### "THESE ARE OUR STORIES. WE KNOW THEM BEST." Collaborative filmmaking on In My Blood It Runs

History. Learning. Love. Resistance. BLOCTOD

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### Acknowledgement

As filmmakers, we acknowledge the unceded territories of the First Nations communities on whose lands so-called 'Australia' has been built. We recognise their sovereignty and we honour their Elders past and present. We are guided by their continued strength, resilience and resistance. We would like to further acknowledge the sovereign territories of the Arrernte and Garrwa people on whose Country In My Blood was made. We are grateful for their generosity and leadership in this project, which made *In My Blood It Runs* possible.

## Acknowledging those who walk before us

Our industry has a long history of appropriation of First Nations stories by film crews who have perpetuated damaging representations of First Nations people and communities. As a mixed team of First Nations and non-Indigenous filmmakers, we take our responsibility to deconstruct harmful ways of working very seriously and we endeavour to work in explicitly anti-oppressive ways.

We stand alongside First Nations communities in our firm belief that the control of First Nations stories and films should rest with the families and communities whose voices and stories provide the content on screen. We have been fortunate to learn from the communities and Elders we have worked with over the years in many communities. In addition to the families and communities on screen, we believe that the whole community and Elders of that community need to be informed and participate in making decisions about the film content, framing and release.

The Screen Australia's *Pathways and Protocols* guide(1) is a pivotal initiative authored by First Nations filmmakers and legal experts that provided us with an important foundational guide to working with First Nations communities. We highly recommend that filmmakers read this guide alongside our overview of our specific experience and practice on IMBIR.

We are sharing our process of making In My Blood It Runs not as a 'how to' but as <u>a case study</u> on the approach we took for *this* project and *this* story. We have made mistakes, learned a lot on the journey, and we continue to identify areas where we need to grow. We believe every project is different and requires a unique process designed and led by the participants and their communities.

"Every story has a spirit, you can't tell the story without knowing what the spirit of that story is. We know the spirit of our stories, so we have to be the ones telling the stories." – Margaret Kemarre Turner OAM, Key advisor, Director Children's Ground We recognised the relationship Dujuan's family had with two key organisations Children's Ground and Akeyulerre Healing Centre; both organisations are Arerrnte and First Nations led groups who work on the ground in Mparntwe. The elders who lead these two organisations are Dujuan's grandparents. It was their original vision for telling strength-based stories like Dujuan's that gave birth to this project. Aside from the vast inkind support, we worked closely with these partners and have benefited from their constant guidance on process and competency, from hours of advice and collaborative planning sessions, and from their expertise on process and critical socio-political context relevant to this film and impact campaign.

In developing our process on IMBIR we have been fortunate to draw upon the experience and expertise of other communityled initiatives, namely Children's Ground, Akeyulerre Healing Center, Lavarch Productions, Amiun (formally known as Community Prophets), Closer Productions and Isuma Productions. Building on the expertise of these established models of working in film and/or social justice community development, we have adapted and designed our approach.

"We have a really strong belief in Australia as First Nations people that we should be in charge of telling our own stories. And I think one of the really important aspects of filmmaking, which we really tried to explore with In My Blood It Runs, is how we build a structure around a community that wants to tell this story." – Larissa Behrendt, Producer, legal academic, writer, filmmaker and Indigenous rights advocate

1. Screen Australia Pathways and Protocols guide. "Researched and written by lawyer Terri Janke, this spiral-bound handbook provides advice about the ethical and legal issues involved in transferring Indigenous cultural material to the screen. It covers documentary and drama, including short dramas, feature films and television drama. Using real case studies as practical examples, the guide assists and encourages recognition and respect for the images, knowledge and stories of Indigenous people." https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/about-us/doing-business-with-us/indigenous-

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### Approach -Cultural Safety and Competency



From the outset, our focus for this film and impact campaign was to give and share power with Dujuan, his family and community. We wanted to work in culturally responsive ways that recognised Dujuan, his family and the community's authority. To honour this commitment we had to adjust many conventional film processes. We began by raising a mirror to ourselves and asking critical questions about the project, our own team structure, the biases we brought along with us and the process we needed to genuinely centre the agency of those onscreen.

