

A Magpie Runs Through

The Magpie River · Muteshekau-Shipu · Côte-Nord, Québec · shot 10–22 September 2023 · 13 days · 2,650 source clips · 8 cameras
· feature documentary



The Magpie's falls. Frame from the footage — Canon 5D, RAW.

A caravan that never holds the same shape twice drives thirteen days north to meet a river the law has just agreed to call a person. They arrive with an argument to prove. The river declines to participate. Somewhere past the third breakdown, the film stops being about the river's personhood and starts being about theirs.

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS

Everything you need to cut this film without having been there. The premise. The exact story. Every camera and what its filenames look like. A day-by-day timeline of everything that happened, in order. The system that holds the three storylines together. The honest state of the existing edit, and the order to work in.

THE ONE THING TO UNDERSTAND FIRST

Everything on the drive is organised by **day** — which is how it was shot, not how it should be watched. The DAYS projects are the archive. They are not the timeline. This film gets cut by **arc**, not by chronology. **The days are the river's bed. The people are the water.**

1 • The Premise

In February 2021 the Innu Council of Ekuanitshit and the Minganie municipality granted the Magpie River **nine legal rights** — the first river in Canada recognised as a living person. That is the hook. **It is not the film.**

The film is what happens when a caravan of artists, guides, philosophers and musicians — most of whom have never been north — drive thirteen days to go and *meet* a legal person. They arrive with an argument to prove. The river declines to participate. What they find instead is that they have spent two weeks doing to each other exactly what water does: meeting, merging, eddying, and coming apart.

The film is honest about not knowing. There is no grand narrative constructed after the fact — the crew went looking and filmed what they found, including the parts that went wrong. That posture is the film's greatest asset. Most documentaries in this genre arrive knowing their conclusion. This one earns its conclusion on camera, and the audience can feel the difference.

"As soon as you name something — as soon as you catch it in language — you crystallize it. You can see it so clearly. And you stop it from changing. You lose some aspect of its divinity. That's not how humans work. That's not how relationships work. We are like water — we have to flow, and just be. I think if we could speak like water, if we could be like a river, we wouldn't hurt so much."

— TAN · THE FILM'S OPENING LINES

THE THESIS, IN ONE LINE

A river is the first proof that many can become one without ceasing to be many.

THE TURN

At the waterfall the argument dissolves. *She is a wild river. She does not care at all about personhood.* Then the real irony lands, and the film must be brave enough to leave it unresolved: having found her sacred, **we clothe her in personhood in order to protect her from ourselves.** We started as one. We grew an ego and dominated the earth. Now we hand creation back its rights one piece at a time — because we have decided personhood is the most valuable form of existence there is.

2 • The Cameras

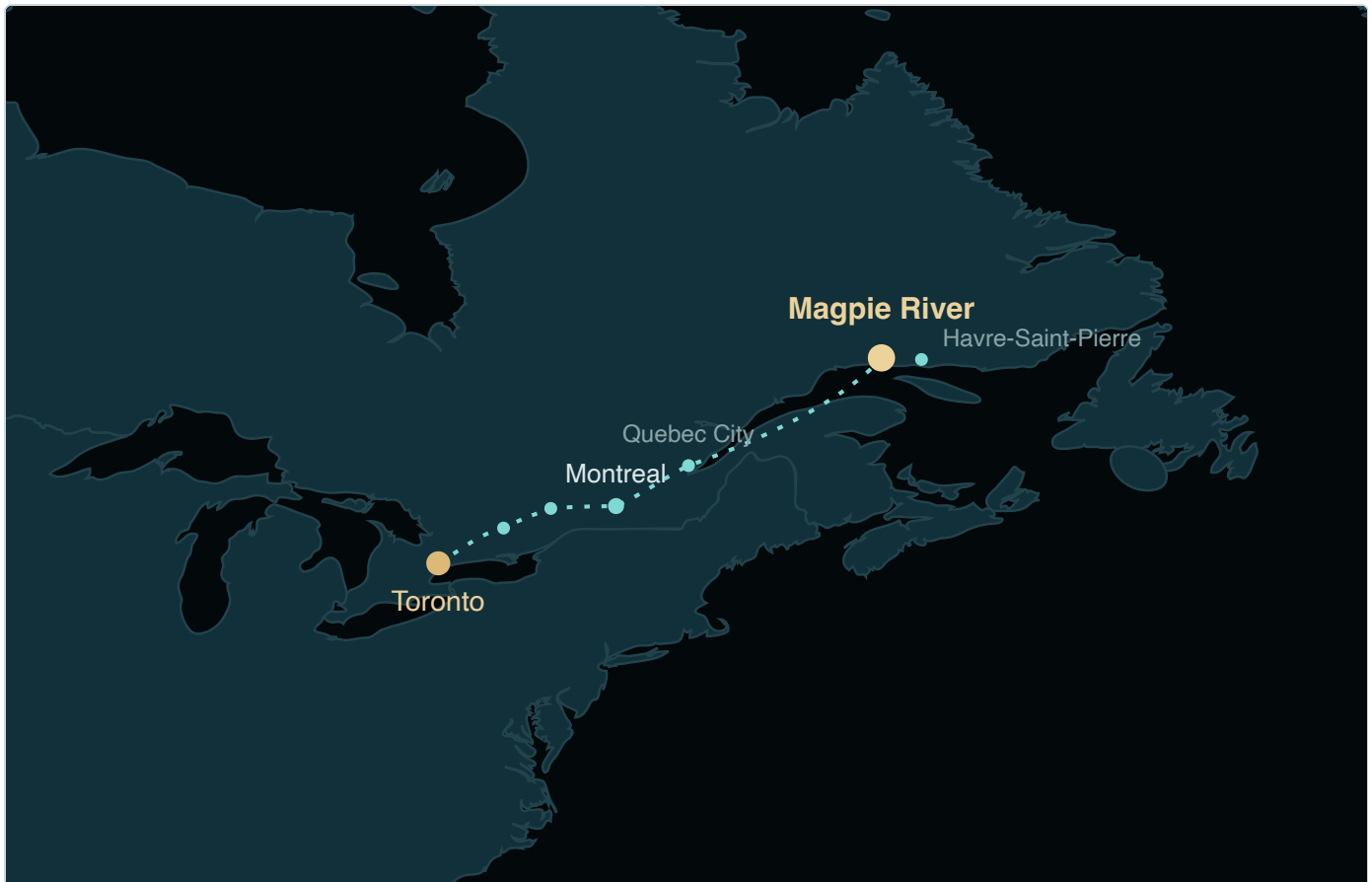
Eight camera systems, 2,650 distinct source clips across the thirteen days. **Learn these filename prefixes — they are how you know what you're looking at before you open it.**

