
A DOCUMENTARY MOVEMENT

Rivers of Life

Production Overview

Ambitious, mobile · where the money shows

Created by Tan

Feature chapters · Returning series format · Rights of Nature

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For commissioners · impact funders · co-producers · nations

The pitch to production

Each chapter is a mobile unit with a soul: caravan logistics, river access, interview depth, and one or two swing set-pieces (waterfall, ceremony, dam face, courtroom, aerial of the full system). Scale lives in place and relationship — not in fabricated spectacle.

Unit structure (per chapter)

- ◆ Unit A — Caravan / Road: RVs, camps, cities en route, character arcs in motion.
- ◆ Unit B — River: on-water, bank camps, aerials, the climax site.
- ◆ Unit C — Testimony: elders, scientists, guardians, community interiors.
- ◆ Unit D — Archive / graphics: legal documents, map of personhood rivers, limnology language.
- ◆ Unit E (as needed) — Ceremony / protocol days: community-led, schedule-protected.

Where spend reads on screen

- ◆ Time on the river — days, not a single golden-hour hit.
- ◆ DP / sound who treat water as character; aerial partner for true geography.
- ◆ Local fixers, translators, cultural advisors — non-negotiable quality and ethics.
- ◆ Post: poetic grade, patient edit, score that does not explain.
- ◆ Impact deliverables cut in parallel with festival cut.

Where we save without looking cheap

- ◆ Real caravan, real breakdowns, real road — authenticity is free if you film it.
- ◆ Rotating cast of friends + local companions vs. large standing crew on every mile.
- ◆ Chapter I footage and brand kit already exist — series overhead amortized.
- ◆ One visual religion locked; no reinventing LUTs and type each chapter.
- ◆ No forced celebrity unless it serves the river; the river is the star.

Chapter II sketch (Wabigoon)

Prep	8–12 weeks access, research refresh, community protocol
Principal	~3–5 weeks (road + community + river)
Post	16–24 weeks festival feature
Core team	Director, DP, sound, producer, AD/driver, local liaison
Budget philosophy: medium-scale independent documentary with broadcast finish. Detailed line budget available in financing conversations; this overview is the production truth, not the spreadsheet.	

Consults & ethics (non-negotiable)

- ◆ Indigenous nation / community consent and story stewardship for each river.
- ◆ Rights-of-nature legal advisor for accuracy without turning film into brief.

- ◆ Environmental / public-health advisor where harm (e.g. mercury) is central.
- ◆ Trauma-informed interview practice for survivors of industrial violence.
- ◆ Credit and compensation for knowledge-holders; no extractive B-roll raids.

Risks named honestly

- ◆ Access timelines can shift — relationship before schedule.
 - ◆ Legal statuses evolve (courts reverse, parliaments amend) — film holds the living process.
 - ◆ Tone risk: poetry without condescension; politics without pamphlet.
 - ◆ Travel and weather on remote water — safety plan, insurance, local guides.
- These risks are also the integrity of the project. We staff for them; we do not dilute them.

Deliverables already in package

- ◆ Pitch letter, one-sheet, series treatment, format bible
- ◆ Chapter slate (II–IV greenlight)
- ◆ Why-now market note, impact & partnerships brief
- ◆ Chapter I trailer + site + one-pager
- ◆ Footage access conversations for serious partners