



4 DAYS  
273 MILES

# FINDING

# TRACTION

A FILM BY JAIME JACOBSEN AND MONTANA PBS



FEATURING NIKKI KIMBALL EXECUTIVE PRODUCER AARON PRUITT CO-PRODUCERS CHARLES DYE DANIEL SCHMIDT RICK SMITH  
CO-DIRECTOR CHARLES DYE WRITTEN BY STEFANIE WATKINS JAIME JACOBSEN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DANIEL SCHMIDT  
EDITOR STEFANIE WATKINS ORIGINAL MUSIC CRAIG MINOWA VISUAL EFFECTS ED WATKINS ONLINE EDITOR & COLORIST SCOTT STERLING  
SOUND MIX & MASTER JEREMIAH SLOVAP PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY JAIME JACOBSEN



# FINDING TRACTION | PRESS KIT

Produced and Directed by: Jaime Jacobsen  
Executive Producer: Aaron Pruitt  
Featuring: Nikki Kimball  
Running Time: 57 minutes  
Genre: Documentary

**Online Screener** – <http://vimeo.com/102252963>  
Password: ultra

**Trailer** – <http://vimeo.com/51246049>

## Website & Social Media

[www.findingtractionfilm.com](http://www.findingtractionfilm.com)  
[www.facebook.com/FindingTractionFilm/](http://www.facebook.com/FindingTractionFilm/)



## AWARDS & SCREENINGS

2015 – Best Mountain Sports Film, Vancouver Int'l Mountain Film Festival (Canada)  
2015 – Best Women in Adventure Film, Sheffield Adventure Film Festival (UK)  
2015 – Best Running Film: Silver Award, Sheffield Adventure Film Festival (UK)  
2014 – Best Action Sports Film, Danish Adventure Film Festival (Denmark)  
2014 – Finalist, Mountain Film Competition, Banff Mountain Film Festival (Canada)  
2014 – Official Selection, Mumbai Women's International Film Festival (India)  
2015 – Official Selection, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival (Missoula, MT, USA)  
2015 – Official Selection, Green Mountain Film Festival (Montpelier, VT, USA)  
2015 – Selected as the headliner for the 2015 Trails in Motion 3 World Tour (100+ stops)

## FILM CONTACT

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## LOGLINE

*Finding Traction* presents the inspirational story of ultra runner Nikki Kimball's quest to become the fastest person in history to run America's oldest hiking trail, the 273-mile Long Trail. Through Nikki's incredible journey, racing towards a dream and against time, we gain a new perspective on what we all share in terms of endurance and the human spirit.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

*Finding Traction* presents the inspirational story of ultra runner Nikki Kimball and her quest to become the fastest person in history to run America's oldest hiking trail, the 273-mile Long Trail. The documentary asks what drives her to attempt such an incredible feat, and follows Nikki's journey from its beginning – training and racing in the Rocky mountains – to her actual record attempt through Vermont's beautiful but brutal Green Mountains. Throughout the film, Nikki's crew and support team provide an intimate portrayal of the courage, grit and passion behind her record attempt, and interviews with the world's leading evolutionary biologists, including Bernd Heinrich, author of "Why We Run," shed light on the science and psychology behind Nikki's incredible race against time. For Nikki, this well-publicized run is more than a chance to inspire people to be active and spend time outdoors, it's her way of encouraging women and girls to take an equal place for themselves in professional sports. In addition to providing an inside look into the journey of an elite athlete, *Finding Traction* gives viewers a new perspective on the endurance of the human body and spirit, and informs us all, regardless of our sex, of our true potential and inspires us to reach it.

## DETAILED SYNOPSIS

Nikki Kimball is a petite redheaded ultra marathon running champion whose disposition is anything but diminutive. Undeclared for nearly a decade in the world's toughest ultras, Nikki excels at winning the events most people think are impossible to even complete. In *Finding Traction*, viewers join Nikki on an inspirational journey as she embarks on her ultimate challenge: to become the fastest person in history – man or woman – to run America's oldest hiking trail, the 273-mile Long Trail.

