

***Into America's Wild* Celebrates Time Spent In Nature**

Finding Joy — In this scene from *Into America's Wild*, a young girl expresses joy from being in nature, here shown under Charleston's famous Angel Oak, estimated to be 400 to 500 years old.



This coming February, MacGillivray Freeman's new film *Into America's Wild* will take viewers on a visually stunning cross-country journey in search of the hidden wonders of the natural world. Whether kayaking down the lush Oregon coast, exploring ancient canyons in the Southwest, finding amazing scientific phenomena like the Pando Aspen Grove in Utah, or discovering the wild in our own backyard, the film celebrates all the good that comes from spending time in nature. *News On The March* sat down with director Greg MacGillivray, his son, producer Shaun MacGillivray, and his daughter, production manager Meghan MacGillivray, to discuss their latest project.

NOTM *Into America's Wild* covers a lot of ground, traversing the entire country, but the soul of it is the message that we as humans really need to spend time in the natural world to get the most of life. How did that come about?

MEGHAN We started out making a movie about American trails and trailblazers, and that's still a big theme. But when we cast our main characters—John Herrington, Ariel Tweto and Jennifer Pharr Davis—we discovered they all shared this incredible passion for teaching kids about the power of the natural world, and that really resonated with all of us. It's something that has become harder and harder in the world today, to put down the smart phone and get out in the wild. One of our consultants on the film, Richard Louv, has a name for it: Nature Deficit Disorder. There is a lot of science that supports the idea that when we spend too much time indoors we really miss something essential to our psyches. We're healthier and happier when we spend time in nature.



SHAUN It's important for us as human beings to feel that deep connection to the natural world. We're meant to be part of nature, it's in our DNA. It's a big subject for a film, but it gave us that chance to take audiences on a very meaningful trip through the American wild and all the different ways people find happiness when they connect to nature.

NOTM Most filmed journeys across the U.S. move from east to west, following in the footsteps of the pioneers who came from Europe. But this film does something different,



Fossils, Wilderness and Weird Rocks—Ariel Tweto and John Herrington observe the unique rock structures in New Mexico's Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness. This area has also been known for dinosaur fossil discoveries!



Beauty in Nature—Record-breaking hiker Jennifer Pharr Davis backpacks in the Eastern Sierra near Mammoth Lakes. Davis has covered more than 14,000 miles of long-distance trails on six continents.



Adventure Among Glaciers—Ariel Tweto and friends kayak through the pristine Alaskan waters while enjoying the view of the glaciers around them.

moving from west to east, starting with the arrival of prehistoric people along the Pacific coast, aka The Kelp Highway. Why did you want to re-create that?

GREG Historians used to believe that the first people in North America walked across the Bering Strait. But the evidence now suggests they came by boats maybe 16,000 or 18,000 years ago. I am very intrigued by the thought of what was going on in the minds of those people when they came upon the Oregon coastline—and they drank in this land full of fresh water and plenty of fish to catch; where the climate is fantastic, the soil is rich and there is plenty to eat. They must have felt a sense of potential that has always been part of this country. This place had to have been something truly beautiful to behold, and I loved trying to give the audience the feeling of what those paddlers experienced. And as they moved into the canyons and mountains, the natural landforms and wonders they discovered kept getting more and more spectacular.



NOTM Although the film takes us to unseen places, it also places an emphasis on how easy it is to find green spaces everywhere, even in big cities. Why was it important to include that idea?

MEGHAN From the beginning we knew that was something we wanted to get across. Even in the density and concrete of the city, you are never apart from the natural world. You can still find trees and grass and the peacefulness that nature brings us. You can find it in New York City and you can find it in Chicago. And there are people working to bring even more green spaces into our cities now that we know how important it is.

GREG Even as we grow more and more urban as a society, we will never lose the need to cultivate a sense of exploration and curiosity—and getting out into the wild in any form inspires that. In nature, things are changing all the time and you encounter new situations, even just the wind changing and the clouds parting to let in the sun. That allows you to develop the tools to confront and enjoy the unpredictable.

NOTM This film makes stops along the fertile Pacific Northwest coast, stunning canyons of the Southwest, an urban trail in Texas and the Eastern treasure of the Appalachian Trail, among others. What were the biggest production challenges?

SHAUN There are always the usual logistical challenges of taking the cumbersome IMAX equipment into hot and remote locations and doing lots of helicopter shots and drone shots. But the biggest challenge was really just the sheer size of the story we were trying to tell. How could we capture as much of the range and diversity of nature that can be found across North America, as well as the impact of nature on people physically, emotionally and spiritually? As much as the film is about some amazing places you might never have seen, it's also about meeting some incredible people and learning about how they found meaning in those places.

NOTM The film is very in-the-moment, but you also head back in time for an encounter with Sacagawea, the Shoshone guide who gave Lewis and Clark invaluable knowledge about the plants, animals and geography surrounding them on their famed expedition. Why was it important to include this story from the past?

SHAUN We always like to showcase history when we can, but in this case, it felt really important to talk about the spirit of exploration that has always been a part of America. When you realize that one of the most important scientific expeditions of all time wouldn't have been successful without this highly skilled and knowledgeable woman with a profound relationship to the land, that was something that fit right in with the themes of our movie.



NOTM What excites you most about what you accomplished with *Into America's Wild*?

GREG The film is a real celebration of nature and the connection between humans and the natural world, and it acknowledges the wisdom of Native Americans within the storytelling. The indigenous peoples' perspective on the world was so different from European settlers' perspectives but it's a part of our nation's history that we can learn so much from.

MEGHAN I love that we will take viewers to every region of the United States, from the Pacific Northwest to the Southwest to the East Coast, from remote canyons to city green spaces. Audiences will discover hidden trails and natural wonders they never knew about, and hopefully be inspired to venture off the beaten path for an experience in nature they never had before, even if it's someplace close to home.