



**FOR RELEASE – February 4, 2026**

**Festival Feature documentary “Leaving Beringia” explores Indigenous perspectives of the origins of people in the Americas**

(Victoria, BC) The world premiere of Cree-Metis filmmaker Barbara Todd Hager’s POV feature documentary, *Leaving Beringia*, is set to take place at the Victoria Film Festival on February 10, 2026. This is Hager’s fifth feature documentary, and the third to premiere at the Victoria Film Festival.

*Leaving Beringia* challenges the long-held scientific theory that during the ice age, Indigenous people walked across a temporary land bridge that connected Siberia and Alaska. Then around 13,000 years ago, they travelled south into North America, through an ice-free corridor that opened up through Alberta, and eventually settled throughout the Americas.

In *Leaving Beringia*, Hager visits eight of the oldest Indigenous occupation sites in Canada, the United States and Mexico, that were occupied by people thousands of years before the ice-free corridor offered a survivable path south. In ground-breaking conversations with leading archaeologists and Indigenous knowledge keepers, Hager discovers that modern scientific research frequently aligns with Indigenous origin stories, place names, and traditional knowledge, resulting in compelling new narratives of the origins of Indigenous people in the Americas.

Hager, who also directed the award-winning docu-drama series, *1491: The Untold Story of the Americas Before Columbus* (APTN, ZDF), said, “The origins of the first people in the Americas is one of the greatest mysteries of modern times. Since the 19th century, western scientists have built their theories by analyzing stone tools, ancient hearths and butchered animal bones. They rarely collaborated with Indigenous people in the territories they were working in, or asked for their interpretation of the materials they were uncovering. As an Indigenous filmmaker, and former museum administrator, I want *Leaving Beringia* to share Indigenous peoples’ perspectives of our ancestors’ origins.”

*Leaving Beringia* was commissioned by TELUS Independent and will be broadcast on OPTIK TV. The film received support from the Canada Media Fund, CAVCO, FIBC and the Indigenous Screen Office.

The Mexico premiere of *Leaving Beringia* takes place in March at the Puerto Aventuras International Film Festival.



Tickets for the world premiere of *Leaving Beringia* are available at <https://www.victoriafilmfestival.com/product/leaving-beringia/>.

For interviews with director Barbara Todd Hager, please contact Paula Raimondi at [acimow.communications@gmail.com](mailto:acimow.communications@gmail.com)

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**About Barbara Todd Hager (Producer / Director / Writer)**

Barbara Todd Hager is a Métis/Cree award-winning filmmaker. She has produced and directed four documentary series and five feature docs for APTN, CBC, CTV, CHUM, SBS/NITV, TELUS, Knowledge Network, and ZDF, including *Leaving Beringia*, *Forbidden Music*, *Down2Earth*, and *All Our Relations II*. Her eight-part docu-drama series, *1491: The Untold Story of the Americas Before Columbus*, covers 20,000 years of history from the perspective of Indigenous people. The series won three 2018 Canadian Leo Awards for Best Documentary Series, Music Composer, and Screenwriter. Hager owns Acimow Media, a BC-based production company specializing in high-quality, international Indigenous documentaries. Acimow means “she/he tells their story” in the Cree language.

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