



TURTLE ISLAND PRODUCTIONS

James M. Fortier • Writer/Producer/Director/DP

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For Immediate Release:

Turtle Island Productions has recently completed and premiered the feature length documentary "Pulling Together" in association with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe of Auburn, WA. TIP's owner and producer/director James Fortier was hired by the Muckleshoots to produce a 30-minute video of the tribe's participation in last summer's annual tribal canoe journey. What began as a simple video to share the canoe journey experience with tribal members gradually morphed into a full-fledged feature documentary chronicling the events of the journey and the canoe family participants who took part in the 14-day saga.

The annual tribal canoe journey is a growing phenomenon whereby dozens of tribes from the Pacifica Northwest, including B.C., travel for up to two weeks in traditional ocean going cedar canoes, coming together, tribe by tribe, into a growing gathering until their final destination where they will hold a four-five day traditional potlatch sharing stories, songs and dance, and food. The revival of the canoe journey harks back to the late 1980's and has been growing in popularity among tribes and in spiritual and cultural significance every year.

The 2003 Tribal Journey began for the Muckleshoot tribe's canoe family as they joined up with the Makah Tribe at Neah Bay on the tip of the Olympic Peninsula. Fortier's film chronicles every leg of the journey from their arrival in Neah Bay to their ultimate destination on the shores of the Tulalip Reservation north of Everett, WA. With unlimited access and trust, Fortier was able to capture the cultural, personal, spiritual, and physical dimensions of the journey for the Muckleshoot canoe family as they underwent a transformation from so-called "babies" (new to the journey) to "new leaders" by journey's end.

The private premiere screening was held April 20 at the Auburn Performing Arts Center in Auburn, WA for an audience of about 800 Muckleshoot tribal members and invited guests from nearby Puyallup and Tulalip reservations among others. At the conclusion of the film, the Muckleshoot canoe family quietly took the stage and performed a song that tribal council member Jessie McDaniel had gifted them (used for the closing credits as well). Members from other tribes joined them on stage for several impromptu hand drum songs and dancing. The tribe then proceeded to handout DVD and VHS copies of the film.

The tribe is working with Fortier to coordinate a film festival strategy for the coming year in order to bring this uplifting story to a wider audience. Current plans are to hold off immediate festival screenings until after the prestigious Sundance Film Festival selections are announced in December, 2004 for the next Sundance Festival in January 2005.

For more information contact James Fortier at 650-738-1834.