

Unikkausivut Tautsejuk Our Changing Story

by
The Nillialaugit Players
Jens Haven Memorial School
Nain

Cast:

Sedna Scene

Narrator 2 Alicia Dicker
Sedna Brianna Brown
Father Toni Lampe
Husband/Raven Tyrone Lampe

PiKalujak Scene

Narrator 3 Brianna Brown
Raven..... Tyrone Lampe
Angakkuk(Shaman) Caroline Nochasak

Polar Bear Scene

Narrator 4..... Alicia Dicker
Children Megan Dicker
Toni Lampe
Amber Saksagiak
Women BriannaBrown
Caroline Nochasak
Old Man/Angakkuk(Shaman):.....Tyrone Lampe

Teacher Directors: Catherine Boyle & Juanita Skanes

Inspired by “The Polar Bear in the Rock: Two Windows on the World” by the Labrador Institute of Memorial University and Derek Wilton and “Reflection from the Polar Bear – The Story of Three Shaman” by Rose Pamak, Unikkausivut Tautsejuk, explores the transformation of Labrador Inuit culture. The play uses the classic “play-within-a play” technique, as local Inuit legends are retold inside the main storyline of a family struggling to find a balance between technology and tradition. Unikkausivut Tautsejuk blends modern Inuit life with legend and aims to bridge the gap between generations, as the stories unfold. This play examines how technology influences culture and traditions. It also reflects on the changing nature of legends and other stories in the oral tradition. On a more literal level, each legend featured involves a physical transformation, emphasizing the LCAF’s theme.

Unikkausivut Tautsejuk - Our Changing Story

A group of young people are sitting around a fire, laughing, talking and telling stories. They are dressed in traditional Inuit clothing (silapaks, akuliks and skin boots). Someone is drum-dancing and two of the girls are throat singing. This scene depicts Inuit traditions of long ago.

*While the scene above is played out, a narrator, similarly dressed, takes the stage and speaks.
[Spotlight on narrator 1]*

Narrator 1: *[motions to the scene behind/beside him/her]* That is how it used to be. We were happy. We enjoyed each other's company. We knew how to have fun. We loved to laugh. Our stories were passed down from generation to generation around the fire. Our people found strength and comfort from the beat of the drum. Throat-singing was our entertainment. That was before...before radio...before resettlement...before TV and Internet and cell phones. Before our lives got so busy with all of our "stuff". Now we're rushing around, disconnected from each other. There's been so many changes. We don't seem to be that interested in our stories...in our past...in each other...

Present Day... another group, this time inter-generational, arrives at a cabin after a long ride. They have gotten off their snowmobiles and are settling into the cabin for the night. They might sit around a woodstove or a fire of some sort. Some sit at the table, some a bunk and some on the floor, near the fire.

Teen: *[stretching to indicate how tired and stiff he/she is from the skidoo ride]* Long ride, eh? I'm tired and hungry. We should roast some marshmallows.

Mom: *[looking surprised]* Long ride? You were cruising along, right comfy. Imagine what it was like in Anansiak's Day, on dog team.

Mom passes around some marshmallows and sticks.

Anansiak: *[addressing her grandchild]* Sitting on the back of your big ol' skidoo, I never felt a bump. Smooth o' ride. I almost fell asleep, like a baby. Good thing I don't snore! You would have had a fright! (laughs)

Child: *[impatiently]* Gimme a marshmallow. Where's my Ipod? I want to play a game. Hook up the generator so I can watch a movie.

Teen: *[annoyed with younger sister]* Your Ipod? That's my one! Ahhh...wish I could Facetime Toni or even do a Facebook chat!

Anansiak looks confused. She glances from grandchild to grandchild.

Anansiak: What language are you speaking Inuktitut? Doesn't sound like Inuktitut...not even English ... Issa? Ipad, Facetime, Facebook...all kinds of faces!

Mom: Don't mind them Mum. They're just missing their Internet connection that's all. It'll be some good when we get that out here. We might even be getting cell phone service this spring.

Teen: Cool! I can't wait!

Child: Awesome!

Anansiak: *[puzzled]* Inter-net? What kinda fish do you catch with that?

Everyone laughs.

Teen: No Anansiak. It's for our computers and Ipods and stuff. We can go online, Google, send emails and all that.