The model we used to develop this approach was underpinned by the expertise and previous work of our advisors and our team and by the principles and framework of the Amiun Culturally Safe and Responsive Practice in the Arts. Our team has a diversity of experience working in partnerships with key film characters and in diversity on screen, which included Sophie Hyde and her work with Closer Productions on character agency, Larissa Behrendt and her expansive work on community agency, Maya Newell and her work creating space for the voices of diverse young people on screen, Rachel Edwardson and Amiun's work on Culturally Safe and Responsive film practice reform, and Alex Kelly's work in ethical impact strategy. Alongside this we had critical advice and guidance from the processes and practices of our key community partners Akeyulerre Healing Center and Children's Ground, who heavily influenced our process. Culturally Safe Practice gave us a framework from which to begin and has become a best practice model across many industries; it was originally introduced into the health sector in New Zealand by Iripaheti Ramsden. This foundation helped our

team to do the work to be ready for authentic collaboration with Dujuan, his family and his community and our diverse creative team.

"As with many of our previous projects as filmmakers on the IMBIR team, we were always focused on the fact that we were working with real people and real stories. This sharpened our practice and partnered our desire to produce a compelling, beautiful film with our responsibility to be in constant reform of traditional filmmaker practice which concentrates power in the hands of the director/producer. As a non-traditional filmmaker, I have always found that working in authentic partnership with the participants and communities represented on screen, whether it's my community or another community, the film is always better, always more beautiful, always with a stronger story and always more successful. With IMBIR, we were to be working with such talented and strong storytellers and leaders, those who are on screen and those who worked behind the screen. It has been a powerful example of how the real magic of cinema can emerge when the film is made in anti-oppressive ways." - Rachel Edwardson, IMBIR Producer and Impact Producer

With the support of Indigenous leaders and other leading experts, we held workshops to grow the cultural competency of our non-Indigenous key creatives. This included deepening our understanding of stereotypes and bias, power and representation, reviewing team structure and ensuring pathways for voicing concerns and honest feedback. We continually assessed our process and sought advice for any needed adjustments.

### "I wanted to make this movie because I want Australia to know what it's like for kids like me. It was hard work but I had my family to help me."

Dujuan Hoosan, 12 yrs old, Onscreen Contributor and Collaborating Director



## Partnership with those Represented

The Arrente contributors were core partners in the project and we have engaged in robust consultation at all stages of production. As part of the creative film team, the family in the film have been able to contribute to the nuance and authenticity of the film and ensure we were working in antioppressive ways.

"It was hard making the film because we had to decide what to put in and what to leave out. We had workshops and sat down together, out past The Gap (in Alice Springs) as a family, to think about how best to tell my son's story. We wanted to show that our children are cared for and being protected by their families." – Megan Hoosan, Dujuan's Mum, Collaborating director IMBIR