FILENAME PATTERN	CAMERA	CLIPS	WHO / WHAT IT'S FOR
IMG_####.MOV / .HEIC	iPhone	1,272	The largest source by far. The intimate, in-the-moment material — much of it shot by Tan himself. Where the honesty lives.
BD9A####.MOV	Canon cinema body — "Main Camera"	598	The A-camera: interviews, the falls, the ceremony. Your best-looking footage.
20230915_#####.mp4	Android phone (Samsung)	450	Second phone. Filename = date + time , so this is your most reliable clock for reconstructing what happened when.
DJI_####.MOV / .MP4 / .DNG	DJI drone	109	Every aerial: the Bounder on 138, the river braiding through town, the float. 21 DNG raw stills. Note: almost all of it is from Sept-iles onward (Day 7+), when Hayden joined.
DSC_####.MOV	Secondary body	57	B-camera coverage.
GOPR#### / GP01####	GoPro	49	Action / water / mounted. Note: paired .WAV files carry the audio.
VID_20230915_180422_00_097	Insta360	9 raw + 135 exports	See the warning in §11. The 360 EXPORT folder is the richest narrative index on the drive — but they're baked reframes, not equirect.
SDC####.AVI	Legacy camcorder	12	Days 1–2 only. Texture/nostalgia grain if you want it.
_D9A####.CR2	Canon 5D — stills	171 RAW	5760×3840 RAW. The 5D JPGs/ subfolder is only 720×480 previews — always use the parent .CR2.

The practical consequence: this is a two-tier film. The Canon is beautiful but arrives late to every moment; the phones are ugly but they were *there*. **Do not grade the phone material into oblivion trying to match the Canon.** The texture difference is the difference between "being filmed" and "being lived", and this film's whole argument depends on the second one. Let them look different.

3 • The Timeline — Everything That Happened

Thirteen days in order. Clip counts are per the production's own DAYS/DAY *.prproj bins. Filenames in monospace exist on the drive under those exact names.



Toronto → Tamworth → Montréal → Québec City → the ferry → Sept-Îles → Havre-Saint-Pierre → the Magpie.

1

SEP 10

95 clips

Toronto → Tamworth

44.4872, -76.9959 @ 22:02

- Out of Toronto and the POM collective — the art house where this group found each other after the pandemic. **POM was about people being allowed to be themselves.**
- The Bounder is on the road by afternoon. `dji_fly_20230910_174312` — first drone up.
- **At Caroline Butts's place in Tamworth by 22:02** (GPS-confirmed). A long lunch, the whole caravan around one table — **the only time they're all in one room.**



Lunch at Caroline's, Tamworth — the whole caravan at one table



Leaving Toronto

`bowden-.mp4 (04:27)` • TORONTO TAKE OFF • TAKE OFF TAMWORTH

2

SEP 11

214 clips

Tamworth

44.4896, -76.9925 • all day

- The fire pit and the chairs by the water. **The sharing circle:** everyone states an intention. Nothing is planned yet.
- **The branch-passing ceremony.**

- **Caroline casts a face in plaster** — Matt sits for it. She sketches the river's shapes with plaster still on her hands and **talks about eddies and flows**. The film's entire vocabulary gets planted here. **Matt's arc begins**.
- **Jake Walker**: his home, his water, his car, his songs. [Entering Walker's home getting frosted](#) · [Walker singing in car](#) x4.
- The garden: tomatoes gathered for a dinner nobody organised. [Tamworth underwater conversation](#).
- The mask is painted blue. It will travel 1,200 km in the Bounder.
- **Then night falls and the yard goes up in flames**. A burning structure, sparks going up, the whole group around it — Jake Baer raising a can in the firelight, Walker talking straight into the lens at midnight. **This is Act One's high-water mark — the group at its loudest and most whole. Cut it directly against his silence in Act III.**



The circle by the water — everyone states an intention



Caroline casts a face in plaster



Walker's bonfire — Act One's high-water mark



Jake Baer at the fire — the same hat holds the vessel at the Magpie



By firelight — Act One's high-water mark

[Tamworth Sharing Circle.mp4 \(13:52\)](#) · [MASK MAKING.mp4 \(06:33\)](#) · [WalkerTanDonutsCar.mp4 \(08:45\)](#) — **the bonfire is at 180–440s, non-360, and it is the best night material in the archive** · [Rivers/Tamworth.prproj \(304 refs\)](#) · DSLR BD9A4608–4677

3–4 SEP 12–13

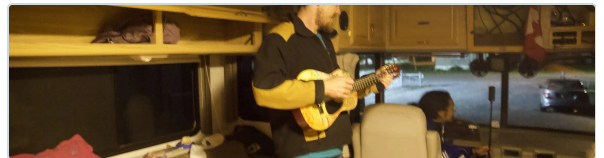
274 clips

→ Montréal 45.5199, -73.5767 @ 23:12 · all day 13th

- Tamworth → Montréal, arriving late on the 12th.
- **Leo's mother's house**. Dinner prep, the backstory chat, the meal. [Leo mom backstory dinner chat](#).
- **The toast** — glasses up around the table, and someone is **still wearing the mask**.
- Silka and Celina go shopping; the city gets its own portrait. **Antoine joins here** for the run to the Magpie.



The toast — someone still wearing the mask



The Bounder's own soundtrack, played live

[Carte Postale.mp4 \(13:15\)](#) · [MONTREAL DINNER](#) · [DAY THREE/FOUR.prproj](#)

5 SEP 14

199 clips

Montréal → Québec City

- The KOA — the caravan regroups.
- **Goodbye to half the group**. Québec City's only job in the film is the farewell.
- Somewhere on this stretch: **the gas station**. The Bounder **tears its own rear bumper off at the pumps**; a crew member picks it up off the tarmac (plate CWPFF-130 in frame). **A police officer arrives and writes a report**. The tail-lights go back on with **duct tape**.
- **Jake reports the broken RV by phone**. Antoine handles the repair joint **about the invoice** — the money moment. A technician works inside thirteen days of mess.
- **Poutine at a red picnic table** — curds, gravy, peas — because nothing is moving.