Child: And I like YouTube....and games.

Anansiak: Google? How do you do that? Is it like a giggle? *[She laughs.]* I'm good at that.

Mom: *[frustrated with her children]* Forget about your technology for one night, eh? Let's get settled away for the evening. Tetuk and crackers would be good...and some of Anansiak's stories.

Child: *[not impressed]* Stories? Booorrrinnngggg! Cartoons better!

Anansiak: When I was a girl, we had no cartoons...no computer... Our stories were passed on, down from generation to generation, just by telling them over and over again. Years ago, our people used the drum to tell stories, you know, like those drumdancers up to the school. And we didn't have any games either, like your o'Fussy Birds...

Child: *[interrupts Anansiak, laughing]* Angry Birds Anansiak!

Teen: *[to sister]* Be quiet you! (to grandmother) Anansiak, tell us some of the stories you remember.

Anansiak: *[looking quite pleased]* OK...this is one of the most famous ones. It's about Sedna. Inuit all over the North share this story. In Inuit legend, Sedna was a beautiful young woman who lived in an igloo with her father. She thought that she was too good to get married. You'd say she was very proud and big feeling....

Lights fade on the cabin scene and lights come up on the legend scene (the other half of the stage). Narrator 2 resumes the storytelling.

Sedna Scene:

A young girl sits combing her hair, admiring her clothes, her beauty...

Narrator 2 : Hunters from near and far came to ask to marry Sedna, because she was so beautiful. But Sedna turned down every single one. She loved only herself.

Sedna: No one deserves to marry me! I'm too beautiful for them!

Sedna's father is outside the igloo and overhears her.

Narrator 2: Sedna's father overheard her and was outraged with his daughter's vanity.

Sedna's father: *[furiously]* The next man who comes to ask for your hand will be your husband. You will say yes this time!

Sedna shakes her head, "NO".

Raven/Husband enters Stage.

Narrator 2: Sedna was adamant. She would not marry any of these unworthy men. Then, a strange man approached the igloo and asked to marry Sedna. Her father accepted for her and pushed his confused and furious daughter and her new husband out of the igloo.

Sedna's father: *[waving goodbye]* Atsunai Paniga!

Narrator 2: Sedna would not look at her father. She was too angry. She turned away from her father and rowed away from the island with her husband.

Sedna and Husband "paddle" their kajak.

Narrator 2: They rowed and rowed and rowed, looking for land. Finally they stopped at a little island. Sedna appeared to be very confused.

Sedna: Why are we stopping here? This isn't a good island to set up camp.

Husband: *[with his back to Sedna...laughs evilly...when he turns around, he's wearing a raven mask]*

Narrator 2: When Sedna's husband turned toward her, she was horrified to discover that he was a huge raven.

Sedna: *[screaming]* Father! Save me! Come and get me father! Please bring me home!

Narrator 2: Sedna ran around the island, trying to escape from her raven husband. She cried and cried. Finally, after several weeks, her father heard her cries and paddled to the island to rescue her. Sedna's father grabbed her and they ran to his kajak. They paddled away as fast as they could.

Sedna and her father mime the action described above.

Sound effects for howling winds and crashing waves.

Narrator 2: Unfortunately, a storm was raging. The winds roared and the waves crashed. Suddenly the raven flew towards the kajak. Sedna and her father trembled in fear. Raven approached Sedna's father, who begged for his life....

Sedna, Raven and Father mime actions above.

Father: *[as Raven approaches him]* No, please! Take my daughter, not me! Leave me alone. You can have her.

Narrator 2: Sedna's father tried to push her out of the kajak. Sedna gripped the kajak, pleading for mercy.

Father and Sedna mime actions above.

Sedna: *[desperately]* Atataga! Atataga! Don't do this! Please, don't!

Narrator 2: But Sedna's pleas went unanswered. She was too late. Her father hauled out his knife and cut off her fingers. Sedna lost her grip and fell back into the sea, falling into the depths like a snowflake falling from the sky.

Father takes out his knife and cuts Sedna's fingers. Sedna falls from the kajak.

Narrator 2: Sedna fell to the bottom of the sea. When she hit the sea floor, her fingers transformed into the sea creatures, like seals and walrus.