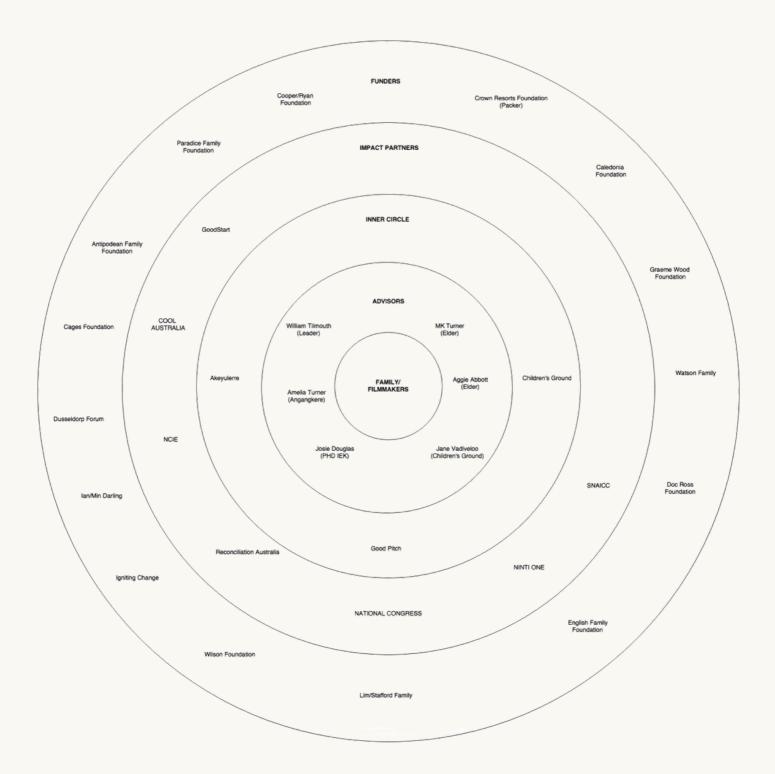
Regular (1-3 months) workshops were held with the key contributors to offer them a paid opportunity to talk about themes, context, perspectives, scene coverage, story outlines, process, representation and the filmmaking process. In these workshops, the family could raise any questions or concerns, which come up during the project. We continued through the edit process, and the families and advisors viewed the assembly cut, rough cut and fine cut, leaving appropriate time for feedback and changes based on their direction. "We need people to come and talk to us and work with us. We don't need people to tell stories about us, we know what stories we want to tell and should be the ones to tell them.

When we were making Dujuan's film, we talked about everything, what we were filming, what we liked, what we didn't like and how we were going to make it. And then what we wanted to do with it. It was a lot of work, but we are really proud of it.

Non-Aboriginal people often come up thinking they know what is best for us, thinking they know better than we do, we don't need people to save us, we need people to work with us." -Carol Turner, IMBIR Collaborating Director and Dujuan's Nana



This is an image of our somewhat unconventional creative control model which indicates where and with whom the power sat. Dujuan and his family are at the centre of all decisions and acknowledged as Collaborative Directors with the filmmakers, whereas funders and those furthest from the lived experience are distanced from influencing the story. "The community made this film more focused, more honest, more powerful at every step. They guided us into telling something that was relevant and if we listened and asked the right questions and offered things to them to consider, they would always point us to something that expanded our original thoughts. We always needed to remember that this story came from them, is of them and we were always trying to find ways to celebrate and showcase that vision." – Sophie Hyde, IMBIR Producer, cofounder Closer Productions



## **Recognition of Traditional Owners**



We filmed on Arrente land in Mparntwe, Alice Springs and engaged Senior Traditional Owner, Felicity Hayes to join the team as an Executive Producer. This title was an attempt to accurately recognise her role and translate that value into western 'film credits'. Felicity is passionate about two-way education and has worked as an Arrente educator for over 25 years. Felicity's support and permission to allow us to film on her country was crucial to the film being made, and her political strength

# Advisors

To ensure oversight of the project from the beginning we established an advisory group chosen by Dujuan and his family which included both people who were on screen, in Dujuan's extended family and those who could walk beside the filmmaking process. Each advisor brought specific expertise to a team consisting of a multi-generational group of Arrernte Ngangkeres (Healers), Elders, leaders and educators. We met with this advisory team on both a formal and informal basis and sought their guidance on project development, story structure, cultural protocol and impact strategy. As a small recognition of their vast expertise, the advisors are compensated for their time and expertise and they were credited appropriately. This included:

