narration.

1.11 Website

As part of this project, I created a new website www.Qilaat.org, to unify all my artistic practices and research in one place.
The website was created in a Squarespace, a platform, which offers website designs, which gives options, to customize and bring in moving visuals to your design and is easy to manage. I developed the page, according to my current needs, but I will continue creating content onwards, as I get more time to do so.

1.12 Writing classes

I consider myself, inherently a practical orientated person. However, writing classes, supported me in articulating my artistic practice in English which is my third language after Greenlandic and Danish.

Methods I, provided me with knowledge about practice-based research, and exercises in how to improve communication regarding my own artistic practice.
Creative writing gave me new approaches, to instant writing, editing processes and various ways of use words in a creative process.

3) Artistic background

I am a multifaceted artist, who likes to explore. Besides current focus on drumdancing, I am a performer and have I released three albums, within the genres of blues, singer songwriter and electronic music.
Over the years I have evolved my practice in different branches such as acting in theatre and films/series, also I enjoy producing music or work in collaborations that are based fully on improvisation.
Due to the difficulty to obtain a stable income from arts in Greenland, I have always had other professions alongside my artistic practice. One of my fields of profession is body-minded psychotherapy, from which I graduated in 2014. The following year I started researching in the fields of drumdancing as a therapeutic method. This is ongoing research, that I will continue exploring.

4) Portfolio

During my studies I have been collaborating in different constellations, which are all connected to the Greenlandic traditional drumdancing and drumsinging.
I will elaborate on few from my portfolio, which you can find on www.qilaat.org/portfolio

True Detective – HBO series:

In 2022, I casted for an American TV-series with HBO; True Detective. The series is set in a fictive town in Alaska, why they auditioned a lot of Inuit from Alaska, Canada and Greenland. My character was a (singing) doula, among 3 other doulas, which are Canadian Inuit throat singers: Tanya Tagaq, Nancy Mike and Charlotte Qamaniq. Apart from being a cast, we also contributed with original music for the series. I contributed with improvised drumming, drumsinging and vocal improvisations.

Tanya Tagaq

When we met on True Detective, we all clicked! Which led to continued collaborations. I gusted Tanya´s performance in Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto, Canada in November 2023, where I contributed with some improvised drumdancing and drumsinging alongside throat singers, Nancy Mike, Charlotte Qamaniq and Cynthia Pitsiulak.

Our latest collaboration was an artistic residency at Brown University, Rhode Islands, USA in March 2024, where we performed, held artists talks and had further collaboration with Jeffrey Ziegler, Jean Martin and the legendary Kronos Quartet.

Album "Pilarngar" 2023

I released my newest album "Pilarngar" in July 2023, produced by an Icelandic producer Salka Valsdóttír and released by and Icelandic record label "Marvada Creations". The album is a blend of electronic music and traditional Greenlandic drumdancing. On few of the songs I collaborated with other artists; Aka Niviana Pedersen (GL), AneMarie Ottosen (GL), Yaari Walker (Alaska), Nancy Mike (CA). In the song "Anaana" (mother) I collaborated with activist Naja Lyberth (GL), which is spokesperson for the IUD case in Greenland, currently suing the Danish Government.

Out of this world 2023

Qudus Unikeku is a Nigerian choreographer I collaborated on a performance titled "Out of this world" in Paris. We performed at Pompidou, with sound managed by IRCAM.
Joined by amazing crew including Olatunde Obajeun (Nigeria), Pandit Dinesh (India), Pierre Carré (FR), Varna (GL) and guest performers: Keziah Jones (Nigeria), Charles Amblard (FR), Sylvester Rabbat (FR/Syria)
I contributed to the collaboration with improvised drumming and drumsinging.

5) Contextualization review

I will share some of the sources that inspired me and added different context to the research I was am doing:

Thomasine Umeerinneq:

My late mentor Thomasine influenced my work, through her knowledge, encouragement, patience, and support of my process. She showed me the way of passing down the heritage

the traditional way and she personally handed her trust in me to pass it on to the next generation, which is my honour.

The women´s boat expedition

This Danish officer Gustav Holm and a crew, managed to get to East Greenland, by the help of East Greenlandic hunters. This travel was the follow up on a previous failed attempt from another Danish officer, W.A Graah.
Gustav was supposed to do measure the further landscape that Graah did not reach, make maps of the coast, do archaeological and ethnographic research. This expedition was the beginning to colonization of the East Greenlandic Inuit, as they settled a trading station and missionaries, on the same premises as in West Greenland. This time in history, their ways of describing Inuit and their culture, all the things they took and deceases they brought, have had direct consequences for my ancestors, which are past down to me. I work on reviving what they forbid.

Hanseeqqap ullorsiutai / Hanseeraq´s diary

He was a Greenlandic catechist on the women´s boats expedition that despised the pre-colonial Inuit beliefs. His documentations illustrated a very orthodox perspective, which recapped the state of mental colonization that is still present today and reminded me that we still have a long way, with decolonization. Not only is it systemic, but also the mental colonization, we carry and pass on, that is current, in today's Greenland.

