Les Davis and the search for First Montanans

A Proposal for the Montana Archaeological Society
(Confidential)
Dear MAS,

Following is our proposal for the development of an hour-long broadcast-quality film on the life and work of Dr. Leslie B. Davis, past curator of Anthropology and Ethnology at the Museum of the Rockies.

Montana is a notoriously big place, the big sky country. It contains the entire upper Missouri and Yellowstone River basins and spans an area of over 147,000 square miles. When you add the dimension of time, it gets even bigger.

One man spent much of his Montana life exploring the fourth dimension in his search for the first Montanans. Les Davis was a giant of Montana archaeology and anthropology. He was involved in many excavations and research projects across the state for the last 50 years.

The proposed film centers around Les and his work across Montana, but it also explores the question: Who were the people who occupied the rapidly changing post-glacial tundra, grasslands and forests of Montana? What were their lives like, and how do modern researchers discover the secrets of the early inhabitants of Montana?

The film will utilize archival footage from excavations around the state including Blacktail Cave, Barton Gulch, Sheeprock Springs, MacHaffie, Dry Creek Headwaters, Portal Creek, Mill Iron, Indian Creek, Anzick, the Lindsey Mammoth site, and others.

In collaboration with Dr. Sally Thompson, anthropologist and former University of Montana researcher, and long-time associate of Les Davis, we will conduct interviews with archaeologists, anthropologists, geologists, Native Americans and landowners who collaborated with Les, and the field technicians who meticulously excavated and cataloged artifacts and other clues to the early occupation of Montana and the Greater Yellowstone area.

We are seeking interest and funding sources to create a one-hour documentary film to be released in the Fall of 2017.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Smith
President, Oolite Media LLC
Company Facts and History

Earthtalk Studios was founded in 1991 by Daniel Smith as a documentary video production company. We soon evolved into a multimedia development company specializing in website design, interactive multimedia, and video production. Over the past 25 years, we have served many public and private organizations including; Technology/Manufacturing; Tourism/Recreation/Travel; Professional Service Firms; Education/Museums; Nonprofits/Associations; Real Estate/Construction/Architecture. In 2010 we changed our name from Earthtalk Studios to Oolite Media LLC. Following is a sample list of awards received by Oolite Media / Earthtalk Studios.

Oolite Media / Earthtalk Awards

Top 100 Producer: A/V Video Multimedia Producer Magazine: For 2 years in a row, Earthtalk Studios, Inc. was named one of AV Video Multimedia’s Top 100 Producers nationally. Chosen from across the country, the Top 100 Producers are leaders in the development of creative audio/visual multimedia presentations for use on websites and in digital media.

Pirelli International Award: Earthtalk received the Gold Pirelli International Multimedia Environmental Education Award. Daniel Smith, President of Earthtalk Studios traveled to Rome, Italy to receive this prestigious award. Past winners of the award include the internationally renowned scientist and educator John Nash (portrayed in the Movie “A Beautiful Mind”). The Pirelli award was received for Earthtalk Studios’ interactive educational CD-ROM, Global City, developed for Prentice Hall.

Gold Horizon Interactive Award
Travel Montana Press Kit (CD-ROM)

Gold Montana Addy
Yellowstone Geographic (Website)

Gold Northwest Regional Addy
Earhtalk Studios (Website)

Gold Montana Addy
Global City (CD-ROM)

Best of Division Montana Addy
The Yellowstone Club (Website)

Gold Montana Addy
To Eat or Be Eaten (Online Multimedia)

Gold Montana Addy
Tom Morgan Rodsmiths (Website)
Personnel and Qualifications

Daniel J. Smith, M.S., Producer/Director: www.oolitemedia.com

Daniel Smith has been involved with video, web and multimedia design and development for over 20 years. Dan has a passion for science, education and multimedia communications. With a Master's Degree in Earth Science and a minor in Film and Television, Dan founded Earthtalk Studios in 1991. Earthtalk developed an internationally-recognized portfolio of interactive science education multimedia delivered via the web and other media delivery platforms. Earthtalk Studios’ multimedia presentations include online science education field trips for Yellowstone National Park and the Yellowstone Park Foundation, textbook CD-ROMS for Prentice Hall's Environmental Sciences Division, Online Interactive Science Objects for the National Science Teacher's Association, and online community education modules for the Sonoran Institute and the BLM, as well as films for the Museum of the Rockies. Film productions include:

Passport to Steel's Pass: Archaeology in the Northern Rockies: Educational video documentary for the United States Forest Service and the Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT 59717; Writer/Producer/Director/Editor; 1993

People of the Hearth: Paleoindians of the Northern Rockies: Educational video documentary produced for the Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT 59717; Producer/Director/Editor; 1993

A Giant Leap for Dinosaurs: Educational video documentary produced for the Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT 59717; Writer/Producer/Director; 1991

Dinosaur Hunters: Educational video documentary produced for the Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT 59717; Writer/Producer/Director; 1991

The Sheepeaters: Keepers of the Past: A half hour video documentary; aired on PBS in 1990-91; Writer/Producer/Videographer

Sally Thompson, Independent Anthropologist

Sally has spent over thirty years working with the native tribes of the Rocky Mountain West. Trained as an anthropologist (Ph.D., CU, Boulder, 1980), she has worked as an archaeologist, ethnographer, and ethnohistorian. Her dissertation research focused on assessing human adaptations to climate change at the Plains-Mountain interface of Wyoming and Colorado through the examination of Holocene archaeological data. Over the years she has interviewed over 200 elders of 37 tribes and used the results to produce three documentaries and several classroom DVDs, in addition to three websites. She has visited archives in North America and Europe to review maps and research the tribes of the region during the 19th century, especially the records of the fur trade and the Jesuits. In 2009-10, she worked collaboratively with traditionalists from the Kootenai and Blackfeet tribes on the book People Before the Park about their traditional seasonal rounds through the Crown of the Continent, focused on Glacier National Park. She also served as Acting Curator of Collections for the Anthropology Department at UM, focused on repatriating human remains back to tribes as part of NAGPRA.
Some Oolite Media/Earthtalk Video Projects


I had worked with Dr. Les Davis (past Curator of Anthropology and Ethnology at the Museum of the Rockies) for a number of years on films documenting archaeological excavations across Montana. People of the Hearth was an elaborate re-creation of a very special site at Barton Gulch on the Ruby River where multiple cooking (hearth) complexes were found to be used on a regular basis by a paleoindian culture.