- Felicity Hayes Senior Traditional Owner for Mparntwe Alice Springs
- Agnes Abbott Senior Arrernte Elder, Great grandmother to Dujuan
- Dr Margaret Kemarre Turner OAM Senior Arrernte Elder, Great grandmother to Dujuan
- William Tilmouth Senior Arrente man akyahnd Founding Chair of Children's Ground
- Amelia Turner Arrernte Ngangkere, Leader at Akeyulerre, Grandmother to Dujuan
- Carol Turner Arrente Grandmother to Dujuan
- Margaret Anderson, Garrwa Grandmother to Dujuan
- Jane Vadiveloo CEO and co-founder of Children's Ground

and sense of storytelling were vital to unearthing the narrative. Felicity also helped secure funding for the film by travelling to Sydney to pitch with the team early on at Good Pitch Australia 2016, where finance was raised for the majority of the film and the entire impact. Director Maya Newell, who moved to Mparntwe to make the film, sat regularly with Felicity to seek advice about the trajectory of the story.

"Sometimes we took the filmmakers out of their comfort zone. But they were all the more willing to do that. The film team had to put aside ego, film industry understandings of professionalism, learning and try to learn a new way.

On this project, we discussed different issues and things that came up in the footage and talked about how to present it so it was in the proper context. We discussed what might have been inappropriate to put out into the public. There was a lot of feedback from the family and the advisors. It was an enjoyable process. We had deep discussions and the advisors were comfortable to raise any issues they needed to. There were many consultation sessions that were noted carefully and fed back through the whole team so that the things that needed changing in the story or the way we were doing things could be changed. It's how everything came together. I was quite satisfied with the process of the advisory group. We did things in an Aboriginal way, and that's how the consultations on this film worked.

This was the vehicle in which the family told their story and they drove it where they wanted it to go. I am quite proud of it actually." - William Tilmouth, Film Advisor and Founding Chair of Children's Ground "Films made on our Country and with our community have to be approved by the people and made with the people. They have to acknowledge whose stories they are. With Dujuan's film, we found ways to make sure to acknowledge land and Country in the way we made the film. They are our stories. We know them the best."

Felicity Hayes, Senior Traditional Owner Mparntwe, Executive Producer



### Partner Organisations

Our core partnership was with Dujuan and his family, however they were supported by a large team of partners who helped bring this film into being. All our partners fell broadly into two groups: 1. organisational and impact partners and 2. funding partners.

Many of our relationships with Dujuan and his family grew from Akeyullerre Healing Center and Children's Ground in Alice Springs. We gained much support from the trust the community had built with these organisations and we respected this delicate balance and risk they had taken to work alongside a film crew. We were in constant communication with both organisations about our actions, ways of working and developing story themes. They co-hosted many of the larger community meetings and impact workshops and partnered with the impact campaign.

"Community-led organisations have the strongest relationships, history of work and understanding of the critical issues and can help orient film teams to the socio-political context of the stories on screen.

Powerful stories like Dujuan's rarely make it to our screens. And yet these stories are often a key factor in helping policy makers and decision makers understand the untapped potential of community control and systemic change.

Our elders know the power of telling these stories in mainstream and they made a commitment to help guide the film and film team and understand Arrente ways of working.

We have been honoured to be a core partner with IMBIR and to have worked with such a large and diverse team locally and nationally in bringing this project to the Australian public." – Jane Vadiveloo, CEO Children's Ground, Co Founder Akeyulerre Healing Centre, IMBIR advisor

We drew critical advice and support early in the production from additional impact partners who we consulted in specific areas of expertise (education reform, juvenile justice, policy reform and health) while the film was being made and when it was finished. Importantly, we spoke to partners during production to ensure that the film's messages aligned with their experiences and that the film would land positively in the world. Selected key partners included:

Education: <u>Children's Ground</u> <u>NIYEC</u> <u>Stronger Smarter Institute</u> <u>Reconciliation Australia</u> Narragunnawali <u>Akeyulerre Healing Centre</u> <u>Cool Australia</u>

