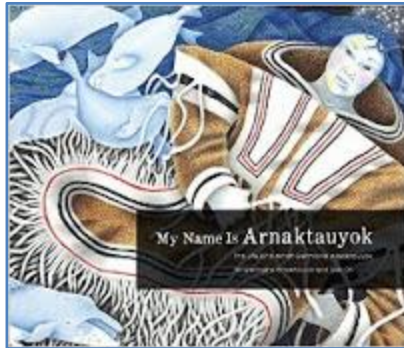


SPOTLIGHT



My Name is Arnaktauyok: The Life and Art of Germaine Arnaktauyok gives exactly what the subtitle promises. There are autobiographic bits, some discussion of her inspiration and creative process, and description of Inuit legends, all of which is interspersed with images of her artwork.

Arnaktauyok's sentences are mostly short and factual. It's hard to say why. One might be inclined to suggest that it's because English is not her first language. Still, she had been forced at residential school at a young age to learn English and I suspect her command of English would be more than sufficient to have spoken with more figurative flair and emotion. She does state at one point that she's shy and she also comes across as quite pragmatic. Even as she describes how residential schools had eroded the bond between her and her parents, it's told with almost no editorializing.

However, the artwork, painstakingly detailed and highly evocative, more than sufficiently balances out the text. Arnaktauyok herself says at one point, "When I do artwork, I put a lot of emotion into." It shows.

The book, as a whole then, is more than a sum of its parts. It speaks as much about the power of art as it does of Arnaktauyok's own life. The beautifully intricate prints and sketches provide an almost cathartic release to her words. Truly a breathtaking book.

My Name is Arnaktauyok is Ruth Bowen's pick for the upcoming Yellowknife Reads debates. Find out more about these debates, including the other panelists and their books, by checking out the library's website: www.yellowknife.ca/ypl

Review by John Mutford

Public Services Librarian