

# GROWING NATIVE

## NORTHWEST: COAST SALISH

### VIEWER DISCUSSION GUIDE



Image of Canoe Journey rowers arriving at Port of Olympia, WA.

#### IN THEIR WORDS

"You want to leave all the negativity and the madness and stuff on shore, you don't want that on the canoe. You want the positive, the good-hearted, and good-minded. We're all one, we're all one heart and one mind and one paddle."

-Courtney Finkbonner,  
Swinomish



Film location: Pacific Northwest

#### PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

***Growing Native*** is a four-part series focusing on reclaiming traditional knowledge and food ways to address critical issues of health and wellness, the environment and human rights. *Growing Native* focuses on Tribes, stories and events from four geographic regions, including Alaska, Oklahoma, Northwest and Great Lakes. Across the country, Native people are regaining health and strength through the recovery and revitalization of traditional knowledge systems of land, language, traditional arts and health.

From totem poles to language revitalization and traditional agriculture, host Chris Eyre (Cheyenne Arapaho) discovers the resilience of the Coast Salish Tribes of the Pacific Northwest. Travel down historic waterways as the tribe revisits their ancient connection to the water with an annual canoe journey. Experience both traditional and contemporary arts and meet the tribal members that are bringing camas, a traditional root, back to harvest.



Image from "Journey landing" at Squaxin Island.

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#### PRODUCER STATEMENT

As executive director for Vision Maker Media, I have the honor of visiting with many Tribal Nations across the country. I get to see first-hand the amazing work reservation-based organizations are doing to promote their traditions to younger generations.

At the same time, I see my relatives struggle. Many Native people have high rates of poverty, obesity, diabetes, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide. I watch young people struggle with identity—they see very few brown faces in the media—and even fewer that are Native American. I see the frustration of people who live in a food desert.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food deserts as parts of the country void of fresh fruit, vegetables

and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets and healthy food providers on or near the reservations.

We created *Growing Native* to reclaim our narrative sovereignty and showcase the stories of powerful Tribal leaders who are on the forefront of returning to their traditional healthy diets and activities. Visit people who harvest wild rice, camas and herd bison. Learn how language revitalization is strengthening Tribal ties to their place on the planet. See how arts and culture play a role in the Tribal economy, as well as cultural preservation. And learn how to make a few healthy ancient indigenous dishes.

Our goal is to increase awareness of each region's ecosystem, encourage stewardship of the land and reclaim the traditions that supported ancient indigenous cultures for hundreds of years. We believe these messages will resonate with all inhabitants of these places — regardless of race or ethnicity.



Shirley Sneve, Executive Director of Vision Maker Media.



L to R: Lillian Pitt (Wasco, Yakama, Warm Springs), Host Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho), and Louie Pitt (Wasco, Yakama, Warm Springs).

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#### BY THE NUMBERS

**1.** Emmett Oliver, a respected Quinault elder, was a driving force in revitalizing the canoe journey in 1989 as part of Washington's centennial celebration. It had been over 100 years since the last canoe journey.

**2.** During the first canoe journey, over 13 tribes participated with 18 canoes arriving at Shilshole Bay in the Port of Seattle.

**3.** On July 28, 2018 more than 108 canoes arrived on the shore during the Power Paddle to Puyallup canoe journey. This marked the 20th anniversary of the first canoe journey.



Host Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho) standing next to a cedar wood carving.

**4.** The Coast Salish tribes are one of the few native cultures that are patrilineal and not matrilineal which means leadership and goods are passed through the male line.

**5.** The Coast Salish people are comprised of over 50 tribes who share the Salish language family which has two dozen distinct languages and many dialects.

**6.** Archeologists are able to document that the Salish people and related tribes have occupied the northwest coastal area for over 10,000 years.

**7.** When the United States defined its boarder, the Coast Salish people were divided between Canada and the US. Today there are over 56,000 people with approximately half living in Canada and half in the United States.

**8.** For thousands of years salmon has been a staple food of the Coast Salish tribes, but the Salmon is also intertwined with their cultural and spiritual beliefs. Many tribes still celebrate the start of the salmon run with a First Salmon Ceremony.

**9.** The Tulalip Reservation was established in the 1855 treaty to provide a home for the Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Skagit, Suiattle, Samish and Stillaguamish Tribes and allied bands living in the region.

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#### EXPLORING THE FACTS

- 1.** In 1989 a group of Coast Salish Elders decided to bring back the canoe journey as a way to restore the lifeways that were slowly being lost to them. Why do you think these elders chose the canoe as a way of restoring their cultural ways? What is the significance of the canoe to coastal nations? What is the significance of the rituals around meeting the travelers and greeting each other?
- 2.** In order for the rowing teams to make this arduous journey, each person must be prepared physically, mentally, and spiritually. Imagine this experience from a personal point of view and discuss what you think a person would go through before the journey, during the journey, and after the journey. Connect this discussion with an “arduous journey” that you may have experienced in your life.
- 3.** Chris Eyre explains that the meaning of “art” in the Salish language can only be translated as “transforming something that merely exists into something of sublime beauty and meaning. Explore how this is expressed through the many uses of the cedar tree. How is a tree in the forest transformed into something with beauty and meaning?
- 4.** Within the early culture of the Salish people the economy, education, food, art, and spiritual ways were not separate but interconnected. Today the Salish people work hard to return to this state of being as a way of strengthening the people. Explore the many ways this is demonstrated within this segment of Growing Native.
- 5.** Language revitalization is a key focal point for the Salish and many other Native people today. Dave Sienko in the Tulalip Language Department demonstrates how new technologies can support the restoration of the original languages of the Salish people. Discuss both the irony and the importance of using these new technologies as a bridge from the past to the future.



