

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE PRESENTS

# Ikumagialiit

With Cris Derksen, Jamie Griffiths, Christine Tootoo  
and Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory

December 12 / 8pm  
STUDIO THEATRE

Toronto  
Premiere



PART OF:

the festival / of cool  
**ARCTIC**

Silaup Putunga Iluani (Inside the Hole in the Universe)  
©2018 Jamie Griffiths / Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory  
Photo by Jamie Griffiths

We respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional owners of this territory and their unique role in the life of the region. Harbourfront Centre is committed to honouring Indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land and waters, and their rich contribution to society. Toronto is on the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We pay our respects their Elders past, present and emerging. We ask that you respect the land and traditions of those who walked upon it for millennia before us.

## SHOW DESCRIPTION

*Ikumagialiit* explores contemporary *Uajaerneq* (Greenlandic mask dance), throat singing, electric cello/beats with hand-drawn 'light' and video, and turns towards the question of how to hold space for fear when pressure is mounting. *Ikumagialiit* takes on the metaphor of the bowhead whale, learning how to breathe in the depths and exploring Inuit practices of meditation and spiritual skill-building to make this journey.

*Ikumagialiit* was commissioned by the National Gallery of Canada for *Àbadakone / Continuous Fire / Feu continuel* in 2019. Funding has also been provided through The Inuit Art Foundation's Kenojuak Ashevak Memorial Fund.

**APPROXIMATELY 90 MINUTES, NO INTERMISSION**

Harbourfront Centre gratefully acknowledges the generous funding and programming support of its partners

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We acknowledge the financial support of FACTOR and Canada's private radio broadcasters.

*Ikumagialiit* was made possible by support from the Kenojuak Ashevak Memorial Fund and the National Gallery of Canada.

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT FROM THE ARTISTS

*Ikumagialiit* (Inuktitut for 'those that need fire') is a four woman performance art band: Christine Tootoo, Cris Derksen, Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and Jamie Griffiths. Using voice, music, movement, light and video, we have created a show based on the diversity of our instruments and the unity of our thoughts.

Our art is informed by our experience as multifaceted women: Inuit women, a Cree woman, queer women, a mother, northerners, younger, older, braided, shaved, tattooed...

Our show takes its lead from Inuit culture and is guided by the use of Inuit spiritual tools we have learned from stories of *angakkuit* (Inuit spiritual diviners). We apply a human experience of the stories, with no claim to having the abilities to be an *angakkoq* (singular of *angakkuit*) or a *tuurंगाq* (a spirit).

As intersectional women, we face tremendous pressure to escape or succumb to conflict. Patriarchy, racism, homophobia, institutional barriers and colonization squeeze us into impossibly small spaces. In *Ikumagialiit*, we dare one another to confront our fears, in order to thrive and become free. The spirit of an *arvik* (bowhead whale) is our knowledgeable, kind, yet formidable guide that forces our humanity to the ocean floor, where we must learn to breathe under the pressure.

All music, unless otherwise indicated, are original compositions by Cris Derksen. Vocals by Christine Tootoo. *Katajjaq* (Inuit throat singing) by Christine Tootoo and Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. All text and movement, unless noted, are by Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. Live hand-drawn lighting: performed by Jamie Griffiths, using custom software by Rob Scharein and Jamie Griffiths. Video projection design by Jamie Griffiths.

# GLOSSARY

## TERMINOLOGY THAT YOU WILL ENCOUNTER DURING THE SHOW

### **Qulliq: Oil Lamp**

A qulliq keeps Inuit homes warm and lit in the darkest of nights. It is the start to formal occasions in Inuit homelands.

### **Agiarneq: Rubbing the rock**

It is said that when an angakkoq is in training, they seclude themselves on the land and find a smaller rock to rub against a larger rock. They rub the two rocks until all notions of time are lost. And still they rub until they enter a great blankness. The strongest of angakkuit will be challenged by spirits that provide such immense pain that life as it existed ceases. Those who survive the pain start a new life. Many angakkuit have described the greatest of these spirits arriving in the form of a polar bear that pierces their heart with a single bite.

### **Puap puasai: Lung bubbles**

To summon someone back to life with a stream of lung bubbles. In the show, Laakkuluk will be challenged to breathe in a new way, drawing her into katajjaq competition.

### **Soqqap inua: Baleen essence**

Baleen are the hairy fronds from inside the mouth of the arvik that they use to filter krill.

### **Blood Clots**

A woman's great loss of blood.

