
A DOCUMENTARY MOVEMENT

Rivers of Life

Chapter Slate — Greenlight

*The next few productions · what we shoot next
and why*

Created by Tan

Feature chapters · Returning series format · Rights of Nature

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For commissioners · impact funders · co-producers · nations

The ask in one breath

Greenlight Chapters II–IV of Rivers of Life: three feature-length documentary productions that extend a proven format from the completed Magpie chapter into a continental and then global movement. One film already exists as proof. The next three open the series as a durable, ownable IP on rights of nature.

Chapter I — Proof (complete)

THE MAGPIE RIVER · MUTESHEKAU-SHIPU · QUÉBEC

Status	Feature complete · trailer live
Legal	First river in Canada granted legal personhood (2021)
Partners	Filmed with gratitude on Innu of Ekuanitshit territory
Assets	Trailer youtu.be/kJZ7LcnIufw · chapter site · raw archive logging

Function for the slate: de-risks tone, format, caravan engine, and audience. Proves that the series can hold philosophy and adventure in the same frame without collapsing into either lecture or travelogue.

Chapter II — Immediate greenlight

THE WABIGOON RIVER · ONTARIO

Status	Research complete · production seeking finance
Legal	Growing case for the same rights won by the Magpie
Stake	Mercury poisoning at Grassy Narrows — justice still unfinished
Geography	Canadian continuity; different province, different political weather

Why second: it keeps the series on Canadian soil long enough to deepen national conversation and broadcast pathways (CBC Docs, NFB, Telefilm impact lanes) while raising the moral temperature. The Magpie is a story of recognition achieved. The Wabigoon is a story of recognition still owed — and of a community that has lived with industrial violence in its water for generations. The caravan does not arrive to 'save' anyone. It arrives to listen, to witness, and to learn what personhood means when the river is sick.

- ◆ A-story: caravan west/north from Toronto into Grassy Narrows country; road as reckoning.
- ◆ B-story: survivors, youth, scientists, guardians, activists, government silence.
- ◆ C-story: dams and external pressures; consumption; flow interrupted — limnology of harm and healing.
- ◆ Climax: not a waterfall of pure freedom, but a harder grace — presence with poisoned water without turning away.
- ◆ Impact: amplify existing Grassy Narrows advocacy; never replace community voice.

Chapter III — Origin of the law

WHANGANUI · TE AWA TUPUA · AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Status	Slated · relationship development
Legal	2017 Act of Parliament — first river on Earth as living legal person

Phrase Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au — I am the river, and the river is me
Mech 140-year struggle by Whanganui iwi

Why third: after two Canadian chapters, the series must touch the source of the modern legal personhood wave. Whanganui is not a sequel to Magpie; Magpie is a tributary of Whanganui's precedent. Filming here, with iwi leadership and Te Awa Tupua guardians, positions Rivers of Life as a global movement rather than a Canadian one-off — and gives international commissioners a chapter that travels their maps.

- ◆ Partnership-first: no production without iwi invitation and co-stewardship of story.
- ◆ Caravan adapted: local protocol, not imported RV bravado; vessel becomes whatever the place requires.
- ◆ C-story: individuality & unity at civilizational scale — person and river as one sentence.

Chapter IV — Open international

Partner-led selection among rivers already recognized as persons. Three strong candidates; one will lock based on access, timing, and co-production geography.

CANDIDATE A — GANGA & YAMUNA · INDIA

High court personhood (2017); spiritual weight unmatched; diaspora bridge for Tan's own cultural waters. Complexity: legal status contested and evolving — the film can hold that tension rather than paper over it.

CANDIDATE B — ATRATO · COLOMBIA

2016 Constitutional Court; Afro-Colombian and Indigenous guardianship; mining and conflict as external pressures. Strong for LatAm co-production and Spanish-language reach.

CANDIDATE C — KLAMATH · USA

2019 Yurok recognition; dam removal and salmon return as living hope. Strong for US public media (POV, ITVS, NatGeo) and a story of repair rather than only harm.

Optional later waters

- ◆ Vilcabamba (Ecuador, 2011) — early rights-of-nature jurisprudence.
- ◆ Turag (Bangladesh, 2019) — urban river, denser human pressure.
- ◆ New recognitions as they emerge — format is designed for infinite chapters.

Production order rationale

- ◆ II Wabigoon first — research ready, domestic logistics, justice urgency, Canadian finance stack.
- ◆ III Whanganui second international — establishes global authority and legal origin story.
- ◆ IV open — maximize co-pro geography and market after two locked chapters exist.
- ◆ Parallel development: soft relationship-building on III/IV while II is in production.

What greenlight unlocks

- ◆ Locked creative package for II (treatment, access plan, budget, schedule).
- ◆ Development trips and formal partnership MOUs for III and IV.
- ◆ Series branding across commissioners as a multi-year movement, not single film.
- ◆ Companion book and impact campaign architecture across three chapters.
- ◆ Talent attachments (narration, score, on-camera presence) at series level.

Investment framing

Chapter I is the sample. Chapters II–IV are the series. Financing can enter at single-chapter level or as a three-chapter slate with preferred windowing. Impact funders may underwrite access and community partnership lines; broadcasters and streamers underwrite production and distribution. The format compounds: each chapter makes the next easier to sell, because the brand and the map grow more complete.

■ *“This is legacy work — a returning format with the reach of the natural world and the intimacy of a road film, growing every year, in every hemisphere, without our asking.”*

— Site · Come Downstream