Her quest is epic, unimaginable even: ten marathons, back-to-back, covering twice the elevation of Everest, all in four and a half days with very little sleep. Through Nikki's personal narrative and the intimate testimony of her closest friends and running partners, we learn about the little-known sport of ultra running and this athlete's passion for inspiring others to be healthy in an age when obesity is America's #1 killer.

Captured in remarkable detail during Nikki's pre-Long Trail training events, and in gorgeous behind-the-scenes verité DSLR and GoPro footage during her actual Long Trail expedition, *Finding Traction* brings to viewers the remarkable transformative power Nikki and others have found in running tremendous distances. Serially casted as a child because her feet turned in, and battling a devastating depression throughout her college years, viewers discover how running saved Nikki's life and how her running then inspired others. As her journey along the Long Trail unfolds, we see the passion Nikki has for inspiring others to go after their dreams, as she heroically strives to attain her own.

In addition to conveying Nikki's personal journey, *Finding Traction* also explores the role running has played in our past as endurance predators. Drawing upon interviews with evolutionary biologists Bernd Heinrich, author of "Why We Run," and David Carrier, featured in the national best-seller, "Born to Run," the film sheds light on the science and psychology behind Nikki's incredible journey. Their testimony is accompanied by innovative slow-motion photography that highlights the motion of the body through space, enabling the viewer to enter the sacred space of the running dream world that Nikki inhabits on the trail where intense and "exquisite pain" melts away the concerns of her daily life.

A broadcast hour in full HD for public television and festival release, *Finding Traction* uses both documentary and narrative techniques to convey the greater philosophical underpinnings behind Nikki's run. Ultimately, the film enables audiences to better understand the psyche and motivation of this elite athlete, and helps unlock the power of dreaming to open anyone's potential. Through Nikki's incredible journey, racing towards a dream and against time, we gain a new perspective on what we all share in terms of endurance and the human spirit.



## DIRECTOR'S BIO

Jaime Jacobsen is an independent filmmaker who is passionate about using film to cultivate conversation on the pressing issues of our times. Her films have explored the politics of gender and identity, as well as contemporary social justice issues through the eyes of Native American youth and elders in the Rocky Mountain West and women in diverse communities across the globe. Jaime's previous films include *The Water Carriers*, which profiles an engineering student's work to bring clean water to school children in Kenya (Silver Telly Award, 2008), *Homefront: United or Divided*, Montana PBS' companion program to Ken Burns' *The War* (Regional Emmy Award Nomination, 2008) and *Montana Fare*, about food politics and culture in rural Montana (College Emmy, 2010). Most recently, Jaime won an Emmy Award for her work as a Field Producer on *Indian Relay* (Independent Lens, 2013). She currently teaches filmmaking as an Assistant Professor of Media Studies at Notre Dame University – Louaize in Beirut. Prior to moving to Lebanon, she taught in the Honors College at Montana State University, where she obtained a MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

For me, documentary filmmaking is about finding people who intrigue and inspire us, and who have a fascinating story to tell. These individuals challenge us to ask bigger questions about the world and our place in it. Through Nikki's story in *Finding Traction*, I wanted to inspire people, especially women and girls, to reach their full potential and go after their dreams.

It was amazing to spearhead the creation of this film and to have the opportunity to bring this story to audiences around the world. One of my personal goals as a filmmaker is to use film to cultivate conversation about the pressing issues of our times. *Finding Traction*, at its core, explores the limits of human body and spirit, while posing larger questions about gender equity, human endurance, and our individual determination to succeed. I wanted to bring more attention to the extraordinary accomplishments of amazing female athletes like Nikki and inspire others through her story.

When I first met Nikki three years ago, and learned about her motivation behind her Long Trail record attempt, I felt I understood her mission in some way. I am a young female director working in what is still largely a male-dominated field, trying to launch my career and make a name for myself. Most of my colleagues are men and I often find myself on shoots or working on projects where I am the only woman. Indiewire has



recently published a number of articles about gender inequality in film, highlighting the lack of women in leadership and directorial roles in Hollywood and in television.