#### **Juvenile Justice:**

<u>Human Rights Law Centre</u> <u>Raise the Age Campaign</u> <u>Amnesty International</u> <u>Australian Human Rights Commission</u> <u>Aboriginal Legal Service NSW</u> <u>Change the Record</u>

IMBIR had the privilege of being selected as a 2016 GoodPitch Australia film. We raised funding for our production and impact campaign which allowed the space to dream big, design with community, and support their model of working. This undoubtedly was costly and would not have been possible in the same way without the foundational and continued support and partnership of Shark Island Institute, GoodPitch Australia and Documentary Australia Foundation.

We were also fortunate to secure funding from Closer Productions, Screen Australia, South Australia Film Commission, Documentary Australia Foundation, Screen Territory, and in-kind film support from Children's Ground, Akeyulerre Healing Centre, Amiun and the Sundance Institute.

We were transparent and explicit with our process. Each new partner and/or funder we were fortunate enough to work with signed onto the collaborative structure our film and campaign used, and recognized that the creative control rested with the family.

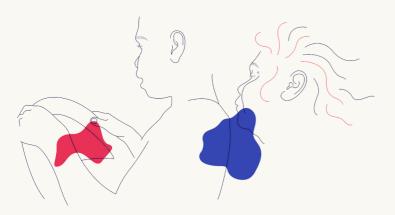
We also supported a range of roles on the film for emerging First Nations practitioners to have development opportunities and exposure to wider networks.



### **Community Consultation**



We held multiple community meetings over the course of the project to ensure that the wider Arrente community were aware the film was being made, understood the core issues and worked to create space for everyone to have an opportunity to ask questions, raise issues or offer advise in a safe space. These meetings were hosted and supported by our partner organisations in Alice Springs, Children's Ground and Akeyulerre Healing Center. "The community made this film more focused, more honest, more powerful at every step. They guided us into telling something that was relevant and if we listened and asked the right questions and offered things to them to consider, they would always point us to something that expanded our original thoughts. We always needed to remember that this story came from them, is of them and we were always trying to find ways to celebrate and showcase that vision." –Sophie Hyde, IMBIR Producer, cofounder Closer Productions



### On the Ground

The Director, Maya Newell moved to Mparntwe, Alice Springs to learn, be responsive to community needs, continue to build and maintain relationships, and be able to navigate the story alongside families.

We edited the bulk of the film in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). Editing on Country allowed Dujuan, his family and advisors to come into the edit suite, view rushes and cuts, and have discussions around the story and film.

## **Flexible Timelines**

Conventional filmmaking is fast-paced, often with tight turnarounds for shooting, edits and delivery. Such deadlines often mean that community practices and protocols cannot be appropriately respected. We used flexible timelines to ensure there was appropriate time for consultation with families and that these windows of time were scheduled into the edit turnaround. It was key for collaborators that each individual, family and the whole of the community had space to consider decisions at their own pace. This meant not selling the film in advance to market to ensure that we had no contractual pressures on the production, so that those on the ground could take the time that was required.

## **Shared Profit**

As collaborators, we openly discussed profit and compensation with Dujuan and his family and found ways to recognise their workload, cultural and socio-political expertise, and advice; we understood this as separate from their on-screen contributions. Together, we navigated the restraints in industry protocol of not 'paying' documentary contributors throughout shooting, and explored meaningful ways to mutually benefit from the production.

We set up a royalty distribution structure that shared the profits of the film with the contributors. Dujuan and his family received equal to the Director, and proportionately more than each producer. Dujuan's family decided that they wanted to set up a Trust so that these funds could benefit Dujuan and his brother as they grew up. The film team held meetings where all family members travelled to Mparntwe to be part of the conversation and design how they wanted the funds to be used for the children's benefit.

