

CORY TRÉPANIÉ

INTO THE ARCTIC

Painting With Arctic Peoples

The sheer inaccessibility of many parts of the Canadian Arctic has required me at times to rely on local Arctic inhabitants for travel. This has opened the door to exploring regions of our planet that have been seldom visited, and never painted before. But even more than that it has shown me the world of the north through the eyes of people that have been calling it home for generations.

The Inuit's knowledge of the land was freely shared with me by showing me how to make tea from wild plants, how to deal with Polar Bears, and allowing me to accompany them on a hunt. These added rich layers of experience to my painting expeditions, which I hope that on some level these bring further authenticity to my art and films.

For example, in the western Arctic, the only way my family and I could travel the 72km. from Paulatuk to Tuktoyaktuk National Park was with the help of two Inuvialut men from the community. As a family our gear weighed almost 500 lbs, and Steve and Jonah hooked up a Komatik - an Inuit sled - to their four wheelers to bring us to the edge of the Brock River Canyon.

After a big storm nearly blew our tent off a cliff, a dense fog settled in, obliterating nearby views. Jonah, the elder of Paulatuk, joined us in our tent, put a large pot of water on the stove and poured coffee grinds in to make "cowboy coffee".

Little did I think this would have artistic implications on my journey. But seeing Jonah resting in our tent cradling a fresh mug of coffee, and with no landscapes to actually see outside our tent, I set up my easel... right there. The portrait I did, to my surprise as a landscape painter, became my very first painting in the Canadian Arctic.

On another occasion, in the eastern Arctic, I traveled with Inuit guide Billy Arnaquq, and the two of us set out his fishing nets to catch fresh catch Arctic Char from the ocean. He caught a number of them, allowing me the rare opportunity to enjoy nature's bounty on the land, the way he and his ancestors have been doing for generations.

The northern local people that I traveled with had never been out on the land with an artist before. They appreciated and respected that in my own way, I was paying homage to these wonderful lands, their back yards, with my work.

Cory Trépanier's INTO THE ARCTIC

A traveling museum exhibition of Canadian Arctic oil paintings by Cory Trépanier

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