We have come a long way, but the fact remains that men and women are still not equal. Currently I live and work in Beirut, Lebanon, where women face even more challenges than they do in the United States. Lebanese women are still fighting for basic rights, such as the right to pass on their nationality to their children. Every day I feel more committed to this mission – of empowering women in diverse communities across the globe – and using my talents in filmmaking to tell stories that motivate the public to imagine, and ultimately create, a better future.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### Aaron Pruitt – Executive Producer



Aaron Pruitt is the Associate General Manager and Director of Content for Montana PBS, providing editorial leadership for the statewide public TV service and reviewing thousands of hours of programming from national and local sources. Pruitt serves as executive producer for many Montana PBS productions including the news-public affair series, *Montana Focus*, and the music performance program, *11th & Grant with Eric Funk* as well as documentaries like the award-winning *Class C: The Only Game in Town*. Pruitt often collaborates with independent filmmakers, and has distributed programs to PBS, such as *Wolves in Paradise (PBS Plus)*, *Before There Were Parks: Yellowstone and Glacier Through Native Eyes (PBS NPS)*, *Fort Peck Dam (PBS Plus)* and two PBS Independent Lens documentaries, *Butte America* and *Indian Relay*. With 20 years' experience, Pruitt understands the PTV audience, the educational mission of public television as well as the editorial and technical processes for guiding projects through the PTV system.

### Charles Dye – Co-Producer / Co-Director



A competitive distance runner in high school and college, Charles was immediately drawn to the story of *Finding Traction*. Currently teaching cinema production at Virginia Tech, Charles' most recent film, *Indian Relay*, won two regional Emmy Awards and aired on PBS' Independent Lens in 2013. His earlier work includes the Emmy winning *Before There Were Parks: Yellowstone & Glacier Through Native Eyes*, *A Cat Called Elvis*--the #1 downloaded podcast on the Webby-award winning [www.lifeonterra.com](http://www.lifeonterra.com), *Last of the Gum Men*, which aired nationally on PBS via NETA satellite in 2003, and *Saving the Snow Leopards of Mongolia*, which aired worldwide on the National Geographic Channels in 2002.

**Rick Smith – Co-Producer**

Rick Smith's award winning work has been featured in numerous fiction and documentary films. He has worked as producer, cinematographer, and photographer for a variety of non-profits, governmental agencies and broadcast entities including PBS, National Geographic Television, Yellowstone National Park, and The Nature Conservancy. Smith's films have been the official selection at dozens of film festivals and his film 2006 short film *Fish & Cow* was a newcomer finalist at the 2007 Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival as well as a recipient of the 2008 International Wildlife Film Festival Montana Filmmaker Award. Most recently, his work on the Montana PBS films *Indian Relay* and *Before There Were Parks* both received Northwest Regional Emmy Awards for Best Cinematography in 2014 and 2010, respectively.

**Daniel Schmidt – Co-Producer / Director of Photography**

Daniel is committed to creating smart and edgy non-fiction films that reflect the human connection to the natural world. He has worked as a producer, editor, and cinematographer for a variety of broadcast entities, government agencies, and non-profits including National Geographic Television, PBS, NASA, The National Science Foundation, DIY, HGTV, Patagonia, On The Snow, TeleCaribe, and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. He garnered an Emmy award during his tenure as Senior Producer of the Montana PBS series, *TERRA* and his own film, *Feeding the Problem*, was nominated for the Best Newcomer Award in 2011 at the prestigious Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. His passion for adventure, storytelling, and cinematography has taken him around the world – from the high-mountain huts of Japan's top sword makers, to the snake-filled swamps of the Tasmanian highlands. His combined love of art, science, and storytelling thrust him into the land of media production and an MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking from Montana State University.

