

# SURVIVAL PRAYER



Participant in the 2012 IFP Documentary Labs



## INQUIRIES:

### **Benjamin Greené**

Director/Producer

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### **Abe Lloyd**

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Website: [www.survivalprayer.com](http://www.survivalprayer.com)  
Trailer: <http://vimeo.com/greenefilm/sp>  
Running Time: 70 min.  
High Definition Video



SURVIVAL PRAYER

# FILM REVIEW QUOTES

"The images remind me of the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich."

– **Werner Herzog**, Film Director

"*Survival Prayer* conveys the wisdom behind the gathering of native foods by Haida people, laying it out carefully in a stream of exquisite images, perfectly placed. The film, attentive in a tender and respectful way to a tradition older than the Babylonian and Inca empires, gently frames a profound question: In the days ahead, when we'll really need it, will the Haida's wisdom still be available to us?"

– **Barry Lopez**, Author of *Arctic Dreams* and *Of Wolves and Men*

"[*Survival Prayer*] is a wonderful film, and a moving portrait of a people struggling to keep their traditional hunting and gathering ways alive to inspire new generations of Haida men and women."

– **Wade Davis**, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence

"Benjamin Greené's debut is an absolutely stunning piece of ethnographic filmmaking.

The bond between the film's haunting score and beautiful imagery is as strong as the relationship between the filmmaker and subject. Greené shows incredible patience behind the camera, letting shots breathe and the story unfold at its own pace which helps transport viewers not only to the beautiful surroundings that he documents, but also to the pace of life the Haida embrace."

– **Ben Fowlie**, Founder and Director of the Camden International Film Festival

"The scenes, sounds and events captured in the film are stunning, and the stories of the people who struggle to keep their food traditions vibrant are compelling and inspiring. Thank you, Benjamin and *haawa* to the Haida participants for sharing these important lessons with all of us."

– **Nancy J. Turner**, Distinguished Ethnobotanist at the University of Victoria

## LOGLINE

On a remote archipelago in the Pacific Northwest, an uncommon abundance of wildlife has sustained the Haida people for countless generations. Here, a last speaker frames a moving portrait of these sacred food systems at risk. Rich with spectacular scenery of the North Pacific coastline and detailed views of wild food gathering and preservation, *Survival Prayer* is a story of possibility amid deep loss.



## FILM SYNOPSIS

*Survival Prayer* is a journey to the edge of the world. Following individual food harvesters as they gather and prepare for the winter, the film celebrates the modern lifeways of a remote indigenous community and bears witness to a profound relationship between individuals and the land that sustains them.

The story takes place in Haida Gwaii, an archipelago drifting off the northwestern edge of the North American continent. Formerly known as the Queen Charlottes, Haida Gwaii's diverse geography supports an unusual abundance of animal and vegetable life that has sustained its inhabitants for countless generations.

In the past century, commercial logging, over-fishing, and invasive species have compromised the availability of traditionally harvested foods and threatened the long-term viability of these practices. Compounding this ecological damage is the imminent extinction of the Haida language and loss of traditional knowledge.

Naanii Mary Swanson, a last speaker, frames this portrait of age-old traditions at risk. Against the spectacular scenery of the North Pacific coastline, her ancient words set the tone for detailed views of modern life, in which the labor of survival — cutting seaweed fronds, pulling salmon from nets, plucking young spruce tips — speaks to timeless rhythms that still retain strands of sacred ritual.

With scenes that favor the authority of silent acts and a rich visual vocabulary, *Survival Prayer* vividly illuminates the points at which nature and culture join to sustain human life.

An intimate ethnographic reflection, this meditative encounter with the Haida people's traditional food systems reveals poignant possibility amid deep loss.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In the fall of 2010, my wife and I arrived on Haida Gwaii for the first time. We went straight to the beach to cook a meal and spent some time listening and looking, unimpeded by recording devices. Later, we would taste the roe on kelp from Skidegate Inlet and blueback sockeye at Copper Bay while having conversations with those we met. It was through these experiences and conversations that the vision for the film was nourished. During the eight weeks that we filmed *Survival Prayer*, we came to see the parallel between the Haida's natural and cultural heritage, and to grasp that traditions as deep as time still hold new hope. In sharing the richness of these traditions, we sought to illuminate the poetry of this place.



# CREW BIOGRAPHIES

## **DIRECTOR/PRODUCER Benjamin Greené**

Benjamin Greené studied Neuroscience at Oberlin College and co-directed a documentary about the struggle for shelter and community in post-Katrina New Orleans. After college, he spent two years in a brain-imaging laboratory before leaving academia to pursue filmmaking. He went on to co-direct *Bury Me in Redwood Country* about the tallest and largest trees on the planet. *Survival Prayer* is his solo directorial debut. Benjamin is a 2012 graduate of Werner Herzog's Rogue Film School, winner of the Special Jury Prize for Direction at the 2013 Sarasota Film Festival, and alum of the IFP Documentary Filmmaker Labs.

## **CO-PRODUCER/EDITOR P. Corwin Lamm**

P. Corwin Lamm (Corky) is an artist and filmmaker living in Brooklyn, NY. He graduated from Oberlin College with degrees in studio art and cinema studies. Corky and Benjamin are long time collaborators. Corky co-directed *Have I Got a Witness*, and edited *Bury Me in Redwood Country* and *Survival Prayer*.

## **ASSOCIATE PRODUCER/ORIGINAL MUSIC Michael Beharie**

Michael Beharie is a musician living in New York City. Michael studied composition and classical guitar at Oberlin Conservatory and Max/MSP at Harvestworks (NYC). Michael performs at local venues including Issue Project Room, The Stone, Zebulon, Coco 66, Cameo Gallery, La Sala, Glasslands Gallery, and Brooklyn Bowl.

## **CO-PRODUCER/OUTREACH Abe Lloyd**

Abe Lloyd is an ethnobotanist with a passion for the indigenous plant foods of the Pacific Northwest. In 2011, he received his Master's degree from the University of Victoria, where he studied under the internationally celebrated ethnobotanist, Dr. Nancy Turner. He pursues his interests professionally, academically, and recreationally as the director of Salal, the Northwest Indigenous Foods Institute, as a board member for the Society of Ethnobiology, and as a dedicated forager that shares his wild food experiments on his Wild Harvests blog ([www.arcadianabe.blogspot.com](http://www.arcadianabe.blogspot.com)).



## CREDIT LIST

Directed and Produced by  
**BENJAMIN GREENÉ**

Edited by  
**P. CORWIN LAMM**

Original Music Composed by  
**MICHAEL BEHARIE**

Production Sound by  
**CHRISTINA WIENHOLD**

Graphic Design  
**KYLE MARMESH**

Director of Photography  
**BENJAMIN GREENÉ**

Audio Engineering  
**ZELJKO MCMULLEN**  
**MICHAEL BEHARIE**  
**TOM ARSENAULT**

Co-Producers  
**CHRISTINA WIENHOLD**  
**P. CORWIN LAMM**  
**ABE LLOYD**

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Marketing and Distribution  
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# TECHNICAL SPECS

Running time: 70 minutes

Shooting format: DVCPro HD

Aspect ratio: 1:1.77

Sound: Stereo

Rating: Not Rated

Available screening formats: HDCam, BluRay

