

# TANYA MARYNIAK

## THE BIO

Award-winning filmmaker Tanya Maryniak directs and edits documentary films that inspire social change. With a degree in New Media from Ryerson, Tanya has worked in film and television since 2000, traveling to some of the planet's remotest corners to satisfy her storytelling addiction.

Tanya's work has screened at film festivals worldwide and aired on CBC, Bravo!, the Discovery and History Channels, Knowledge Network, W Network, Animal Planet, MuchMusic, CMT, OLN and Global TV.

In 2014 the Prestige Film Awards honoured Tanya's film *Every Child* with their Humanitarian Award and Gold Award for Best Directing. Tanya received two Leo nominations for her work with academy-award winner John Zaritsky on *Do You Really Want To Know?* and *Wild Horse Redemption*. And in 2016, her skills were key to winning the Leo's Best Documentary Award for Network Entertainment's *Johnny Cash: American Rebel*.

## BEHIND THE STORIES

I'm sitting on a wonky hand-made stool in a remote Ethiopian hut, mud between my toes, brain still rattling to the tempo of the deeply-rutted road along which I've just traveled. My nose is plugged with boogers the colour of the dusty, rusty landscape, and my shoulder is raw from the chafing seat beat. An attractive sight, I know. Unaware of the toll on my body, my mind is utterly fixated on finding the story and pulling me in. Even on days like this, it doesn't feel like "work."

We live in a rich, raw era of documentary storytelling. Docs — once a high-brow art — now spill onto the streets. They're profound, cheeky, rousing, eye-opening and entertaining. An impactful documentary can change policy, raise funds and create the social shifts we desperately need. I've seen this first-hand, through creating films that have generated more than \$20 million for development work. That's a lot of coin. Its changes are mind-blowing. But it's not enough for me. Seeing this potent impact pumps my storytelling addiction. There's nothing more satisfying than devoting months to a project, then stepping back and watching it dare change.

I believe change is not buried within stats and facts (although they certainly hold value). It's found by digging deep through all the noise to the grassroots, to individual lives, and drawing out the compelling tales hidden within. Here you see eye-to-eye another human's triumphs or despairs. When we arrive at this most raw level, we can feel another's life. This is where impact happens.

As a filmmaker I'm privileged to engage with people the world over and it's an honor to hear their most intimate stories, much like a counselor but without the pressure of giving wise advice.

I've listened to the people who live in a still-segregated town in Mississippi where black kids and white kids go to different schools, and churches do not mix; to residents of an isolated town in the Democratic Republic of Congo who macheted a field so our Cessna could land; to forgotten villagers in the mountains of Southern Ethiopia, reached by a newly carved, precipitously narrow road. And from these conversations I have not only grown but brought shape to their stories and shared them with the world.

Early in my career, when music videos were my playground, I got my kicks from creating poetry for the eyes through ominous, vibrant or whimsical scenes. But after a few years, I hungered for more. I wanted to give quiet voices a podium. So I entered the doc world, and here I found a home.

Be it in the edit suite or in the field, I connect with fascinating stories. The inmate learning patience through training a wild mustang; the young couple struggling with genetic testing that may reveal the deadly Huntington's gene; a Congolese village celebrating the first taste of clean water; Johnny Cash travelling down his remarkable, tumultuous path.

The world hands us profound story material every day. Teenage boys set their autistic classmate on fire; factory workers die of leukemia for corporate profit; the day after the US election, a white kid waves a Trump sign in the face of a little black kid and tells him to "go home".

Acts like these boil my blood. Then they numb me. And then they fuel me. As a teller of tales, I can't un-see. So instead, I use the loudest voice I know.