The bumper, torn off at the pumps



The police write it up



Duct tape over the tail-lights



The technician, inside 13 days of mess



Poutine, because nothing was moving

6

SEP 15

426 clips

Québec City → Tadoussac 46.8134, -71.0535 @ 07:47 → 48.7477, -69.0853 @ 23:02

- **The largest day in the archive — 426 clips.** Dawn drone over Île d'Orléans, then 480 km up the north shore.
- **The ferry** — filed on the drive as **fairy.mp4**. **FAIRY MATT LOSS:** Matt loses something on the crossing. This is the top of his turn downward — use it.
- Julia plays with the 360 in the car, crossing little towns. The best road-feel texture in the archive.
- **22:20 — THE TRUCKER.** A truck stop short of Tadoussac. In French, through Antoine, a stranger explains what it means to live on the road: **life is all movement, the coming-together and separation of every connection, and each person changes you a little. He states the film's thesis better than the film does.** GPS puts the caravan in Tadoussac forty minutes later.



The north shore — the only road, and it only goes one way

TRUCKER · FAIRY RIDE · fairy.mp4 · FAIRY MATT LOSS.mp4 · Interview/Trucker Interview/ (20230915_222059.mp4, 20230915_234528.mp4, BD9A4965-4968) · Julia play with 360 in car x5

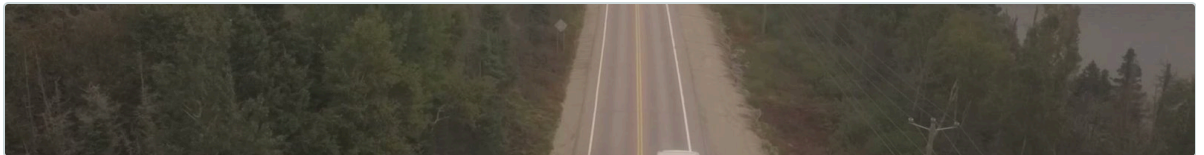
7

SEP 16

379 clips

→ Sept-Îles 50.2051, -66.2988 @ 13:57

- The long haul up 138. RV driving next to river · RV driving through rain · RV on dirt road.
- **Hayden Farrell joins the caravan at Sept-Îles** — from here north, most of the drone material is his. The Bounder alone on 138 with the river beside it is **the signature image of the film.**
- The road turns from industrial to wild.



Highway 138 — the Bounder alone. Hayden's first day.

DAY SEVEN.prproj · drone/ · SEPT ILLES [unbuilt]

8

SEP 17

351 clips

Havre-Saint-Pierre → the Magpie 50.3031, -64.4993 @ 15:46 → 50.3530, -64.4396 @ 18:07

- **Ekuanitshit.** Entrance of reserve culture center · Reserve Tan walking. **The people for whom the river was always a person — long before any resolution was passed.**
- Havre-Saint-Pierre — the last town. The bar: Tan interview Magpie Bartender · People eating in Bar. **Lola interview** (French).
- **At the Magpie by 17:23** (GPS). They camp at the river. **Magpie RV view mastershot.**
- **Alice interview** (French) — 8.3GB of it, still UNTOUCHED.



Ekuanitshit — the culture centre



An interview in a café, north of Québec City



The shore at the end of a long day

9

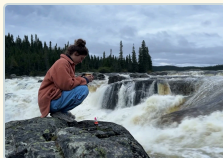
SEP 18

276 clips

THE MAGPIE · THE FALLS

50.2475, -63.5868 · 05:44–11:24

- **At the falls from 05:44.** They go down to the edge; the men claim it.
- Then the soft realisation: **maybe personhood isn't important to the river — maybe we have to learn to speak her language instead.**
- **The mask is passed around.** Each person stands before the water wearing someone else's face. **The most literal image of the thesis in the whole archive.**
- **Ganesh day, kept on the road:** a brass puja vessel at the water's edge, offerings set on the wet rock. *Kyle bathing with Ganesh.*
- **THE WATERFALL.** Pure freedom, pure existence — the whole weight of the river throwing itself over the edge, falling into grace. **THE TURN:** *she does not care at all about personhood.*
- *Magpie river Jake harmonica · round shot everybody at waterfall · Waterfall Tan Leo lost · Waterfall school bus. Back at Havre-Saint-Pierre by 22:51.*



You don't argue with her. You sit down.



The mask, worn at the river



The brass vessel at the water's edge



The turn — she does not care about personhood



The whole caravan, at the edge

Magpie Hike [BUILD THIS] · SCENES/GANESH.prproj → DSLR BD9A5453-5486 · 9999Ganesha_1.mp4 · Young River Baer.mp4

10–11

SEP 19–20

303 clips

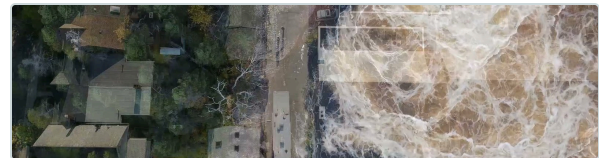
The return begins

Tadoussac 17:50 → Charlevoix camp 47.9958, -69.8268

- South out of the Côte-Nord. Tadoussac again by 17:50 on the 19th.
- **A lakeside camp in Charlevoix** — the caravan stops for most of the 20th (GPS static 08:17–12:02). People wading into a lake at sunrise; breakfast cooked in the Bounder; the drone up over the highway and the water. **The last calm before it comes apart.**
- *Dark RV matt writing stuff* — Matt writing alone in the dark RV. *Making army food snacks in the dark.*



The north keeps what stops running



The river running straight past the road

DAY TEN.prproj · DAY ELEVEN.prproj · TERRENCE MALLICK SCENES

12–13

SEP 21–22

238 clips

Québec → Trois-Rivières → Kingston → Tamworth

ends 44.4871, -76.9959 @ 20:27

- Québec City, Trois-Rivières, Brockville, Kingston.
- **Three breakdowns — the human kind.** They lose it with one another.
- *Last day Leo Jake goodbye x2 · Last day hitchhike goodbye LeoNMatt (3.7GB)* — the group is coming apart and hitchhiking home.
- **GPS ends the film exactly where it began: Tamworth, 20:27 on the 22nd.** The circle closes on its own. **Relationships fray until everyone separates in disparate ways — exactly the way a river would.**
- **Do not resolve this.** The braid parting IS the ending.