Drumdancers & cultural knowledge keepers

I was honoured, grateful and inspired by personal stories and support from both East and Northwest Greenland. Inukitsoq Sadorana is an elder from Qaanaaq, which is still preserving and sharing songs that he learned from his father. Mikkel Bianco from Tasiilaq, is a drumdancer, was taught to drumdance by his siblings and now focus preserving the songs and is still learning.
Tukummeq Qaavigaaq from Qaanaaq, moved to Nuuk and joined the union for drumdancers. When she started, she knew songs from her region, but not how to both sing and drum. This was how the union was beneficial for her, she now drumdances every week, teaches in a local dance school. James Ignatiussen is still the priest in Tasiilaq and he is also the founder of a choir "Kangiata Akisuanera" that includes drumdancing and

drumsinging in their songs and a big supporter of his grandchildren keeping up the tradition.

William Thalbitzer´s diary from East Greenland 1905 – 06

William Thalbitzer was a Danish professor in Inuit language. He travelled around Greenland, while he studied the language and at the same time collected a lot of drumsongs. He was in East Greenland the same time as the priest Christian Rosing, who came after the priest Rüttel from the women´s boat expedition. Thalbitzer´s research was unlike others of his time, not undermining the life of the Inuit. This gave me hope, that I could still find some sources, which would not be upsetting to read.

Inspiring film - "Twice Colonized".

This film based on the life of Aaju Peter, an Inuk lawyer that are fighting for Inuit and First Nations human rights. In the film you see her going through personal struggles, while keeping up the courage to stand up, on behalf of others.
This film showed me another side to strengths in including the lived experience can be interpreted through film.

Inspiring film - "SUMÈ"

Is a documentary about a Greenlandic rock band and their stories through 50 years of performances in both Denmark and Greenland. The documentary tells a story about how the band started their journey and the times they lived in. It was so great to finally see a film about Greenlandic music and it reassured me, that we should be telling our own stories.

6) Final remarks

For this Personal Integration Project in NAIP, I aimed to create a film about reviving the Greenlandic traditional drumdancing and drumsinging, as a contemporary way to convey our heritage. Along with colonization of Greenland in 1721 came Christianity and the traditional practice was forbidden. Leading it to decline to the point where majority of Inuit in Greenland, do not know any traditional songs or how to drum.

I am a descendant from East Greenland who´s lineage experienced the colonial forces later than the Western Greenlandic Inuit. That is a reason we kept it and it managed to be passed on to me. Our traditional way of sharing is through the practice itself, which has been my main purpose for the last decade, along researching. As one of the new ways to revive the tradition, we formed a union for drumdancers in Nuuk "Peqatigiiffik Inngertartut", which has resulted in an increase in practitioners in the Capital area. But my wish is that all regions can have opportunity to learn our traditional practice along their own regional significance. Greenland is a huge country, and it is expensive to travel, which limits the options for me to teach in all regions. Therefore, it was a brilliant opening, to get into film production. It is an accessible tool to share our culture, all over Greenland, furthermore, being a great medium to use in larger groups of for example educational and cultural institutions etc. With no prior experience in film production, it was quite a challenge to take on. The urgency of the matter, combined with my obligation and desire to preserve our heritage, boosted my confidence, and made me to follow the task anyways.

The film was made by intuition, which required me to keep a good memory of all the archival material I had, that was not transcribed. One of many things to take into consideration in the next phase of the project, will be file management.

I faced many challenges through this process of film and music production, that I learned from. While everything within the film production was completely new to me, there was a lot of things within the music / sound production for film, that I never thought of either, such as; surround sound mix for cinema, panning sound for cinema and noise reduction in audio, all very exciting to get a glimpse of.

Haven been through this process of directing, editing, narrating, and composing music, enhanced my skills in so many ways, that I had not imagined.

Far from a linear process, with lots of setbacks, time pressure and other projects at hand, travels, performances, lectures and applications, gave to my amazement, various new ideas. While being away from the project felt stressful, I got time to resonate further on the

film, which was very helpful.

As the editing progressed and the film transformed from an expository into a performative documentary, the narrative changed from an objective to a subjective perspective. That decision somehow still feels a bit overwhelming. While sharing personal traumas, is something I am used to, within therapy, it feels different to seal narratives into a film, for many strangers to watch. But again, that was how I was inspired, which gives hope that our stories will be inspirational for others as well. Collaborating with Greenlandic drumdancers and artists, gave the film a whole other dept because of their own personal narratives, which I am truly grateful for. The most important for me, in fact the storytelling was weaved together from all of us. As Inuit, we have all witnessed and unfortunately many have at times been caught in research, arts etc. that was ethically inappropriate or upsetting. This time, we got to make our own film about our heritage, told from our perspective, in our own language, for our people first and foremost. This is something I needed when I was growing up. In consideration of the new audiences and innovative practices, I felt indeed visual arts would be an innovative way, to convey this tradition, as it would open new possibilities for us, to convey it, to the next generation in a modern way, which would let them get acquainted with, what has been "forgotten" and since it is with English subtitles, it could reach even further.

During the film, it became obvious, even after colonization, danization, influences and assimilation, the Inuit ways of knowing are essential. Our oral tradition and traditional practices as an important part of our cultural identity, that we need to care for, to reunite as a people, reconcile with the past and find strength for the future.

I look forward to developing our practice further, produce more visual content about drumdancing to share on the website and last but not least, finish the next three chapters of "The Forbidden Songs".

- Varna Marianne Nielsen

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8) List of images