**Stefanie Watkins – Writer / Editor**

Stefanie has been editing factual shows and films for over eight years, specializing in natural history and documentary programming for the BBC, Discovery, National Geographic, and PBS, to name a few. She now lives in the UK, but continues to work in the US whenever she can. Since moving abroad, she has been editing for landmark series like *North America* on the Discovery Channel, and *Planet Earth Live* on BBC 1, as well as sports series like *Spirit of Sport* on ESPN Stars. She has also worked as an editor and writer for the Nat Geo Wild series, *America the Wild*, and spent five years as a lead editor and astronomy producer at NASA.

## CAST

### **Nikki Kimball – Principal Talent**

Nikki Kimball is an ultra marathon runner who uses her racing credentials to promote women in sport, decrease stigmas attached to mental illness, and pursue other philanthropic goals. Her athletic dreams began early in life as a cross-country ski racer who does not remember a time before training to attain top positions in her sport. Her quest to become an Olympic ski racer ended within a couple years of college graduation with the onset of a debilitating bout of major depression, which made her dreams financially and practically impossible. In the absence of ski racing, Nikki decided to attend graduate school in physical therapy, hoping to help others attain their athletic and health-related goals.



After graduation, Nikki began work as a physical therapist in upstate New York where she focused her competitive nature on trail running rather than ski racing. She quickly became one of the world's best ultra runners, undefeated in trail ultra racing for seven years. In addition to eight national championship titles in ultra running, and four in snowshoe racing, Nikki's resume includes wins at the world's most iconic races: Western States 100, Marathon des Sables, and Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc. Off the trail she created, "The Running Clinic," a multi-disciplinary health care service aimed at avoidance of running related injuries while living in Upstate New York, and she currently specializes in the treatment of running injuries near her home in Bozeman, Montana. She has also contributed several articles about running injury prevention and treatment to "Runner's World" magazine, and used her running fame as a platform to raise money for organizations such as Girls on the Run and Starfish (an HIV/AIDS prevention charity in South Africa). In addition she frequently speaks to groups about the use of sport in fighting major depression and encouraging open, frank discussion of this difficult topic. This is Kimball's first appearance in a feature documentary.



## BEHIND-THE-SCENES

### Interview with Producer/Director Jaime Jacobsen, featured on *Trail and Ultra Running*

From Interviewer Craig Lloyd:

Jaime Jacobsen, Producer/Director of *Finding Traction*, was kind enough to give me 30 minutes of her day to share her views on documentary filmmaking and Nikki Kimball's incredible feat of completing the 'Long Trail.'

#### **Craig: Tell me about yourself?**

**Jaime:** I'm an independent documentary filmmaker living in Bozeman, Montana for the last 7 years. I studied art and environmental studies in my undergrad and was looking for a way to combine the two separate disciplines. My mom remarried a documentary filmmaker who took me along on film shoots while I was in college. I just loved it. It was a great way to come into contact with a lot of different people, places, and ideas that I normally wouldn't interface with in my life. It has allowed me to tell stories that had meaning in the larger scheme of things, whether it was rallying people around a cause I think is important or inspiring folks. Filmmaking is a great vehicle for that.

#### **Craig: Is this your first feature length documentary?**

**Jaime:** Yeah. Until now I've only made 30-minute films, so this is new territory for me, which I'm really excited about.

#### **Craig: Why did you choose Nikki Kimball and ultra running?**

**Jaime:** One of our co-producers met her in an airport, and Nikki had mentioned her plans to attempt to break a speed record on Vermont's 'Long Trail.' We heard about this and thought, 'what an incredible feat that she is going after.' There is something really captivating about someone who has the drive to go after something that many people might consider to be absolutely impossible. Once I met Nikki my interest piqued to a whole new level because, as a female filmmaker, I have a passion to inspire women. Nikki shares that same desire for women to be active and to achieve their goals. It made me want to share her story. I'm also fascinated with the sport of ultra-running, something I didn't know anything about before starting this project.

#### **Craig: How do you think your film could redefine women's views regarding trail and ultra-running?**

**Jaime:** I hope that, beyond inspiring women to consider a sport that pushes their own limits—either against themselves or their male opponents—it just inspires women in general to pursue their dreams and just go after it. Nikki's passion, drive, and courage are contagious. They have been a big motivating factor in my own life to go after my goals. I hope it does the same for others. If we can do that I think we've succeeded.