Remorquage Normand — the Bounder never really recovered



Calling it in from the cab, one more time

DAY TWELVE.prproj · DAY THIRTEEN.prproj · Last day hitchhike goodbye LeonMatt.mp4 · ACT 2 COPY.mp4

Day Six is the film. 426 clips — more than double any other day. The ferry where Matt loses something, the bumper torn off at the pumps, the police report, the tow truck, the technician, and the trucker at 22:20. **If the middle of this film ever sags, the answer is already shot and sitting in DAY SIX.**

4 • The Best Cut — A Recommendation

Tan's brief: "we need the best thing from the footage — how we orient the story doesn't matter, it just needs to be the best possible cut for awards and really showing all that happened." This section is the answer, argued from what is verifiably on the drive.

THREE FACTS THAT DECIDE THE FILM

FACT	EVIDENCE	WHAT IT MEANS
The Innu voice exists, is audible, and is completely unbuilt	360 EXPORT/Alice interview 360.mp4 — 23.1 minutes, AAC 48kHz, mean -28.9dB (healthy speech). Shot at the Ekuanitshit culture centre. Status: UNTOUCHED .	This is the single most important unwatched hour on the drive. It is the only material that answers <i>why this film gets to exist</i> .
The trucker is a full scene across two cameras	20230915_222059.mp4 (13.0 min, mean -26.4dB) + BD9A4968.MOV (6.6 min) + BD9A4965-67. Day 6, 22:20, GPS-confirmed just short of Tadoussac.	A stranger states the film's thesis at midnight, in French, and is never seen again. He is the Ephemeral River term, filmed. Twenty minutes of it exist.
The Bounder has a complete three-act death on camera	Fine → bumper torn off + police report (D5) → tow truck, repair shop, technician (D5) → never recovers → Last day hitchhike goodbye LeoNMatt (21.3 min, D13).	The vehicle already has the structure the film is looking for. It doesn't need to be invented — just followed.

THE RECOMMENDATION

Do not cut this as a road movie with a river at the end. That version has a waterfall for a climax, and every jury has seen a waterfall. Cut it as **the gap between what they came to prove and what was already true** — a film about the arrogance and the beauty of showing up.

In that version every asset on the drive gets stronger, and the film's biggest liability (they didn't know what they were doing) becomes its biggest advantage (they admit it, on camera, in the first two minutes).

ELEMENT	JOB IN THE CUT
The admission — TAN INTRO	The contract. Open with not knowing why they came. Everything downstream is trusted because of this.
The Bounder	The clock. Its decay times the film. You never need a caption telling the audience how far along they are — they can hear it in the engine.
The mask	The emotional object. Cast in plaster on Day 2; worn at the water on Day 9. One object, 1,200 km, a complete arc with no dialogue required.
The trucker — midpoint	The hinge. Give him real screen time, not a beat. A stranger articulates the thesis better than the film's own narration, then vanishes. Placing him at the centre means the second half is spent realising he was right.
Ekuanitshit / Alice — before the waterfall	The floor. Placed <i>ahead</i> of the climax, so the audience already knows the answer when the caravan finally reaches the river. This is what turns the waterfall from a spectacle into an anticlimax — which is what it truly was.
The waterfall	The anticlimax, on purpose. <i>She does not care at all about personhood.</i> The film has been building to a revelation that turns out to be a dismissal.
The parting	The real climax. Three breakdowns, the group separating, hitchhiking home. Do not resolve it. The braid parting IS the thesis — the film has spent ninety minutes arguing this is what water does and that it is not a failure.

Why this version wins and the road-movie version doesn't. Every jury sees ten films about a threatened landscape. They see almost none where the filmmakers admit they were wrong on camera. In this cut the humility is **structural, not decorative**: the Innu are not a stop on a trip, they are the answer the film arrived too late to; the comedy (a torn bumper, a police report, a tow truck, poutine while the engine cools) **earns** the seriousness rather than undercutting it; and the ending refuses to resolve, which is the argument rather than a failure to find one. **To protect nature from ourselves, we had to make it one of us.** That is the line the reviews will quote — and the film only gets to say it if it has already admitted it didn't know.

WHAT THAT REQUIRES, IN ORDER

#	DO THIS	WHY NOW
01	Watch the Alice interview. All 23 minutes.	The highest-value hour available to anyone on this project. Nobody has done it. If it is strong, the film has a moral centre and the cut above is correct. If it is weak, the whole structure must be rethought — and better to know that now than after a festival rejection.
02	Watch the trucker — all 20 minutes across both cameras.	Decides whether he can carry the midpoint. Everything hinges on him being as good as he sounds.
03	Build TAN INTRO.	The film currently has no first two minutes.
04	Build Magpie Hike + Ekuanitshit.	The climax and the floor. Both UNTOUCHED.
05	Record the six missing River VOs — real voice, not AI.	See §10. An Innu woman from Ekuanitshit would make the form and the argument the same thing.
06	Replace every Adobe Stock temp track.	Hard legal blocker on submission.

The honest limit of this recommendation. It is argued from a complete index of the drive — every filename, all 13 DAYS projects, durations, audio levels, contact sheets across the key clips, and the GPS/EXIF of 195 photos. **It is not argued from having watched 2,650 clips.** The structure above is the best inference available from that evidence, and the two scenes that could overturn it — Alice and the trucker — are precisely the two nobody has watched. **Watch those two before committing to any structure, including this one.**

5 • How The Story Comes Together

Three stories run at once. They are not intercut for variety — they are the same story told at three scales, and they rhyme. When you are lost in the edit, ask which of the three a scene belongs to. If it belongs to none, cut it.

A-Story • The Road (the engine and the clock)

Toronto to the Magpie in a 32-foot Fleetwood Bounder, with a van and cars in support. **Genuinely funny, and the comedy is load-bearing.** The Bounder tears off its own bumper. The police come. Duct tape holds the tail-lights on. A tow truck drags the pilgrimage to a workshop. They eat poutine while the engine cools. The road gives the film its momentum and its jokes — and then, quietly, its pressure.