L to R: David G. Lewis, PhD (Clackamas, Chinook), Host Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/ Arapaho), and Tony Farque looking at an ancient Earth oven.

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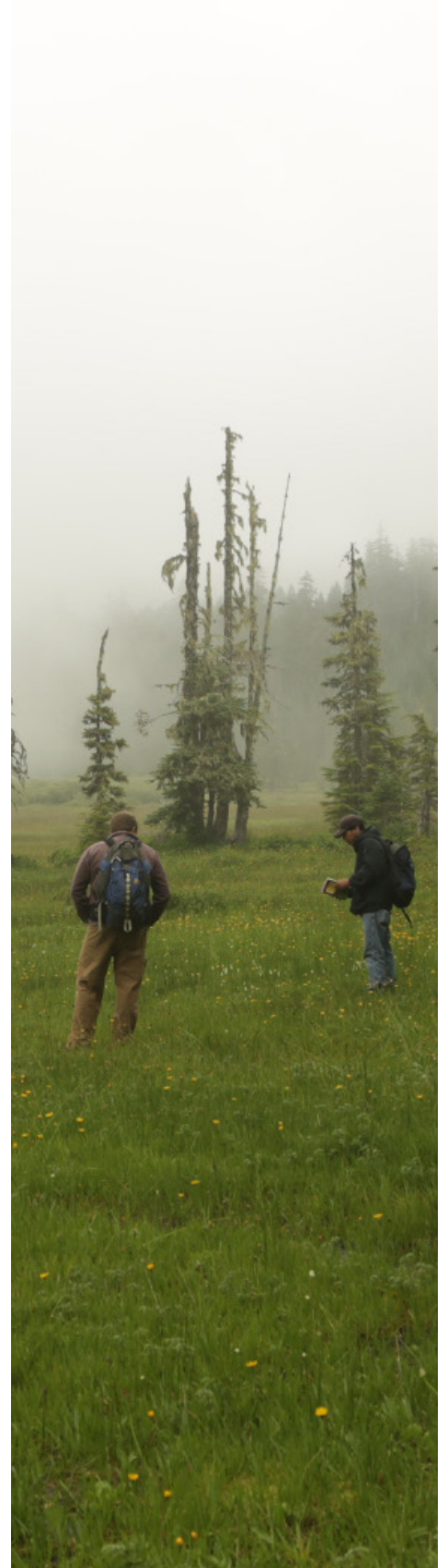
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#### IDEAS FOR ACTION

- 1.** The Salish people are a “water people.” Identify the places within this film where that is demonstrated. How is water connected to art, cultural identity, education, economy and spirituality? Research and identify the main waterways that were used by the Salish and other coastal nations.
- 2.** Using a timeline or pictures board follow an old growth red cedar tree from the forest to the many products and items it becomes when brought into the Salish culture. Focus also on the relationship that tree has with the individuals it meets along the way.
- 3.** Throughout this film the resilience and creativity of the modern Salish is made evident as they recover from early historical events. Identify the key scenes that illustrate this and list the common characteristics and qualities that are present in those who are making these transformations happen.
- 4.** Salmon is a primary food source for the Salish people. Research the critical events that have threatened both the salmon runs and the Salish people. Then identify the steps that the Salish people are taking to insure that this resource remain strong in the future?
- 5.** The Coast Salish people relied not only on the water but on the land for their food. Describe the steps taken as illustrated in the film to restore the camas plant as a staple food. Do additional research to highlight the health benefits of camas.

L to R: Mark McKnight and David G. Lewis,  
PhD (Clackamas, Chinook) at Gordon  
Meadows in the Oregon Cascades.





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#### RESOURCES

<https://www.visionmakermedia.org/films/growing-native>

#### Language Programs and Cultural Camps

<http://tulaliplushootseed.com/>

<http://tulaliplushootseed.com/>

<https://nativeamericannetroots.net/diary/1184> (traditional canoes)

#### Camus Cultivation

<http://www.historylink.org/File/11220>

<http://www.puyallup-tribe.com/>

<http://www.burkemuseum.org/blog/curated/coast-salish-art>

<http://www.coastsalishgathering.com/official-naming-of-the-salish-sea/>

[http://www.firstnations.de/development/coast\\_salish.htm](http://www.firstnations.de/development/coast_salish.htm)

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This Viewer Discussion Guide was developed by Jamie Lee, an author and former instructor at the Oglala Lakota College, where she taught for five years. Lee has a master's in human development and has been a communications trainer and an educator for the past 30 years. Her stories and articles have appeared in *The South Dakota Review*, *Winds of Change Magazine* and several other anthologies. She has published three non-fiction books, a novel and a collection of writings from Oglala Lakota College students. Her first novel, *Washaka: The Bear Dreamer*, was a PEN USA finalist in 2007. Lee has written more than 70 documentary programs, including Public Radio's landmark 52-part Native music series, *Oyate Ta Olowan: The Songs of the People*.



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For more information, please visit [www.visionmakermedia.org](http://www.visionmakermedia.org).

Educational resources for this film are available at <https://www.visionmakermedia.org/films/growing-native-northwest-coast-salish>

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