



July 16, 2015

Contact: Susan Helmink  
(402) 472-8607, shelmink@netad.unl.edu

For Immediate Release:

**Alutiiq Woman Races the Clock to Discover Cultural Truths  
Before Losing Battle with Cancer in *Finding Refuge***  
*Premiering October 3, 2015, through NETA*

**(Lincoln, Neb.):** Follow Isabella Blatchford (Alutiiq) as she embarks on an urgent quest to understand her cultural heritage before stage-four breast cancer leaves her too weak to complete her journey. [\*Finding Refuge\*](#), a new 30-minute documentary available through the National Telecommunications Association ([NETA](#)), premieres October 3, 2015. Isabella yearns to shed a lifetime of shame and cultural denial and replace it with pride in her Native culture. Supported through a broader view from scholars, elders, fishermen, hunters, parents, and community leaders working to repatriate Alutiiq culture, Isabella learns the history of her people, the origin of shame, and the value of Native storytelling.



**Isabella Blatchford (Alutiiq) on her mission to discover the meaning of the massacre at Refuge Rock off the coast of Kodiak Island. Photo by: Torsten Kjellstrand of Dog Mountain Studio.**

Produced and directed by Torsten Kjellstrand, and co-directed by Jamie Francis, the film follows these intertwined narratives with the central theme that hope of rebuilding a culture can replace generational shame with cultural pride. Isabella was raised in Kodiak Island, Alaska, under the influence of her mother and grandmother who urged her to deny her Alutiiq heritage to avoid the shame of being labeled a “Native.” Many stories about cultural identity in the United States come from the point-of-view of immigrant cultures. [\*Finding Refuge\*](#) explores how some Indigenous people in North America also struggle to find community and a sense of belonging.

The supporting narrative begins with Sven Haakanson (Alutiiq) who grew up in Old Harbor, where he was one of few students to go to college and continuing even further to earn a PhD in anthropology from Harvard University. Sven has been recognized as a MacArthur Fellow, served as term director for the Alutiiq Museum & Repository in Kodiak, and is now a professor at the University of Washington, additionally serving as the curator of Native American Anthropology at the Burke Museum. In spite of his clear professional success, Sven too, talks about the legacy of shame that haunts Native peoples:

“I grew up being ashamed of who I was—as a Native here in this village. But after eight years at Harvard, I was like, ‘Wait a minute. I can’t be that stupid!’ But yet, it’s been so ground into me. I hope that one day people will get over that because I think it is survivor’s guilt. We survived, they didn’t. That’s why people like Isabella are so important. They make it personal, which helps others—both Alutiiq and not Alutiiq—find meaning beyond the academic and historic.”

[\*Finding Refuge\*](#)—which received major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and Vision Maker Media—is distributed for broadcast by the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). This half-hour documentary will be available to Public Television stations nationwide on Monday, October 3, 2015. This program is suggested for scheduling in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. For NETA program details, visit [www.netaonline.org](http://www.netaonline.org). For viewing information in your area, visit [www.visionmakermedia.org/watch](http://www.visionmakermedia.org/watch).

## About Vision Maker Media

Vision Maker Media shares Native stories with the world that represent the cultures, experiences, and values of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Founded in 1977, Vision Maker Media, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) which receives major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, nurtures creativity for development of new projects, partnerships, and funding. Vision Maker Media is the premier source for quality Native American and Pacific Islander educational and home videos. All aspects of our programs encourage the involvement of young people to learn more about careers in the media—to be the next generation of storytellers. Located at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we offer student employment and internships. For more information, visit [www.visionmakermedia.org](http://www.visionmakermedia.org).

## About NETA

The National Educational Telecommunications Association ([NETA](http://www.netaonline.org)) is a professional association that serves Public Television licensees and educational entities in all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Since 1967, our reason for existing is to connect Public Television people and ideas by providing quality programming, educational resources, professional development, management support, and national representation. For more information, [www.netaonline.org](http://www.netaonline.org).

## Additional Information Regarding *Finding Refuge* (1/30):

**Broadcast Distributor/Feed Date/NOLA:** NETA | Monday, October 3, 2015 @ 10:30-11:00 ET/HD04 | FRFG

**Credits:** *Finding Refuge* is a co-production of Dog Mountain Studio and Vision Maker Media.

**Funding:** Major funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and Vision Maker Media.

### Film Pages:

**Vision Maker Media:** <http://www.visionmakermedia.org/films/finding-refuge>

**NETA:** <http://www.netaonline.org/search/ProgramDetails.aspx?id=4510>

**Digital Distributor:** **Vision Maker Media on Amazon Instant Video**

1800 N 33<sup>rd</sup> Street; Lincoln, NE 68503

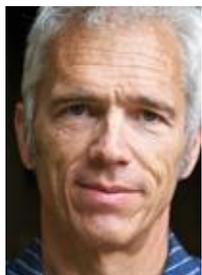
[shopvisionmaker.org](http://shopvisionmaker.org) | 1-877-868-2250

## Crew Bios:



### **TORSTEN KJELLSTRAND, PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/PHOTOGRAPHY**

A native of Sweden, Torsten Kjellstrand works as a freelance photographer and filmmaker in New York City, N.Y., and Portland, Ore. Soon after getting his Master's Degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia, a portfolio of Torsten's work earned him the "1996 Newspaper Photographer of the Year" award from the National Press Photographer Association's Picture of the Year International Contest. He worked at *The Herald*—a small, sophisticated newspaper in Jasper, Ind. Since then, he has won many national and international awards while working for *The Spokesman Review* in Spokane, Wash., and *The Oregonian*, in Portland, Ore. He has taught and presented both in the United States and internationally. He was a John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford University (2003-2004). Before his work as a photographer, Torsten was an English major at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., followed by a Fulbright Scholarship to study comparative literature at Uppsala University in Sweden. Most of all, Torsten is husband to Jean and father to children Björn and Maria, and human friend to Solo, the family dog. Torsten is currently Visiting Professor of Multimedia Journalism at the University of Oregon.



### **JAMIE FRANCIS, DIRECTOR/DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Jamie Francis grew up along a tiny dirt road deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. He is a first-generation college graduate, earning his Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1984. Jamie has worked at newspapers since college—mostly as a photographer but also writing a regular column for two papers. Recently, he has embraced documentary filmmaking and works for Blue Chalk Media in Portland, Ore. While working at the *St. Petersburg Times* in Florida, he covered news events throughout the world travelling to more than 45 countries and living on the road for months at a time. During this time—on extended stays home to St. Petersburg—he began documenting life along 22nd Avenue in South St. Petersburg. This body of work—*The Deuces*—became the New America Award winner in 2003. Essays have been a favorite for Jamie throughout his career and besides *The Deuces*, three other essays have been recognized as the best work of their respective year by the National Press Photographer Association's Picture of the Year International Contest. His best adventures include his wife Pamela and their children, Lily and Rafe, and so far two dogs, Mister RIP and Bandit.

###