Day 6 — the Bounder tore its own rear bumper off at the pumps.



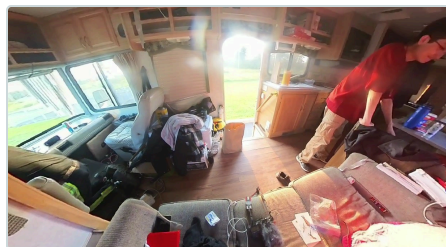
Somebody official had to write it down.



Remorquage Normand. The pilgrimage gets a tow. [360, reframed]



The repair: duct tape over the tail-lights.



The technician, inside thirteen days of mess. [360, reframed]



Curds, gravy, peas. The meal you eat when the engine has opinions.

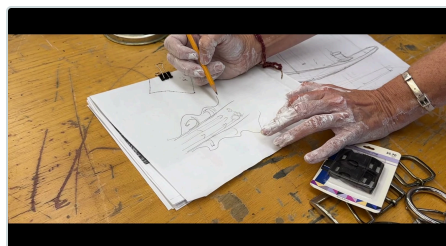
B-Story • The People (the heart)

Matthew Turnbull's hero's journey. Jake Walker's performative masculinity unwinding mile by mile. Caroline's mask, cast in plaster on Day 3 and worn at the river on Day 10. The women who hold each leg. And three collective breakdowns on the way home, until the caravan separates in disparate directions — **exactly the way a river would.**

Do not resolve this. Most documentaries would hide the fraying or redeem it in a final scene. Here the fraying *is* the thesis: braided channels part. Let the ending prove the argument the film has been making for ninety minutes.



Day 3 — Caroline casts a face in plaster.



Plaster still on her hands, drawing the river's eddies and flows.



Day 10 — the same mask, worn at the Magpie.

C-Story • The Water (the spine)

Limnology as the literal grammar of love — see §5. The river narrates. Personhood as a legal object gets slowly replaced by personhood as a lived fact. **This is what makes it a film rather than a travelogue.**

6 • The Cutting System — Limnology

Limnology is the science of freshwater ecosystems. Its vocabulary turns out to be a startlingly exact language for how human beings meet, merge and part. **These are not metaphors imposed on the footage. They are a shot list.** Each term names a real hydrological process, its human equivalent, and the specific scene in this archive that carries it. Cut the C-story by walking this table top to bottom.

Confluence

THE MERGING OF TWO WATERS

Two people, two separate worlds, becoming a single deeper current — and neither diminished in the joining.

Cut it here: MONTREAL DINNER + RIVER INTENTIONS. Cut the caravan physically merging — Leo and Antoine picked up, the table filling. The thesis stated once, early, without narration.

Flow

MOVEMENT AND VITALITY OF A RIVER

Love is not a state but a movement. A river that stops moving is a river dying.

Cut it here: Every driving montage. RV driving next to river / through rain. Flow is your connective tissue — never let Act II sit still for long.

Tributary

SMALLER STREAMS FEEDING THE MAIN

Every friendship and family tie — the lesser loves that pour themselves into the larger flow of a life.

Cut it here: QUEBEC CITY → MONTAGE. Each person joining or leaving is a tributary entering or splitting. Track arrivals/departures as hydrology.

Merging Identities

RIVERS MERGING TO CREATE SYNERGY

Two souls melding — becoming one current while somehow still remaining two waters.

Cut it here: THE MASK AT THE RIVER. Each person wears someone else's face in front of the water. The most literal image of the thesis you have. Protect it.

Dams

STRUCTURES CONTROLLING FLOW

The boundaries we build. Necessary for protection, dangerous when they stop the water from being water.

Cut it here: MAGPIE DAM (unbuilt). The literal threat personhood exists to prevent — and the metaphor for every wall the group throws up on the way home. Cut them against each other.

Eddies

REVERSE CURRENTS AND SWIRLS

The moments a relationship circles back on itself — testing, stirring, deepening what holds.

Cut it here: THE THREE BREAKDOWNS on the return. Also Caroline's mask monologue, which names eddies out loud on Day 3 — plant the word there, pay it off in Act III.

Ephemeral Rivers

STREAMS THAT FLOW ONLY SEASONALLY

Fleeting encounters that leave a permanent mark, though they were never meant to last.

Cut it here: THE TRUCKER, Day 6, 22:20. A stranger met near midnight who changes the film's thesis and is never seen again. The definition, filmed.

Subsume

A RIVER TAKING IN SMALLER STREAMS

How we absorb each other's stories and selves — every person you love rewriting the shape of you.

Cut it here: MATTHEW TURNBULL'S ARC. Track how much of Matt's language by Act III is borrowed from Caroline, Antoine, the river. He is subsumed.

Canals

WATERWAYS WE BUILD TO CONNECT

Mediation, empathy, the effort of communication — the channels we dig by hand toward one another.

Cut it here: ANTOINE TRANSLATING. French↔English at the truck stop, with Lola, with Alice. He is literally digging a channel between two waters. Never subtitle him flat — let the effort show.

Consumption

ONE RIVER ABSORBING ANOTHER

The vulnerability of love — letting go of a separate self for the sake of a deeper, unified one.

Cut it here: JAKE WALKER ADVENTURE. The performative self worn down mile by mile. **The Day-2 bonfire** (WalkerTanDonutsCar @180–440s) is the group — and Walker — at maximum volume — cut it directly against his Act III silence. The fire is the character.

External Pressures

FORCES ACTING ON THE RIVER

Money, expectation, distance, time — the droughts and floods every bond must weather.

Cut it here: DAY 6. The bumper, the police, the duct tape, the tow truck, the invoice. The road applying pressure until the group cracks. Your pressure gauge — escalate it.

Individuality & Unity

ONENESS HELD WITH SEPARATENESS

The whole art of it: to become one with another while still, wholly, remaining yourself.

Cut it here: THE WATERFALL, then THE PARTING. The braid running as one and then separating. The last image of the film and the answer to its first line.

How to use this: the twelve terms are the film's skeleton. If a scene doesn't carry one of them, ask why it's in the cut. If a term has no scene, that's a hole — and three of them currently point at **unbuilt** sequences (Dams → Magpie dam; Canals → Alice/Lola; Individuality & Unity → Magpie Hike). Those aren't coincidences. **They're the reason the film doesn't land yet.**

7 • The People

From the production's own planning document and cast database. **Legs matter:** most of the caravan is only present for part of the road — who is in frame tells you where you are in the film.