"We felt we could not make a film about the critical need for agency and self determination of First Nations people in the decisions that are about them if we did not practice this behind the scenes. In My Blood It Runs is the hardest film I have had to make. It required all the huge challenges of making any documentary film, but layered on top of that we actively pushed up against the conventions of our own industry and sought a path of cocreation in the process of making it. We felt we could not make a film about the critical need for agency and self determination of First Nations people in the decisions that are about them if we did not practice this behind the scenes.

I grew to see my role on this film as a facilitator at the service of Dujuan and his family who wanted to tell their story. I and the film team, used our creativity, artfulness and practical skills as filmmakers and our privilege in the way of access to funding, large audiences, status, and networks to uplift and support Dujuan and his family's IP - their lives and lived experience that was courageously being shared. This is quite different to the model of the single auteur which is the dominant approach in filmmaking and what is taught at film schools." –Maya Newell, Director/Producer/Impact Producer



## Consent as a Continual Process

We treated consent as a continual process, not just a legal signature at the onset of filming as in conventional filmmaking practice. We signed multiple release forms at various stages of the project and checked in with Dujuan as he grew older and was more cognisant of what it meant to share your life on screen.

"From the beginning we knew we needed to leave space for Dujuan, the community and the family to keep holding the choice of whether to tell the story or not. That's usually a decision made once at the beginning of a process, but with this we knew we needed partners (financial and otherwise) who would understand and value that ongoing choice. That's why everything we did had to centre the family and part of our job was to protect that from the mainstream film process and expectation and to celebrate that way of working." – Sophie Hyde, Producer, co-founder Closer Productions

## Duty of Care

Our duty of care plan was co-designed and implemented with Dujuan and the family to support them through the filming, release and impact campaign.

We learned a lot in developing the Duty of Care plan for this film. Core to these lessons was the constant need to protect agency and privacy, to critically assess potential impact of media and other attention, to be agile and flexible, to seek advice, to be explicit with all outside parties and to be prepared to bring in diverse skills as needed.

Every decision was assessed against our duty of care for Dujuan and his family and community.

Some key pillars of our Duty of Care plan:

- Dujuan's wellbeing is at the core of all decisions and is prioritised above all other objectives
- Decisions are designed and controlled by Dujuan and his family, with the support of the film team and are monitored through family advice at all stages
- We work in culturally safe and responsive ways
- Our process is explicitly and intentionally communicated across our internal team to ensure congruence and collective effort
- We are always focused on looking for opportunities for Dujuan (and his brother Colin where applicable) that are responsive to his interests and developmental stages

- We budget for bush trips on homelands for Dujuan at the end of every trip overseas or film festival to re-ground
- We develop a comprehensive MOU contract with partner organisations that limit the use of his image and allow his family to manage his profile and exposure
- We undertake a risk assessment on release of the film and develop a social media strategy that centres Dujuan's wellbeing

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## Impact Work



"This film is about me, it is my story. I want Australia to let kids like me be free to be Aboriginal kids. We should have Aboriginal teachers in school and there shouldn't be so many Black kids in jail. When I grow up I want to fight for the rights of Black people like our old people." – Dujuan Hoosan, Collaborating Director

Our impact work grew as a continuation of the collaboration process we built during filming. At roughcut stage, we held a round of conversations and workshops to collaboratively design the core focus of the campaign. The first meeting was a three day event on Country for Dujaun, his family and our advisors that was co-hosted by Children's Ground. The community-identified priorities and direction for the impact campaign included:

- 1. Racism 2. First Nations lead Education 3. Mainstream Education
- 4. Juvenile justice



# Key principles that guide our impact strategy

- First Nations people have solutions and must have the agency to enact these solutions
- Those with lived experience are the experts and their voices should be amplified and heard
- · Children have wisdom and their voices matter
- Everything is connected. Genuine solutions do not exist within silos
- Change comes through working in partnership and networks
- A commitment to cultural safety

We worked to ensure there was an impact benefit nationally as well as locally and that we had diverse national partners, including First Nations led and other National and regional organisations.