Lights fade out on Legend Scene and the spotlight moves back to other side of the stage, for the cabin scene.

The family is sitting listening to Anansiak, totally engrossed in her story.

Anansiak: And then Sedna, herself, transformed with them. She became Sedna, the Inuit goddess of the sea.

Child: Cool! Is that where the sea creatures came from? Did one of her fingers turn into a giant squid or a sea monster?

Teen: We should ask Sedna to bring send us some seals tomorrow, hey boy.

Mom: That's why we leave some of our kill for Sedna, to say thank you for providing us with food.

Anansiak: Yes, Sedna can be generous. That's when animals are plentiful. But if we forget to say nakkumek, she gets stingy and she keeps the seals, jumpers and whales from us.

Teen: [*appearing quite interested now*] Do you know any more legends like that one Anansiak? Tell us another one.

Anansiak: Let's see. There's another one, yeah...with Raven again...about how PiKalujak was formed.

Child: [*excitedly*] Pikachu? Like on Pokemon?

Teen: [*laughing but annoyed*] No! PiKalujak...just north of here...Meatball Island. How was it made Anansiak?

Anansiak: Well, the elders used to tell a story about three angakkuks. These three had a competition to see who was the most powerful. The angakkuks were from Hebron, Okak and Nain.

Lights fade on cabin scene as the Legend Scene illuminates. The action for the PiKalujak Scene is all mimed – no dialogue.

Spotlight on Narrator 3.

Narrator 3: The Hebron angakkuk created a crow in the landscape. The crow was very important to the Inuit because he spoke Inuktitut very well, better than all the other birds and animals. People believed that the sounds of the language were connected to the sounds of the crow. This created a powerful bond.

As the narrator tells this part of the story, the Raven dances across the stage behind him/her, flying around the stage space and eventually exiting off stage.

Narrator 3: Not to be outdone, the Okak shaman picked up a huge iceberg and hurled it through the air. The iceberg landed just north of Nain, out in Nain Bay.

As the narrator tells this part of the story, the shaman mimes picking up a huge , heavy iceberg and hurls it to the “south” of him.

Lights fade on Legend Scene and illuminate the cabin scene once again.

Anansiak: The iceberg turned to stone, becoming the rocky island that Nainimuit known as PiKalujak.

Child: *[curiously and anxiously]* What about the Nain angakkuk, Anansiak? He was the strongest one, eh?

Mom: *[gently but firmly]* Let Anansiak tell the story. Don't butt in....Listen...

Teen: Yes Anansiak, what did the Nain angakkuk do?

Anansiak: Oh the Nain angakkuk was powerful all right. There are many stories about his power and what he created. This is my favourite one...because I can look out my window and see the evidence of the legend...history come to life.

Child: Out your window? What can you see? Did he make the Moravian Church? The Fish Plant? Or was it Northern?

Mom: *[laughing]* No, you silly girl. It's something that's been on the outskirts of Nain a lot longer than any of those things. It's Nain's landmark. Can't you guess what it is?

Child: Nain Hill?

Teen: Mount Sophie?

Child: Annainaks?

Anansiak: Good guesses, but no, I'm talking about the polar bear.

Child: A live one? Where to? I've never seen a live nanuk in town before...only dead ones. We did see one out at Black Island once and one out at the sinna, seal hunting with Dad.

Teen: Not a real live nanuk. That one in the rocks, issa? Over across, below Mount Sophie, headed out Southern Point way?

Anansiak: *[smiling]* BINGO! That's the one! Jackpot for you! *[Anansiak hugs Teen]*
You want to hear how that nanuk got up there?

Everyone nods “Yes”.

Anansiak: I hope I can remember how it goes...

Move again to Legend Scene. Lights fade out on cabin scene and come up on legend scene, where Narrator 4 takes over the storytelling.

Polar Bear Scene:

Narrator 4: Our elders say that there are secrets in the hills. (*look off, as if peering into the distance*) A very long time ago, the men of the village went hunting. The women and children were left home alone.

Children and women wave goodbye, seeing the hunters off. Children play games while women resume their chores – cooking sewing, cutting fish...

Narrator 4: Only one man, the shaman remained. He was too old and feeble to hunt, so he stayed in his tent to rest.