NAME	ROLE	ON THE ROAD FOR	NOTES FOR THE CUT
Tan Dhingra	Director · Vision	All 13 days	The confessing voice; the opening monologue is his. Shot a great deal of the film himself — much of the intimate handheld and phone material is Tan's own hand.
Kyle James	Producer · AD · Main Driver	All 13 days	The heartbeat and most of the wheel time. His fatigue is a real Act III thread.
Antoine Panaioti	Philosophy professor	Montréal → Magpie	A scholar of Buddhism and comparative philosophy — the intellectual spine of the film, not merely its French voice . He is also the bridge to the trucker, Lola and Alice, and to the repair shop. He <i>is</i> the Canals term.
Matthew Turnbull	Writer · Philosophy	Toronto → Québec City	"Matt." Sits for the mask (D2). Loses something on the ferry (D6). The hero's journey.
Jake Baer	River guide	Reaches the Magpie	The one who knows the water. Wide-brim hat, ginger beard — he raises a can at the Tamworth bonfire and holds the brass vessel at the Magpie ceremony. Harmonica at the river. Young River Baer .
Celina Lucareli	Poet	Toronto → Montréal	Weaver of colour and emotion; more scene credits than almost anyone.
Alex Widder & Julia Shevel	Music	Varies	Alex is the musician — the score is written and played live inside the moving Bounder. Julia also drives the 360 texture on Day 6.
Silka Hsu & Ryan Killburn	Music · Nature & geography	Toronto → Québec City	The other half of the caravan's sound, and the eyes on the land it crosses.
Leo Carter	Producer	Montréal → Magpie	His mother hosts the Montréal dinner (D3–4) — the warmest scene in the film. Gets lost with Tan at the falls.
Vanessa Paxton	Camera	Toronto → Montréal	The first leg's eye, on the theme of relationships.
Hayden Farrell	Aerials	Joins at Sept-Îles (D7)	Met on the road, not in Toronto. Shot most of the drone material from Sept-Îles north — including the signature Bounder-on-138 shot. Nothing of his exists before Day 7.
Solene Fortin	Côte-Nord	North shore	Already living close to the land — shows the caravan what the destination looks like lived-in.
Caroline Butts	Host · Tamworth	Days 1–2	Hosts the first stop. Casts and paints the mask. Names "eddies and flows" out loud — the film's vocabulary is planted in her studio.
Jake Walker	Subject · Tamworth	Days 1–2	The rawest arc. Backwards cap, long hair, moustache. Own home, own water, own car, own songs.
The Trucker	Found subject	Day 6, 22:20	French. States the thesis better than the film does.
Lola · Alice	Interviews	Days 8–9	French. Local voice — keeps this from being a film about visitors.

Read the legs before you cut — but trust the footage over this table. The caravan is never the same shape twice; people join and turn back at different rivers. That churn is not a continuity problem to hide — it is the Tributary term, filmed. Track who is in frame and the film tells you where it is on the map without a caption. **Hayden only appears from Sept-Îles onward — no drone material of his exists before Day 7.**

⚠ **There are two Jakes, and they are easy to confuse.** **Jake Baer** (river guide) = **wide-brim hat, ginger beard** — at the Tamworth bonfire AND at the Magpie holding the brass vessel; he reaches the river. **Jake Walker** (Tamworth subject) = **backwards cap, long hair, moustache** — he appears only in Tamworth material. Clip names saying "Jake" mostly mean **Baer** (Magpie river Jake harmonica, Waterfall Celina Jake walk); clips saying "Walker" mean **Walker**. **Check the hat before you name anyone in a caption.**

⚠ **WHICH SOURCES ARE ACTUALLY TRUE**

The footage is the only reliable source. The paperwork describes intentions that did not survive contact with the road.

SOURCE	TRUST	WHY
The footage + EXIF	TRUE	2,650 clips; 195 photos carry GPS. This is what happened. When anything below disagrees with it, the footage wins.
Photo GPS/timestamps	TRUE	The timeline in §3 is built from these, not from the plan.
"Plan Trip" (Sep 4, 2023)	PLAN ONLY	Written before departure. Its route and its per-person "confirmed dates" are intentions . The footage contradicts several: the plan has Celina and Jake Baer ending at Montréal and Matt at Québec City — but all three appear in Magpie and waterfall clips. Do not cut from this table.
"River Writes" notes	DRAFT	Story-structure thinking, useful for intent and voice. Its "two RVs" is not supported — the footage says one RV, one van, and cars.
Editing log ACT labels	CREATIVE	Act I/II/III are Tan's dramatic structure, not chronology . GASSTATION sits in Act III but happened on Day 5.

WHO THE FOOTAGE ACTUALLY PLACES AT THE RIVER

Derived from clip names only — no inference: **Tan** (Tan walking on waterfall rocks, Tan interview Magpie Bartender), **Kyle** (Kyle bathing with Ganesh, Magpie Leo Kyle talk), **Leo, Matt** (Magpie Matt walking stairs), **Celina** (Waterfall Celina Jake walk), **Jake** (Magpie river Jake harmonica), **Antoine. Walker and Caroline appear only in Tamworth material** — they are the first stop, not the expedition.

8 • The Edit As It Stands

Straight from the production's RIVERS SEQUENCE EDITING LOG — not an estimate. **FIXED** locked · **SEQUENCED** assembled, needs polish · **UNTOUCHED** not started.

