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BC Métis/Cree filmmaker Barbara Todd Hager to donate educational royalties from her latest documentary *Forbidden Music* to First Nations language programs

VICTORIA, CANADA (February 18, 2025) - Métis/Cree filmmaker Barbara Todd Hager has announced that her production company, Acimow Media, will donate the educational royalties of her documentary, *Forbidden Music*, to First Nations language and cultural programs. The film had its world premiere to a sold-out audience at the Victoria Film Festival on February 15. The documentary follows the story of Austrian-born ethnomusicologist Dr. Ida Halpern and Kwakwaka'wakw artist and song maker Chief Mungo Martin. Together they recorded 124 songs in Halpern's Vancouver home in 1951 that continue to be used today in the revival of the Kwak'wala language.

Dr. Halpern, who escaped the Holocaust in 1938 and immigrated to Canada, recorded more than 350 traditional songs with Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, Haida and Coast Salish singers. Many of these songs were released on four albums after Halpern licensed the songs to New York's Folkways Records. Today, the recordings are housed in the British Columbia Archives, and the albums and songs are distributed by the Smithsonian Folkways Record label.

Acimow Media's CEO, Métis/Cree director Barbara Todd Hager said, "From 1885 until 1951, the Canadian government made it illegal for Indigenous people to gather and sing their traditional songs and take part in ceremonies like the Potlatch and Sundance. Today, many Indigenous languages are endangered because of policies like the Indian Act and the residential school system, where children were not allowed to speak their language. Ida Halpern used technology to record hundreds of First Nations songs with singers like Chief Mungo Martin. I hope that my documentary, *Forbidden Music*, will make a difference by contributing much-needed funding to First Nations communities who are committed to reviving their languages, which are deeply connected to traditional knowledge and cultural identity."

Four albums of First Nations singers recorded by Halpern on Canada's west coast, were released by Folkways Records between 1967 and 1986, including "Indian Music of the Pacific Northwest," "Kwakiutl Music of the Pacific Northwest," "Nootka Indian Music of the Pacific Northwest," and "Haida Indian Music of the Pacific Northwest."

The feature documentary, *Forbidden Music*, is licensed to Knowledge Network. The film received funding from the Canada Media Fund, CAVCO, Film Incentive BC, Indigenous Screen Office and the Rogers Doc Fund.

Acimow Media acknowledges hereditary Chief David Knox, great grandson of Chief Mungo Martin, for his support of this documentary.



For more information about Acimow Media please go to www.acimowmedia.com

For interview with Barbara Todd Hager, please contact Paula Raimondi, Project Manager, at acimow.communications@gmail.com

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About Barbara Todd Hager

Barbara Todd Hager is a Métis/Cree award-winning producer, director, and writer. She has produced four documentary series and five feature docs for APTN, CBC, CTV, CHUM, SBS/NITV, TELUS, Knowledge Network, and ZDF, including *The New Canoe*, *Down2Earth*, and *All Our Relations II*. Her eight-part docu-drama series, *1491: The Untold Story of the Americas Before Columbus* (APTN, ZDFE) covers 20,000 years of history from the perspective of Indigenous people. The series won the 2018 Canadian Leo Awards for Best Documentary Series, Music Composer, and Screenwriter.

About Acimow Media

Acimow Media is a BC-based Indigenous production company owned by Barbara Todd Hager, specializing in the production of high-quality, international Indigenous documentaries. Acimow means “She/he tells their story” in the Cree language.

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