The old man feebly walks to a mat and lies down.

Narrator 4: The children played games and picked berries while the women carried on with their work. Many women were cutting fish.

Mime actions above.

Narrator 4: Suddenly one of the women spotted a polar bear across the harbour.

Woman: [*screaming and pointing*] Nanuk!

Narrator 4: The people had to prepare for an attack. Polar bears are unpredictable. The women had no weapons though, only their ulus. They were willing to sacrifice their lives to protect their children. There were a few dogs, but they offered little protection against the huge nanuk. The children started to cry. The women were yelling, trying to round up the children. The dogs started howling. All of the commotion woke the old man.

Mime actions above – children crying, women getting ulus ready, sharpening them, pushing children behind them. The old man wakes up and hobbles out of his tent.

Narrator 4: The old man slowly hobbled out of his tent. He knew that there must be trouble brewing. He grabbed his kilautik, a drum made out of a seal's bladder. The old shaman went to investigate.

Old Man: Suna? What's going on?

The women point at the nanuk, screaming frantically. The children are still crying.

Narrator 4: The old angakkuk understood. He did not have a knife or a harpoon, but he did have a powerful weapon. The kilautik is the heartbeat of the Inuit, of the animals, and of the land itself. The angakkuk had great wisdom and skill. He stood in front of the frightened Inuit and pounded his amazing drum. The dogs started to calm down and the children stopped sobbing. The women's screams subsided. The kilautik calmed everyone.

Mime actions described above. Shaman beats the drum rhythmically, slowly.

Narrator 4: The children went back to their games. The women continued preparing pitsik.

Lights fade on Legend Scene. Lights come up on cabin scene.

Anansiak: Surprisingly, when the angakkuk glanced at the polar bear, it appeared to be frozen, embedded into the hillside, like beautiful, gleaming white stone.

Teen: Awesome! A drum stopped the polar bear from attacking the village?

Child: Too bad Mr. Murphy didn't have a drum that time the nanuk broke into his cabin. He hit it on the head with a frying pan, hey Mom?

Mom: *[laughing]* You and your stories. You'll be a famous storyteller like Anansiak some day.

Anansiak: Don't forget the important part of this legend. It's a great story, but if you climb the rocks and try to look for that nanuk, you won't find it.

Teen : How come? You can see it across most days.

Mom: *[shaking her head]* Not all the time. They say that you only see the polar bear when visitors are coming.

Child: Only on good days, must be. Lotsa planes some days. Not on weather hold days though!

Everyone laughs at her.

Anansiak: Those are our stories. They are a part of who we are – where we came from, what we believe. They're not just my stories. They're your stories too. You have to remember them so you can pass them on to your children.

Teen and Child: We will Anansiak.

Light fades for the final time on the cabin scene. Lights come up on the other side of the stage, which is no longer the Legend Scene, but the living room of the children's home in Nain. The scene is a modern living room. The kids are sitting around, "plugged in" to iPods, iPads, laptop, TV, etc... Everyone is engrossed in his/her own activity, oblivious to the other.

Anansiak comes in, looks around, and groans disappointedly.

Anansiak: *[disappointed and disgusted]* Ahhhhhh! Didn't you kids learn anything when we went off to the cabin? You're all plugged in to your o' gadgets again!

Teen: *[explaining]* Anansiak, I've created a Facebook Group called "Legends of the Labrador Inuit". People are commenting all out, and posting their own legends and stories. Come look!

Anansiak goes over to look at the laptop or iPad.

Child: And look at me! I'm on YouTube, watching videos. I want to make my own so I'll be famous, just like that guy from "Feel the Inukness"...only I'll be funnier... *[he dances]*

Anansiak: *[Laughing and smiling]* How good! I never believed that technology would be any good, real help to us. I always thought that it would destroy our culture and traditions. But I was wrong. I am so proud of you my ingutaks, using technology to keep our culture and traditions alive. Imagine that! It does my ol' omatik good to see this.

Teen: *[gets up and puts arm around Anansiak]* Anansiak, we'll always have our stories. How we tell them and share them might change, that's all.

Child: *[comes over and hugs Anansiak too]* Thank you for sharing our changing stories. Nakkumek.

CURTAIN.