ACT	SEQUENCE	STATUS	DAY	WHAT IT IS
I	TAN INTRO MONTAGE	UNTOUCHED	1	The highest-value missing piece. The film has no first two minutes.
I	TORONTO TAKE OFF	FIXED	1	Bowden; the POM house; the feast; the blessing.
I	TAKE OFF TAMWORTH	FIXED	2	Arrival at Caroline's.
I	RIVER INTENTIONS	FIXED	2	The sharing circle. Fire pit. Branch-passing.
I	CAROLINE MASK	FIXED	3	Plaster cast; the eddies-and-flows monologue.
I	JAKE WALKER ADVENTURE	FIXED	3	Walker's home, water, car, songs.
I	MONTREAL DINNER	FIXED	5	Leo's mother's house. The toast.
I	QUEBEC CITY → MONTAGE	FIXED	5	KOA; the caravan regroup, then part of it turns back.
II	FAIRY RIDE	FIXED	6	The <i>ferry</i> . Matt loses something.
II	TRUCKER	FIXED FR	6	Truck stop, near midnight.
II	TERRENCE MALLICK SCENES	SEQUENCED	—	The lyric passages. Your tone bank.
II	SEPT ILLES	UNTOUCHED	8	The north shore city.
II	Indigenous Reserve	UNTOUCHED	8	Ekuanitshit. The most important unbuilt scene.
II	Magpie dam	UNTOUCHED	—	The threat. The reason personhood exists.
II	Alice interview	UNTOUCHED FR	8	8.3GB, unbuilt.
III	GASSTATION	FIXED	6	The bumper, the police, the caution tape.
III	RV BREAKDOWN 1	SEQUENCED	6	Poutine, roadside call, the tow.
III	Havre Saint Pierre	UNTOUCHED	9	The last town before her.
III	Magpie Hike	UNTOUCHED	10–11	The climax. Unbuilt.
III	Lola interview	SEQUENCED FR	9	Local voice.
—	RIVER VOICE OVER x7	UNTOUCHED	—	6 of 7 unbuilt. The spine is missing. \$10.

Read this honestly. Act One is essentially finished. Act Two is half-found. **Act Three — the reason the film exists — is the least built:** the Magpie Hike, Havre Saint Pierre and the Indigenous Reserve are all UNTOUCHED, and six of seven River Voice Overs do not exist. **This film is not short of footage. It is short of its own ending.** Every hour spent re-cutting Act One is an hour not spent on the only real problem.

9 • The Path To A Print

The method, in the order it should happen. This is a nine-step path from the drive you were handed to a festival print.

#	STEP	WHY IT'S IN THIS POSITION
01	Watch DAY SIX end to end, first.	426 clips, and it contains the ferry, the accident, the tow and the trucker. If you understand Day Six you understand the film's tone: funny, broken, accidentally profound. Start there, not at Day One.
02	Build TAN INTRO MONTAGE.	The film has no first two minutes. Until the opening exists, nothing downstream can be judged — you're timing a body with no head.
03	Build Magpie Hike (Act III climax).	The destination of a hundred-minute pilgrimage is UNTOUCHED. Source: DSLR BD9A5453–5486, Young River Baer , 9999Ganesha_1 , the waterfall clips on Day 11.
04	Build Indigenous Reserve (Ekuanitshit).	Without it the film is settlers discovering a river's rights without the nation that won them. Ethical axis and awards axis, same scene.
05	Record the six missing River VO's — with a real voice.	The spine. See §10 on casting; this is the biggest single decision left.
06	Reframe the 360 chaos clips.	Unlocks the forklift tow, Jake's song, FAIRY MATT LOSS and the trucker b-roll. Recipe in §11 — verified working.
07	Build Magpie dam + Havre Saint Pierre; cut Alice, finish Lola.	The stakes, the last threshold, and the local voice. Dam completes the limnology set.
08	Replace every Adobe Stock temp track.	Hard legal blocker. See §10.
09	Full assembly I → II → III, then time it.	Act One is done. Time the whole thing before polishing anything.

The one structural instruction. Cut by **arc**, not by day. Track five threads and let the days fall where they must: **Matt's descent** · **Walker's unwinding** · **the mask's journey** (plaster on D3 → worn at the river on D10) · **the Bounder's slow death** (D5 gas station → D6 bumper/tow → D13 hitchhiking) · **the group's fraying**. Every one of those has a beginning, middle and end already on the drive. The days are the river's bed; the people are the water.

10 • The River Voice & Sound

Seven V.O. slots exist in the log; six are unbuilt. The river is the film's only narrator.

The rule: the river never comments on the humans directly. She speaks about water, and the audience does the translating themselves. The moment she explains the plot, the film dies. **Every one of these should be able to play over a shot with no people in it at all.**

VO 1 • ACT I • OVER THE COLD OPEN / DEPARTURE • DAY 1

"The first light breaches the horizon, a herald of beginnings. In the quiet before the world awakens, I lie in wait, my currents poised to journey alongside the souls who seek my embrace. Their eyes, alight with the spark of discovery, peer into my depths as if searching for answers only the natural world can provide. I am their canvas, their confidant, the witness to the hopes that bubble forth like a spring from the earth."

VO 2 • ACT I • OVER WALKER'S BONFIRE • DAY 2 • FOOTAGE EXISTS: WALKERTANDONUTSCAR.MP4 @180-440S

"As dusk cradles the world in a tender embrace, the flames cavort to the rhythm of heartbeats. Shadows tell tales on the old, wise rocks that have witnessed the ceaseless dance of my waters through eons."

VO 3 • ACT I • AFTER THE MASK / NEW BONDS • DAY 3

"Within my banks, I cradle the laughter and secrets of newfound friendships. Just as water melds with earth to create clay, these individuals, once strangers, now mold one another with stories and shared dreams. My waters... polishing these raw moments into memories as smooth and enduring as river stones."

VO 4 • ACT II • OVER "DRIVING FAST THROUGH RAIN AND BRIDGE" — THE STORM • DAY 5-6

"Amidst the fury of the storm, the bond of the travelers shines, a beacon in the tempest. Their unity, a testament to the spirit of camaraderie, nurtured under the watchful gaze of the ancient pines."

VO 5 • ACT II→III • THE CONFLUENCE • OVER THE CARAVAN SPLITTING AND REJOINING

"Here, where waters from distant trails entwine, every merging droplet murmurs ancient tales. A union of journeys, a melding of souls, bound by the unseen threads of destiny."

VO 6 • ACT III • THE WATERFALL • THE TURN — THE ONE BUILT VO • DAY 11

"She is a wild river. She does not care at all about personhood. And seeing that amount of freedom in her — within existence — means it must also exist within us."

VO 7 • ACT III • THE PARTING / END CREDITS • DAY 13

"As they bid farewell to the gentle hull of my waters, their laughter, their shared silences, engrave ephemeral trails on my essence... As I meander through endless realms, with every ripple the narrative unfolds, a poetic reverie towards the infinite horizons, a gentle journey through the tapestry of existence."