American Indian Tribal Histories Project (Western Heritage Center) (2007-2010)

We were enlisted by the Western Heritage Center to create a 10-part series of oral history videos for the American Indian Tribal Histories Project. Numerous interviews with tribal elders were completed over a period of about a year. Ten finished videos were created and packaged into a block set for sale. The videos were also archived at the museum for research purposes.

Microbe Theater (Museum of the Rockies) (2009-2011)

We created a science-based museum video relating the story of microbes in Yellowstone National Park to be part of the Museum of the Rockies Early Life Exhibit. The video has elaborate motion graphics as well as video shot in Yellowstone and microscopy shot in the lab.

Gallatin County Detention Center (Gallatin County Sheriff) (2011-2015)

The Gallatin County Sheriff enlisted the creative services of Oolite Media LLC to create an inmate orientation video for the Gallatin Valley Detention Center. Actors were used to re-create situations in the Detention Center. We also created an information video for the Gallatin County Sheriff to be shown at community meetings and on the web.

Video Book Trailers for Multiple Clients (2015)


Todd Wilkinson came to us to create a video book trailer that could promote his book Last Stand: Ted Turner’s Quest to Save a Troubled Planet. The trailer uses archival footage from WWII and NASA footage from the space shuttle to emphasize the world-changing contributions Ted Turner has made over the years.

Author Jon Knokey finished his groundbreaking book Theodore Roosevelt and the Making of American Leadership analyzing Roosevelt’s journey to leadership and needed an exciting video book trailer to kick off the publication. Utilizing the extensive Teddy Roosevelt archives at Harvard, we crafted a dramatic teaser beginning with Roosevelt’s legendary charge up San Juan Hill.
Narrative

Sally Thompson and I both conducted video interviews with Les Davis before he passed away. These interviews help to fill in the details of Les’ journey over the last 50 years and his contribution to the understanding of Montana’s first inhabitants. I videotaped and produced a number of films for Les in the 1990s documenting various excavations, including *The Sheepeaters: Keepers of the Past*, *Passport to Steel’s Pass*, *Sheeprock Springs: A golden Research Opportunity*, *Montana 1492*, and *People of the Hearth: Paleoindians of the Northern Rockies*. In addition, I have a wealth of video footage from various digs and archival footage including excavation of the Lindsey Mammoth. There are also many photographs of Les and his crews from different sources.

Les and I had been planning a documentary film relating the First Montanans story for several years before he passed away. With this proposal, I am continuing to move forward with our plan. I’m excited that Sally Thompson will be involved in the project to guide me through the science and nuances of telling both the story of Les’ contribution and the picture that is unfolding of the provenance and lifestyles of the First Montanans.

The plan is to create this hour-long broadcast-quality PBS-style documentary in several stages. First, we plan to produce a trailer/pilot to be shown at the 2016 Montana Archaeological Society conference to generate interest in the project. Then, depending on funding resources, complete the film over the next year or so with the goal of releasing the film in the autumn of 2017.

Our approach will be to emphasize the following elements:

1) Expansive, breathtaking scenics and drone aerials of occupation sites and active digs.
2) Rich closeups of native vegetation and wildlife representing the natural resources utilized by the early inhabitants of Montana.
3) Map animations of locations and terrain of precontact occupation sites.

4) Stock footage of scenes such as bison migrations and past climate conditions which don’t exist today.
5) We will utilize archival footage of a variety of excavations across Montana including excavation of the Lindsey Mammoth and re-creations developed at Barton Gulch for the *People of the Hearth* film.
6) We visualize interviews with a variety of associates of Les and other players in the story of the search for First Montanans.
7) Kit Mather worked closely with Les over the years creating illustrations of paleoindian lifestyles in Montana and now extinct mamal species that existed in prehistoric times. She was instrumental in illustrating the People of the Hearth film. We will utilize Kit’s colorful illustrations in the First Montanans film.
8) We will also utilize archival black & white or sepia photographs to accompany the narrative.
Proposed Budget for:
Les Davis and the Search for First Montanans

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Service</th>
<th>Cost Estimate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie Trailer</td>
<td>$2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-production: research and scriptwriting</td>
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<td>HD Video production</td>
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<td>Post-production</td>
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<td>Artwork &amp; Illustrations</td>
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<td>Graphics &amp; Animation</td>
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<td>Archival film processing (upconverting to HD)</td>
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<td>Music Fee</td>
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<td>travel per diem (3 trips to 2016 digs &amp; interviews)</td>
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<td>contingency/overhead</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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*This is an estimate of costs to finish this film.

Initially, we are requesting the Montana Archaeological Society to set up a fund for donations.

We will be seeking funds from Humanities MT and other organizations as well.

We hope to attract other funding sources, including foundations, and/or individuals to move forward with production this summer.
In memory of Leslie B Davis 1935-2014
Thank You!

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to discuss this project with you. We are very excited about finishing this documentary film which will encapsulate the life’s work of Les Davis and paint a picture of the early human occupation of Montana and beyond.

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