

Program Title	Arctic Hip Hop
Program Subject(s)	Native Peoples; Dance; Social Work; Education Hip Hop Music; Hip Hop Culture; Rap Music; Rural Areas
Year Produced	2008
Directed by	Randy Kelly
Produced by	Jacques Menard; Micheline Shoebridge
Distributed by	Third World Newsreel, 545 8 th Ave., Ste. 550, New York, NY 10018
Reviewed by	Timothy Hackman, University of Maryland
Running Time	44 minutes
Color or B&W	Color
Awards Received	n/a
Audience Level	General Adult
Review	

Arctic Hip Hop follows social worker Stephen Leafloor, also known as B-Boy Buddha, as he and his crew of dancers and beat-boxers take their week-long educational program to the remote hamlet of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada (population 1,477 at the time of filming.) Leafloor's group is called BluePrintForLife, which, according to its website, "offers dynamic, culturally appropriate programs designed for First Nations and Inuit youth that are founded on Hip Hop, rooted in traditional culture, and centered on community needs." (<http://www.BluePrintForLife.ca>) Leafloor himself is a social worker with 25 years' experience including "street work with youth at risk,... child protection and community outreach," as well as a Hip Hop dancer.

Over the course of five days, the BluePrintForLife members work with the children and teenagers of Cambridge Bay, interspersing instruction on hip hop dancing and choreography, beat-boxing, and rapping with lessons on violence, alcohol and drugs, critical thinking skills, bullying, and suicide. One of the more interesting segments involves the traditional Inuit art of throat singing and its similarities to beat-boxing, showing the ways the group blends Hip Hop and local culture in their programming.

Footage of the group and their students, most of it shot in the gymnasium of Kiiliinik High School where the program was held, is interspersed with spotlights on three of the youth. Shannon is an eleventh grader with a baby and a part-time job at a bingo parlor. She is sensitive to the problems of her community and speaks with obvious pain about feelings of anger, loneliness, and sadness, but she remains open and friendly, and her earnestness is heartbreaking. Eric stays with friends for two weeks at a time while his mother works in a diamond mine many miles away. He looks to his involvement with a military cadet program to fill his time and prepare for his future. Cassandra, aka Sunny, was a teenage alcoholic who was involved in a snowmobile accident that left her with severe mobility impairments.

The week culminates in a Friday night dance battle/talent show, which opens with Inuit dancers and drummers in traditional regalia and includes a turntablism demonstration, a beatbox/throat singing mash-up, and kids dancing singly and in pairs and trios. All of the children are given a chance to demonstrate their talents: Eric recites some original rap lyrics and, although she can't dance, Cassandra walks across the stage without her walker to enthusiastic applause.

Altogether it is a touching demonstration of community togetherness, and the pride of the children and their families is evident. While it might be tempting to make fun of a group of mostly white Canadians working in the urban African American idiom of hip hop, Leafloor and his crew have an obvious and deep affection for the art form, and have thought carefully about the ways it can be used to bring

positive messages to kids in remote areas who are dealing with serious, adult problems. *Arctic Hip Hop* shines a light on a worthwhile program and a dedicated group of individuals, and is recommended for anyone interested in innovative social work methods, outreach to at-risk youth, or native peoples of the Americas.

Reviewer Rating Recommended