



Lisa Utronki

Lisa Utronki uses filmmaking to support her conservationist philosophy. Her first film, *Long Live a Free Magpie*, documents the Magpie River, one of eastern Canada's most spectacular multi-day trips, and the fight to keep it free-flowing. "The Magpie is a fantastic resource and if we lose it, we lose part of ourselves," says Utronki, 30.

Her second movie, *B. East*, looks at the lifestyle of professional paddlers. "The way kayakers live to do what they love is a story in itself," she says. "Kayakers are great athletes and they're willing to sacrifice everything to be on the water."

Before riding whitewater, Utronki rode horses. She was applying for a position in a stable when she heard a raft company on the Ottawa was looking for raft guides. From there, learning to kayak came easy. She eventually sold her riding tack and, with hours of video footage from her kayaking trips, she decided to try filmmaking. "I feel I can add something to movies that isn't there," she says. "I want to make whitewater understandable to everyone. All of the kayakers in my movies could show them to their grandmothers and they'd get it."

Utronki has made video her life, filming client trips on Chile's Futaleufu for Kayak Fu. As a female, she feels she has an advantage in gaining access. "If anything, I can get away with more because it's easier [as a woman] to ask in-depth, personal questions. The media can tell great stories and I want to be right at the center of that." Info: www.reeltimeimages.com.



Becky Bristow

Becky Bristow has starred in plenty of paddling flicks, so moving behind the camera was natural. Her chance came when a pair of Russian entrepreneurs invited her and expedition boater Dunbar Hardy to explore Siberia's Chukotka province. Their mission: lay the groundwork for a rafting industry north of the Arctic circle, where reindeer outnumber people 10-to-1. The Russians supplied a decrepit helicopter, but instead of hitting the best whitewater locales, the pilots had their own agenda. "Our trip coincided with the salmon run," says Bristow, 29. "We knew there was whitewater around but we couldn't get the pilots to take us to it. They wanted to hit the fishing spots."

There was little they could do. *A Russian Wave* is the story of their trip, one with little whitewater but full of cultural nuances rarely seen in boating movies. "Having a storyline is so much more interesting," Bristow says. "It makes it worth watching."

Critics agreed. *A Russian Wave* won numerous awards, including People's Choice for shorts at the Whistler Film Festival, Best Independent at the Rossland Film Festival, and a finalist ranking for Best Film at Banff. Bristow has used this success to jumpstart her next project, *One Woman's Drive*, about Michelle Phillips, a 36-year-old mother who raced in the 2004 Yukon Quest dogsled race. Bristow endured minus-40 weather to follow Phillips along the 1,000-mile route. "It's inspiring that she still is doing what she loves and isn't giving up on her passions because of motherhood," Bristow says. "We can all take something from that." Info: www.wildsoulcreations.com.



photo by Jenning Steger

Anna Levesque

Anna Levesque saw a missing element in the literary canon of kayak instruction: There were no videos or books catering to women. "I was looking at an instructional book and there were only two pictures of lady paddlers," says Levesque, 32. "I knew we needed something women could relate to."

Before long, Levesque began filming her *Girls at Play* series, instructional videos designed by a woman, for women. The videos focus heavily on the mental aspects of paddling, because Levesque believes women approach whitewater differently than men. "Men don't have to communicate as much," she says. "I always thought I was weird because I wanted to ask questions. Then I got together with other women and discovered they

had similar stories." She pushes female paddlers to learn to read water, to stop following other boaters and to make their own decisions. She shares that message on her instructional tour, and in the videos, both of which—*Girls at Play* and *Whitewater Kayaking Basics for Women*—will be released on a single DVD this summer. Next up for Levesque: a series on sea kayaking and recreational boating for women. Info: www.watertgirlsatplay.com.