Casting the voice — the single biggest decision left. The editing log lists "AI VOICE OVER OF RIVERS VOICE" as a placeholder. For a festival cut, don't. Cast a real voice — ideally an Innu woman from Ekuanitshit. The film's entire argument is that this river is a person in reciprocal relationship with a people who have always known it. A synthetic narrator contradicts that in the first thirty seconds, and every jury will hear it before they hear anything else.

THE REAL OST — USE THESE

Slove — Carte Postale · County Road 4 · Counting forever
· The Edge · Water.wav · begin again · hang violin leaves
· hola pedro · plyaski · rainbows end · ways to go ·
LittleVoices · Scalped no vocals · The Crawl · 2176

DIEGETIC GOLD — PREFER THIS OVER SCORE

Walker singing in the car (x4). Jake's song over the tow.
Jake's harmonica at the river. Alex, Julia and Ryan playing
inside the moving Bouncer. **The caravan's own music is
the confluence made audible.** Wherever a scene has its
own music, use it instead of score.

TEMP TRACKS — LEGAL BLOCKER

The current cuts lean on Adobe Stock **watermarked
previews:** Floating Ambient Guitar · Dusty Horizon · Two
Worlds · Inner Reflection · First Light · Lo fi hip hop ·
Guy. None are cleared. **Every one must be replaced
before any festival submission.** Not a creative note — a
disqualification risk.

LANGUAGE

TRUCKER, Lola and Alice are French. Antoine is the on-
camera bridge. Set subtitles in the film's serif, not a
default sans — they are part of the picture, not an overlay
on it.

11 • Where Everything Lives

Drive: /Volumes/RIVERS — **note the trailing space in the volume name**; every path must be quoted. Treat the drive as read-only.

PATH	WHAT'S IN IT
RIVERS ULTRA PROJECT FILE/DAYS/	The archive spine. DAY ONE...DAY THIRTEEN.prproj — every clip bucketed by day. Day 6 = 426.
RIVERS ULTRA PROJECT FILE/RIVERS MAX.prproj	Master. Sequences: RIVERS MAX · DAY 5 · DAY 6.
RIVERS ULTRA PROJECT FILE/EDITS/	ULTRAEDIT - ACT ONE.prproj · RV Breakdown 1 (1).prproj · Gas Station Accident ah (1).prproj · ULTRA TMELINES.mp4 (5.1GB)
RIVERS ULTRA PROJECT FILE/CAMERAS/	Per-camera bins: BAER · DRONE · DSLR · GO PRO · PHONE SHOTS
RIVERS ULTRA PROJECT FILE/SCENES/	GANESH.prproj · Magpie Morning2.prproj
RIVERS ULTRA PROJECT FILE/Trailer.prproj	The live trailer. Bins: OST · Interview footage · Drone Shots · Ganesh · Cool B roll
highresexports/	Ready-made 1080p renders, non-360 — OPENING- · bowden- · Tamworth Sharing Circle · MASK MAKING · WalkerTanDonutsCar · Carte Postale · Gas Station Accident · RV Breakdown 1 · ACT 2 COPY · ULTRA TMELINES_PART ONE (6.1GB). Start here for anything you need fast.
Interview/	Canon BD9A raws + Trucker Interview/ (Day 6, 22:20 & 23:45)
DSLRjjjjjjjjjjjjjjjjjjjjj/	Ganesh ceremony = BD9A5453–5486 · Tamworth = BD9A4608–4677 · Caroline's studio = BD9A4637 (brushes), BD9A4652 (painting)
ALL photos/	659 stills. 171 CR2 RAW @ 5760×3840 — the 5D JPGs/ subfolder is only 720×480 previews, always use the parent CR2. 21 drone DNGs. Filenames carry the dates: 20230910–20230922.
360 EXPORT/	135 files — the richest narrative index on the drive, and the most descriptive filenames anywhere. Jake reporting broken RV on phone · Technician inspecting RV · Antoin talking about invoice at car repair joint · Chitchat while RV getting fixed (3GB) · Truck toeing and Jake song · Last day hitchhike goodbye LeonMatt (3.7GB) · Leo mom backstory dinner chat · Magpie river Jake harmonica · Tan interview Magpie Bartender · Entrance of reserve culture center · Alice interview 360 (8.3GB) · Waterfall Tan Leo lost · Tamworth underwater conversation · round shot everybody at waterfall. These are 1920×1080 rendered reframes, NOT equirectangular — fprobe shows no spherical metadata, so v360 cannot re-project them; the 360 data is already baked out. But most segments are simply <i>very wide</i> , and this recovers them : <code>-vf "lenscorrection=k1=-0.22:k2=0.02,crop=iw*0.64:ih*0.64"</code> Verified — the tow truck and technician frames in §5 came out of this pass. Tiny-planet segments can't be saved; wide segments can. Projection changes within a single clip, so scan before you pull.
OST/	The real soundtrack, 17 files.
Rivers/Tamworth.prproj	304 refs incl. named gems: Walker singing in car · Entering Walker's home getting frosted · Drinking Walker's crisp water · Tamworth underwater conversation

12 · Why This Can Win

Every jury sees ten films about a threatened landscape. They see almost none where **the filmmakers admit they didn't know why they came**. The distinguishing assets here are not the waterfall — everyone has a waterfall.

- **Radical transparency.** The film says out loud that it went looking without knowing, and filmed what it found. Nothing else in the genre does this.
- **The form is the content.** A film about rivers, edited like a river — all points happening at once, Siddhartha's time-as-river. The structure is the argument, not a container for it.
- **The failure is the story.** Most eco-docs hide their breakdowns; ours are the thesis. A caravan that fractures on the way home is not a flaw — it is the film proving its own point about braided channels.
- **The comedy is real.** A tow truck dragging a pilgrimage. A police report about a bumper. Poutine while the engine cools. Juries remember the film that made them laugh before it made them cry.
- **It never becomes a lecture.** The law is the door, not the room. The Innu of Ekuanitshit were never waiting for the argument to be made — and if the film centres that, its humility becomes its authority.
- **The irony is left standing.** To protect nature from ourselves, we had to make it one of us. The film is brave enough not to resolve that, and that is the line the reviews will quote.

"She is a wild river. She does not care at all about personhood. And seeing that amount of freedom in her — within existence — means it must also exist within us."
