
A DOCUMENTARY MOVEMENT

Rivers of Life

Why Now

Market · culture · commissioner fit

Created by Tan

Feature chapters · Returning series format · Rights of Nature

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For commissioners · impact funders · co-producers · nations

The opportunity

- ◆ Rights of nature is no longer fringe theory — it is statute, case law, and tribal resolution on five continents. Audiences are ready for the human story inside that legal shift.
- ◆ Prestige documentary is hungry for formats that return without becoming procedural — a series brand with feature dignity.
- ◆ Indigenous-led and Indigenous-partnered storytelling is a commissioning priority across public media and streamers — when done with real relationship, not branding.
- ◆ Climate storytelling is evolving past doom reels toward kinship, repair, and legal imagination. Rivers of Life sits exactly there.
- ◆ Chapter I complete means buyers are not financing a theory. They are extending a proven object.

Audience

- ◆ Prestige / festival documentary viewers (Malick-adjacent, poetic nonfiction).
- ◆ Viewers of nature and adventure docs who want human stakes.
- ◆ Indigenous rights, environmental justice, and legal-innovation audiences.
- ◆ Younger audiences who meet the series through trailer, map, and limnology language online.
- ◆ Educational and institutional (universities, museums, river guardianship networks).

Commissioner & funder fit

Primary cold lanes (from existing outreach map): POV, Nat Geo Documentary, CBC Docs, NFB, Sundance Documentary, Hot Docs markets, ITVS, impact foundations, and rights-of-nature aligned philanthropy. Canadian spine for Chapter II; international co-pro for III–IV.

- ◆ Public broadcasters — public-interest legal story + Indigenous partnership.
- ◆ Streamers — returning premium doc brand with global map and beautiful craft.
- ◆ Impact funders — measurable narrative support for living campaigns (e.g. clean water justice).
- ◆ Festival circuit — feature premiere path per chapter; brand accumulates.

Competitive position

There are films about single rivers and series about the planet. There is not yet a returning, human-scale series that follows legal personhood river by river, with a caravan as the narrative engine and Two-Eyed Seeing as method. That gap is the IP.

Risks (named honestly)

- ◆ Must never become 'beautiful poverty' or settler pilgrimage cosplay — protocol is load-bearing.
- ◆ Legal accuracy without freezing the river into a case study.

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- ◆ Series fatigue avoided by radical specificity of place each chapter.

These risks are also the work's integrity. We write, staff, and partner for them.

Materials status

Chapter I complete; trailer live (youtu.be/kJZ7LcnIufw). Pitch site live (rivers-of-life.tan-peak.workers.dev). Greenlight suite: one-sheet, treatment, format bible, chapter slate, production overview, impact brief. Research complete for Chapter II (Wabigoon). Relationship development for Whanganui and open international Chapter IV.