**Craig: Tell me a little about your journey to take on something this grand of a scale.**

**Jaime:** It's been all about being open to possibilities, living with uncertainty, being incredibly flexible. That goes for all aspects of this project, from trying to figure out how to cover a moving target over nearly 300 miles or just trying to put the film together, to raising the money to complete it. This is something I've never done before as a filmmaker and there is a lot of adaptation.

**Craig: How were you able to get cameramen out in the middle of nowhere with Nikki?**

**Jaime:** We utilized Nikki's pacers and support crew. Setting up a camera crew to film Nikki running by wasn't practical in a number of locations, so we had her pacers carry mounted GoPro cameras to film along the way. While it was hard due to the roughness of the trail or the rocks, they were definitely able to do it better than we were. It allowed us to capture some intimate and intense moments like we were right there with Nikki.

**Craig: In most documentaries there is a general story line. What do you do in a situation like this where you really have no idea how it might go?**

**Jaime:** One of the things we do as filmmakers, and I wouldn't say it always works, is we try to plan out all of the different scenarios that might happen during filming. When we did get unexpected footage we just had to roll with it and document what was occurring to the best of our ability. It might mean throwing certain aspects out the window. In the end, it involved a lot of flexibility and open-mindedness.

**Craig: How emotional was it for you as a team to be there and document her finish?**

**Jaime:** It felt dreamlike because we were so focused on Nikki's response and that of her family and supporters. We weren't even focused on ourselves because we were exhausted. The expedition was so challenging. There were times when we didn't know if we would be successful in completing both the filming of it and her actually finishing the run. There were a lot of tears of joy and relief to see everything come to fruition.

**Craig: What does this do for you long term?**

**Jaime:** I hope this is the first of many films I complete as a documentary filmmaker. We plan to finish this film and then go on tour across the country to speak about our experiences. Nikki and our crew make a great team. I know it will be an incredible journey for all of us.

Interview featured on *Trail and Ultra Running*, November 12, 2012

<http://trailandultrarunning.com/interview-with-jaime-jacobsen-producerdirector-of-finding-traction/>

**PRODUCTION CREDITS**

PRODUCER / DIRECTOR	Jaime Jacobsen
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	Aaron Pruitt
FEATURING	Nikki Kimball
CO-PRODUCER	Charles Dye
CO-PRODUCER	Daniel Schmidt
CO-PRODUCER	Rick Smith
CO-DIRECTOR	Charles Dye
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Daniel Schmidt
WRITER	Stefanie Watkins
WRITER	Jaime Jacobsen
EDITOR	Stefanie Watkins
ORIGINAL MUSIC	Craig Minowa
VISUAL EFFECTS	Ed Watkins
ONLINE EDITOR AND COLORIST	Scott Sterling
SOUND RE-RECORDING MIXER	Jeremiah Slovarp
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Christi Cooper
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Tyler Duke
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Charles Dye
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Jaime Jacobsen
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Devon Riter
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Rick Smith
PRINCIPAL CAMERA	Ed Watkins
PHANTOM CAMERA	Rick Smith
GOPRO CAMERA	Dennis Ball
GOPRO CAMERA	Jenny Pierce
GOPRO CAMERA	David Wolfgang-Kimball
GOPRO CAMERA	Sarah Thorson
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Patrick Cody
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Dawson Dunning
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Ken Glynn
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Ian Johnson
ADDITIONAL CAMERA	Patrick McLaughlin
SOUND	Devon Riter
SOUND	Jaime Jacobsen
SOUND	Patrick McLaughlin
ASSISTANT SOUND MIXER	Jessica Joyce
ASSISTANT SOUND DESIGNER	Dodge Kramer
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	Brad Feld
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	Marguerite Keating
STORY CONSULTANT	Shasta Grenier
STORY CONSULTANT	Chris Howard
STORY CONSULTANT	Mike Mavretic



STORY CONSULTANT  
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY  
ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHY  
ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHY  
ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHY  
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