

CHILDREN OF THE ARCTIC

Documentary, Switzerland, 2014, 93 minutes



Languages	English, Iñupiaq
Subtitles	German
Director and camera	Nick Brandestini
Editor	Nick Brandestini
Writer	Taylor Segrest
Music	Michael Brook
Color correction	Milivoj Ivković, Andromeda Film
Sound design	Guido Keller, Magnetix Tonstudio
Sound mix	Guido Keller, Magnetix Tonstudio
Animations	Daniel Müri, Cloudscape
Production	Vesna Eckert, Envi Films
Website	www.childrenofthearctic.com
Supported by	Bundesamt für Kultur Zürcher Filmstiftung SRF Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen Suissimage éducation 21, Filme für eine Welt IDA Pare Lorentz Documentary Fund

Tagline

At the Arctic edge of America, Native Alaskan teenagers strive to be both modern American kids and the inheritors of an endangered whaling culture.

Synopsis

Children of the Arctic is a year-in-the-life portrait of Native Alaskan teenagers coming of age in Barrow, Alaska - the northern-most community of the United States. As they embark on their journey into adulthood in and outside of Barrow, they wrestle with their roles as inheritors of a jeopardized culture. Their decisions are inseparably tied to the fate of their community. Who will carry the Iñupiat torch? Who will choose a more individualistic path? And what hangs in the balance?

For the Iñupiat teenagers of Barrow growing up has become a little more complicated than it was for their ancestors who originally named this place "*Ukpiagvik*" ("a place to hunt snowy owls"). They are the twenty-first century descendants of a culture that has endured for more than a millennium on this isolated, but now rapidly changing tundra. The trappings of western civilization betray a fusion of cultures that can appear seamless. When a polar bear wanders toward town nowadays, the community is alerted via Facebook. Yet their centuries-old hunting culture is still alive and well.

The harvest of the endangered *aqviq* (bowhead whale) remains the heart of their culture - in the fall, motor boats and modern methods are used, whereas, in the spring, whaling crews use the *umiaq* (a hand-made seal-skin boat) and ancient traditional methods. But under the weight of societal and environmental issues, these promising teenagers are finding it challenging to sustain the adaptability that has long defined their people in one of the most inhospitable places on earth.

Film Team

NICK BRANDESTINI

Director, Camera, Editor

Nick Brandestini is an independent filmmaker based in Zurich, Switzerland. From 1999 to 2002, he was a Producer and Editor for the Swiss music television channel VIVA. His first documentary, *Return to Florence* (2006, 49 minutes), is a portrait of a small group of American and British artists studying classical painting methods at an unconventional art school in Florence. The film screened at numerous film festivals in the USA and Canada. His next documentary, *H.R. Giger's Sanctuary* (2007, 20 minutes), is a portrait of the renowned and reclusive Swiss artist H.R. Giger. His latest film, *Darwin* (2011, 88 minutes), about an isolated community in Death Valley, California, is his first feature-length documentary. It played at international film festivals, winning jury and audience awards. It also had a theatrical run in New York, Los Angeles, and Zurich, as well as in numerous cities in Canada.

Filmography

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|--------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| • Darwin | 88 min. | Documentary, 2011 |
| • H.R. Giger's Sanctuary | 20 min. | Documentary, 2007 |
| • Return to Florence | 49 min. | Documentary, 2006 |

VESNA ECKERT

Producer

In early 2013, Vesna founded the media production company Envi Films, together with her brother Nick Brandestini. Their first collaboration took place during the production of the documentary film *Darwin*. Before her work as a producer, Vesna practiced architecture in Zurich and Los Angeles. She earned her Master's degree of Science in Architecture from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH).

MICHAEL BROOK

Music

Michael Brook is a Canadian guitarist, producer, and film music composer. The *infinite guitar* – an instrument he invented – is being used by many artists from different musical genres. Brook composed the music for films like *Affliction*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Who Killed the Electric Car*, *Darwin*, *The Fighter*, and Sean Penn's much praised *Into the Wild*, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination.

TAYLOR SEGREST

Writer

Taylor Segrest is a writer and filmmaker from Los Angeles. He was already involved in the critically acclaimed documentary film *Darwin*. Taylor Segrest has been a contributing editor for *Documentary* magazine since 2006. As a principal of Cinelixir, Segrest consulted a wide spectrum of filmmakers at all stages of the process. He regularly lectures at U.C.L.A. and U.S.C.