Our national and international partners include our film partners mentioned above, Stronger Smarter Institute, National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC), Be One Collective, Reconciliation Australia- Narragunnawali, Change the Record, Raise the Age, NT Council of Social Services, Community Prophets, Australian Human Rights Commission, Aboriginal Legal Services (NSW/ACT), Cool Australia, United Nations Association of Australia NSW Division, Human Rights Law Center, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association, Just Reinvest NSW, National Museum Australia, ATOM and more.

We wanted to challenge the idea that the release of the film and the impact campaign happened as independent and separate initiatives. We found that if we identified strategic opportunities to further the Impact Campaign goals and adjust the traditional film release paradigm we could have a traditionally 'successful' film release that prioritised the impact campaign. Working with this strategy also allowed us to stay focused and uphold our core purpose and the collaboration model we built for the film and impact campaign.

With this foundation and the financial support from GoodPitch Australia, Shark Island Institute, Documentary Australia Foundation and a number of Impact funders, we embarked on a multi-year impact campaign. "In My Blood It Runs has been a powerful example of what can be co-created when power and processes are shared, when methods and expertise is unpacked and made transparent and decisions made through co-design and deep, real collaboration.

All of us were learning across domains of expertise – from knowledge of youth work, education, Country, lore, filmmaking, political strategy and much more and the final film and associated impact strategy is testimony to a process which didn't ever elevate one area of knowledge over another but put them all to the service of making a beautiful film and the most impact we possibly could for the issues identified by the community in and around the film." –Alex Kelly, IMBIR Impact producer

Please see the Take Action page on the website for more information and for the detailed evaluation report on the impact of In My Blood It Runs.

"When we were making this film, we knew it was important, it was an opportunity to tell our side of the story, a part of the story you don't get to see on mainstream TV. To do that we had to work together. For us, working together means we are at the table. We don't need others to tell us what to do, we know what we want. We need to be allowed to be part of the conversation and the decisions.

We travelled with the film all over the world and met the other people and groups who helped make this film successful. We wrote articles in the papers, had a lot of meetings to decide what to do at different stages of the film. I didn't know how much work goes into a film before making this movie, but I'm glad we did it.

The best thing has been seeing how proud it makes my grandson and other communities who watch it." – Margaret Anderson, Dujuan's Nana, Collaborating Director, IMBIR



### In Summary



During all aspects of production and of the Impact Campaign our team was led by First Nations voices and solutions. At every opportunity we centered the film contributors, their community and First Nations led organisations, not only in the making, but also in distribution through impact work, in media interviews, Q&A panels, education events and at festivals and film events.

We are constantly thankful, inspired and strengthened by Dujuan, his families and our key advisors in their ability to lead, hold, and ground the space we were working in. Collaboration is a continual process of learning and transformation grounded in relationships. So much of the work for this film, like many films, happened quietly, unannounced behind the scenes. The team would like to acknowledge the leadership of Rachel Naŋinaaq Edwardson and David S. Vadiveloo whose ideas and practice in cultural safety were a guiding star as we navigated the best approach for this film. We would further like to acknowledge the openness to be changed through relationship and learning that was inherent in the culture of this project, made possible because of a humble and generous approach to learning across the whole team.

This report was prepared by Rachel Edwardson, Maya Newell and Alex Kelly with Dujuan and his families, key film advisors and with thanks to The Unquiet Collective, Children's Ground and our our movement partners. March 2023 For full project credits see https://inmyblooditruns.com/about/#filmteam

We are proud of this film and the ways it enacts change on many levels. While it is an extraordinary amount of work to try to engage deeply in anti-oppressive ways of working and to push up against the status quo, we share a responsibility as filmmakers to work in close partnership with those on screen and to dismantle the harmful ways of working that some filmmaking has used in the past. We hope there are aspects of our way of making that inspire a stronger approach to documentary work for others.