### **White Boxes**

A distillation of conversations around one's fears

### **Accordion Lamp**

Bowhead Dance and Cumberland Sound - accordion tunes handed from Scottish whalers in the Arctic in the 19th Century to Inuit, who have in turn kept the music intact ever since. British whalers decimated the bowhead whale population, using their oil to light the dark streets of cities such as London and Liverpool and the baleen to form the strictures of women's corsets. The whales returned through Inuit stewardship of their own homelands and now Inuit, who still play the old whaler tunes, are relearning how to hunt the great beasts to feed their families and regain food sovereignty.

### **Qatserlini**

An old song from southern Greenland that tells the story of a younger sister finding out that her oldest brother had been killed by a walrus that came up from the depths of the most peaceful of days on the ocean. The sister replays taking in the glassy water, the sound of the birds, hearing the news that her brother had gone hunting, the confrontation between hunter and animal, the walrus destroying of the qajaq (kayak) and breaking the man's body. At the end of the song, the sister finally screams out that she wishes the floor would simply crack open right now.

### **Ilimaqtuqtuurniq: Bondage**

There are many stories of the abilities of angakkuit to fly, to sink, to communicate with the dead, the spirits, the faraway, with animals. The contemporary word for being high on drugs in Greenlandic is the same word for the internet in Inuktitut: to travel to distant places while staying put. Many angakkuit were bonded into uncomfortable positions and then covered by blankets in order to release their minds to travel.

### **Silassuaq: The Universe**

A moment of magic, wonderment and reprieve as we try to take in the immensity of the universe and Christine's hands dipping into it.

### **Uaajeerneq**

A transcultural mask dance from Greenland that existed in pre-colonization, pre-Christian times and again as an artistic tool of decolonization from the 1970s until now. It is an idiosyncratic act that challenges audiences to confront their own fears, play with the boundaries of comfort, take delight in clowning and celebrate everyone's sexualities as intersecting, fluid, individual things of beauty. It is an in-your-face, base, surreal creature performance that literally crawls between seats and enters personal space.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Cris Derksen

In a world where almost everything – people, music, cultures – get labelled and slotted into simple categories, Cris Derksen represents a challenge. Originally from Northern Alberta, she comes from a line of chiefs from North Tall Cree Reserve on her father's side and a line of strong Mennonite homesteaders on her mother's.

The Juno nominated classically trained cellist and composer braids the traditional and contemporary, weaving her classical background and her Indigenous ancestry together with new school electronics to create genre-defying music. As composer, Cris has a foot in many worlds. 2019 compositions include: *Maada'ookii Songlines*, a Mass Choral event for 200 singers commissioned by Luminato; *Rebellion*, a short symphonic piece commissioned by the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra; and *Iron Peggy*, A Vancouver Children's Fest Performance.

### Jamie Griffiths

Jamie Griffiths is a digital artist, film director and performer. Originally from the UK, Jamie spent 20+ years based on the West Coast of Canada, travelling widely with projects before moving to Nunavut in 2015, where she collaborates, creates new works and supports Inuit performance artists as a digital arts mentor.

Early hardcore photography in the LGBTQI cultures of the 1980s and '90s morphed into experiments with music videos and live performance. Designing custom experimental tools, Jamie digs into humanity's failings and triumphs through performance, film and interactive installations. Jamie's latest works explore identity conflict, colonialism, ecology and displacement.

### Christine Tootoo

Christine Tootoo is an enigmatic and captivating actor in film and theatre, recently starring and collaborating in *Kiviug Returns*, Qaggiavuut's Inuit theatre epic that toured southern and northern Canada in 2017, and starred as Ani in the feature film *Iqaluit* by Quebec Director Benoit Pilon in 2016.

Christine has toured as a drummer and throat singer with the Inuksuk Drum Dancers to Ottawa, Iqaluit and Greenland, and she is a button accordion player, mentoring with renowned Nunavut masters Simeonie Keenainak, Zeebedee Nungaq and Jeannie Nungaq. Most recently, Christine has facilitated youth workshops throughout Nunavut in the Inuit performing arts.

### Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory is an artist that applies her study of Uajaerneq and understandings of Inuit philosophies into many genres, from performance art and theatre to writing and curatorial work. Co-winner of the 2018 Dora Award for most outstanding play *Kiinalik: These Sharp Tools* and of the inaugural Kenojuaq Ashevak Memorial Award from the Inuit Art Foundation. Laakkuluk is the first Artistic Director of Qaggiavuut, a nonprofit society in Nunavut supporting Inuit artists and advocating for a Nunavut performing arts centre. Laakkuluk lives in Iqaluit with her husband and three children.



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