

## TRUE LIVES

A New Limited Series from the Producers of *P.O.V.*

### For Immediate Release

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### “Boomtown” Celebrates Independence Day in Indian Country

Documentary, Part of “True Lives” Series Distributed by NETA,  
Available for March 2008 – December 2009 Scheduling by PBS Stations

While most Americans celebrate July 4th by simply watching fireworks displays, for some tribal members of Washington State’s Suquamish nation, selling and setting off huge displays of fireworks for Independence Day is its own summer ritual. "Around here, we call it Fireworks Season," says Bennie Armstrong, Tribal Chairman of the Suquamish nation. "It’s an important part of the local reservation economy." As shown in Bryan Gunnar Cole’s **Boomtown**, fireworks can be serious business.

**Boomtown** will be broadcast on public television stations as part of *True Lives*, a series presented by American Documentary, Inc. and the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). *True Lives* is a new programming initiative from the producers of P.O.V.

For Armstrong and others, selling fireworks entails calculated risk and detailed planning. One first-time stand owner puts her house in the balance by using mortgage money to buy a stock of fireworks. A veteran seller has long depended on fireworks sales to make up the income shortfalls between salmon runs. Another couple uses income from their stand to start a Baptist Church on the reservation. Through it all comes a surprisingly intimate view of contemporary life on the Port Madison Reservation.

People from Seattle and the Puget Sound area make the annual journey to Port Madison because they can buy fireworks here that aren’t legal off the reservation. Filmmaker Cole grew up nearby and made the journey himself as a boy. "Going to Suquamish for the 4th of July was part of my life as a kid and as an adult. I always thought fireworks season would make an interesting film; the holiday offered some common ground to have a dialogue and to offer a different point of view," he says.

The Suquamish are one of 26 federally recognized tribes in Washington State, and they all sell fireworks. But the market in fireworks, like casinos and other economic development enterprises unique to reservations, is the result of treaties with the federal government. To Armstrong, himself a long-time stand owner, the assertion of these types of treaty rights is the key to economic strength and self-determination in Indian Country.

Nevertheless, the irony of celebrating Independence Day is not lost on Armstrong and other tribal members. But while one history reads as a litany of displacement, broken treaties and cultural destruction, another holds the memories and deeds of Indian contributions to the strength and development of the country as a whole. For Armstrong, the reality is that he and other Indians are really dual citizens. Celebrating success as both American business people and as Indians with an

outlook unique to their experiences and traditions, **Boomtown** reveals the most difficult job of all: walking in two worlds.

### **About the Filmmaker:**

#### **Bryan Gunnar Cole Producer/Director/Writer**

Bryan Gunnar Cole is a 1987 graduate of Yale University with a BA in Film Studies and a 1998 MFA recipient from New York University's Kanbar Institute of Film and Television. While at NYU, he received five Craft awards, two Warner Bros. Production Awards, the Martin Scorsese Award, and the Maurice Kanbar Award for directing. His thesis film, **Trim**, won a 1997 Wasserman Award, NYU's top filmmaking honor. Today, Cole is an editor and documentary filmmaker.

He began his career in Seattle, where he co-founded the Annex Theatre. His theatrical producing credits include the large-scale musical "Wonka" (an adaptation of the 1970 film classic "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory") and the comic series "The Up and Coming."

Cole has produced and directed films for National Geographic, PBS, and ITVS among others. His experimental short **Unfurled** was selected as part of Showtime Networks' "Reflections from Ground Zero" Sept. 11 broadcast. His documentary **Boomtown** has screened in festivals and cultural institutions throughout North America in addition to having its broadcast premiere on P.O.V.

Most recently, Cole edited the feature film **Rock the Paint**, which premiered at the 2005 Tribeca Film Festival, and the critically acclaimed documentaries **Another Road Home**, which exhibited nationally, and **Arctic Son**, which premiered on P.O.V. in 2007. **Day Zero** is his narrative feature directing debut.

#### **Credits:**

Producer/Director/Writer:	Bryan Gunnar Cole
Editor:	Spiro C. Lampros
Director of Photography:	Matthew Clark
Original Music:	Erin O'Hara
Executive Producer:	Paige West
Producer:	Selina Lewis Davidson
Co-producer	Manuel Sanchez-Rodriguez

**Running Time:** 1 hour

#### **Awards & Festivals:**

- First Peoples' Festival Film and Video Showcase, Montreal, 2002 – *Rigoberta Menchu Tum Prize*
- American Indian Film Festival honoree
- Newport Film Festival honoree



#### **National Educational Telecommunications Association ([www.netaonline.org](http://www.netaonline.org))**

The National Educational Telecommunications Association is a professional association based in Columbia, S.C. It serves public television licensees and educational entities in all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico by providing quality programming content, educational resources, professional development, management support, and national representation.

#### **American Documentary, Inc. ([www.amdoc.org](http://www.amdoc.org))**

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation. Simon Kilmurry is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.