

FUSE

MAGAZINE

Working Across Communities



STONES. peanuts, miphky and two eggs.
COOKY

SARAH

Inukpak

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Art and Cold Cash

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Arnait Video Collective

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Working across communities

Collaboration, especially the kind that happens across geographic locations, economic, cultural and social groups does the subversive work of bridging and aligning both collectively developed and organically shared interests. The process of coming up with definitions and conceptual frameworks, the importance of examining power relationships, negotiating priorities, assessing risks and understanding cultural differences are all important and relevant issues.

In *Persevering Realpolitik*, Marie-Hélène Cousineau, a founding member of Arnait video collective, reflects on the emergence of a burgeoning video practice in Igloodik. Locating the work produced as an active response to the socio-historical context, Cousineau explores the social, political and economic implications for self-representation, taking the government to task on the dynamics of contemporary intervention and the absence of funding for contemporary Inuit art practice. She insists that, while the establishment of Nunavut gave Inuit channels for political action, the lack of government initiatives to deal with the complexity of northern unemployment creates a situation fraught with confusion and unfulfilled promises.

In *Art and Cold Cash*, the research and arts collective composed of Patrick Mahon, Sheila Butler, Ruby Arngna'naaq, William Noah and Jack Butler embark on a discussion that is grounded in the different experiences of art making that Southern Canadians and Northern First Peoples have as a result of both govern-

ment intervention and the ideology around the production of artwork. In creating a theoretical context for their artistic collaboration, their conversation raises a number of interesting questions around government intervention in art production and the different ways in which it is subsequently conceptualized in Northern and Southern contexts. Interestingly, the conversation reveals that members of the collective have very different concepts and understanding of both monetary and artistic exchange.

and a delayed newsflash ...

On June 8, in the midst of all the intrigue surrounding the passing of the federal budget bills, a spectre from the past came, and passed, without our noticing. Bill C-2 (formerly C-20) which (amongst other things) redefines the lawful defences for child pornography passed third reading in the House of Commons. As this editorial is being written, it is at committee stage in the Senate and is projected to receive Royal Assent before the fall. And no, you didn't miss the newspaper coverage in early June — it didn't receive any.

Most important is not what the Bill contains but what it omits. Namely, upon final passage (which is almost assured), "artistic merit" (remember Eli Langer?) will no longer be an admissible defence. C-2's version of "artistic merit" is "legitimate purpose." (See the Canadian Conference for the Arts and the BC Civil

Liberties Association websites for discussions of the drawbacks of the definition.)

You would think that social conservatives would be applauding the passing of the Bill, pointing to the John Sharpe case as proof that "artistic merit" merely protects 'perverts and pornographers' (conveniently forgetting that Sharpe was found guilty on several charges under the old law). Alas, Russ Hiebert, Conservative MP for South Surrey, rose in the House on 13 October 2004 to declaim the Bill as it would still provide Langer a defence for his "pedophilic paintings."

Whether this is true or not, we can rest assured that once C-2 passes, it will only be a matter of time before Hiebert's theory is put to test and an artist or gallerist (or both) are charged with child pornography. The missing newspaper coverage of early June will be replaced with outrage and accusations (on *all* sides of the political spectrum, not all of it sympathetic to the 'alleged' pornographers). And they will be found guilty, or not, and there will be appeals launched and legal defence funds set up and, eventually, the Supreme Court will review the case and, we can hope, strike it down and ask parliament to try again.

This is not to say that there is nothing to be done now. On the contrary, it is vital to let members of parliament, senators, and the Governor General know your opinion on this matter — and, of course, put aside a little money for forthcoming defence funds.