

THE KILLING OF HENRY JAMES

FILMARTO / BBR, Canada



Suzanne Girard
Filmarto / BBR

Writer _____ Cecil Arto
Director _____ Sylvain Archambault
Producer _____ Suzanne Girard

Project Information

Format _____ HD
Running Time _____ 100 min
Genre _____ Historical drama
Target Audience _____ All audiences
Shooting Start _____ Winter 2011 / 2012
Shooting Language _____ English, Inuktitut, French
Main Cast (confirmed, requested, favoured) _____ Natar Ungalak (f),
_____ Marc André Grondin (f), Remi Girard (f),
_____ Joshua Jackson (f), Jeffrey Dean Morgan (f)

Financial Information

Total Budget _____ 7.700.000 €
Financing already in place (35%) _____ 2.693.000 €

Financiers/Partners already confirmed

Regional Tax Credit 1, Canada (Québec) _____ 1.540.000 €
Regional Tax Credit 2, Canada _____ 625.000 €
Federal Tax Credit, Canada _____ 308.000 €
Filmarto / BBR, Canada (own investment) _____ 200.000 €
SODEC, Canada (regional public fund; development funding) _____ 20.000 €

Looking for

"We are looking for several partners who could each bring 20% or more into the co-production, probably from Germany, the UK, Norway and/or France, but we are also open to others. Some of the shooting should take place in the Nordic countries, and studio facilities as well as foreign technicians are positions that are open to potential co-producers. We also hope to cast some internationally renowned European actors. We would like to find a sales agent from Europe for this project."

Company Profile

BBR is a production company created in 1981. Under FILMARTO / BBR, Suzanne Girard develops original content and produces international feature films and television dramas, documentaries and serials. Filmarto / BBR has worked with numerous foreign companies using tax credit finance opportunities in Québec. Specialised in feature films and TV drama, Filmarto / BBR counts amongst its productions and co-productions: *VOYEZ COMME ILS DANSENT* by Claude Miller, *ENTER THE VOID* by Gaspar Noé, *EMOTIONAL ARITHMETIC* by Paolo Barzman and starring Susan Sarandon, *METALLIC BLUES* by Dany Verete, and recently *LES BIEN-AIMÉS* by Christophe Honoré (in co-production with Why Not, USA). The company also produced the TV drama series *NUREMBERG* by Yves Simoneau and *TALES OF THE CITY* by Alastair Reid, starring Laura Linney.

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Arctic Circle, 1920. An Inuit hunter named Nuqallaq kills Henry James, a British citizen, in an act of self-defence and according to his custom. The event triggers the first murder trial ever held in the Arctic.

Synopsis

An Inuk named Nuqallaq serves time in a penitentiary for murder. He tells his story:

The Arctic, 1920. The golden age of Arctic exploration has run out of steam. Henry James, angry for having failed his gold-digging expedition, lures a group of Inuit to leave the country and return home. To pay his ship fare, James starts stealing from the community. The Inuit families send their chief Nuqallaq to summon James. The White Man comes out of his igloo armed. Nuqallaq steadies his rifle and shoots. The White Man falls dead.

James was a threat, and following their custom, the Inuit had to kill him. The families bring his body to the trading post. Will Caron, the post agent and Nuqallaq's friend, cannot believe it. They could all face justice for killing a White Man. Caron will help his friend, but their lives will never be the same.

The wheels are set in motion. Eager to maintain justice in the North, Canadian authorities send Captain Bernier and Sergeant Robert Joy to investigate the murder. As soon as the ship arrives in Pond Inlet, Nuqallaq is arrested and James' body retrieved. As the investigation is concluded, Will sadly leaves his Inuit wife and children to return with Bernier to the South where his fiancée, unaware of his secret life, is waiting for him. Left alone in Pond Inlet with his officers and waiting for the court to arrive, Joy learns the harsh way of Inuit life and begins to understand the reason why James was killed.

A year later, Bernier's ship finally sails back to Pond Inlet with the Judge and the entire court staff. Will is happy to return and testify in favour of his friend Nuqallaq, but as he makes his round of the ship one night, strong winds throw him overboard. Will dies before being able to testify.

The course of justice is not stopped by Will's death. An odd murder trial takes place, bringing together perfectly lined-up officers with an oddly-clad Inuit crowd who have no idea what the court rituals mean. James is revealed to have stolen Inuit furs and raped Nuqallaq's wife. Nevertheless, the Inuk is sentenced to 10 years hard labour in a penitentiary in Manitoba. Nuqallaq becomes a hero for his community: he will be fed and will live in clean, heated confinement.

Nuqallaq serves a year of his sentence before contracting tuberculosis. As soon as Bernier and Joy learn about it, they have him released and returned to his family. The Canadian authorities do not wish to be responsible for the death of their only Inuit inmate. As a frail Nuqallaq

sets foot on his land, end credits reveal that he died within a few months, leaving behind a sad legacy: tuberculosis spreads throughout the North Baffin villages, killing hundreds of Inuit.

Director's Note

THE KILLING OF HENRY JAMES is based on a true story. The film will be a cross between *ATARNAJUAK*, *THE FAST RUNNER* and *THE ACCUSED*. Its narrative structure isn't far from *AMADEUS*. We'll learn the extremely rich, traditional generosity of the Inuit and their relationship to nature. We'll see that the White Man can be a man of understanding. But we'll also see that the one people's reaction toward the other carries years of misunderstanding and condescension. Humour will play a big role in these reactions: situations will seem extremely funny when the matter is in fact cruelly serious.

One of the main characters will be the colourful, virgin Arctic scenery; its whiteness, the scarlet stains on the ice after a hunt and the darkness of winter. The wilderness, its dangers and the overwhelming skies will also occupy a privileged part of the screenplay. Each frame is powerful, calm and eloquent, using a wide-angle lens to allow the image to breathe.

The contrast of red, black and white will dominate. Red for uniforms and blood, human blood and animal blood. White for the snow, the ice and the ocean's surface. Black for the rocky territory, the depth of the sound and the ocean, and all the shades of grey in the black and white archived photos shot during the trial in 1923. I intend to use the credibility of archived material in the film's flashbacks as witnesses tell their stories. It will be interesting to blend our actors with original 1920s footage or photos, injecting veracity into the film.

Director's Profile

Sylvain Archambault holds a B.A. in film production. He started in advertising, producing and then directing hundreds of commercials shot around the world as well as for an Olympic Games campaign (2002). An award-winning television director, Archambault directed one of the most popular Canadian theatrical features in 2010, *PICHÉ: ENTRE CIEL ET TERRE*. He is presently directing the feature/TV miniseries *ROUGE BRÉSIL* in co-production with France.