



A Kulung porter on the Everest trail. Photo Heema Rai.

Canberra filmmaker's quest to carry Everest

Local filmmaker, Hallam Drury, wants to tell the story of the Kulung people of Eastern Nepal. Next year, he will embark on the journey of a lifetime; working with a joint Australian/Kulung film crew on the slopes of the Himalayas to share the stories

of Nepal's most marginalised communities.

Precariously perched on the mountainsides of the Hongu Valley stand four little villages in an area known as Mahakulung; home to the Kulung people. Twice a year, approximately 8,000 Kulung travel

to the Everest trail, seeking work as porters, cooks, store hands and housekeepers. These overworked and underappreciated workers are the main pillar of the Everest tourism industry.

Drury visited Nepal in 2013 and met Kulung local Dilip Kulung, a human rights practitioner who previously worked for five years as a porter on the Everest trails. It was through him that the idea for the documentary, *Carrying Everest*, began to grow.

On a 30-day trek, Drury and his crew will travel about 200km on foot throughout Mahakulung and the wider Solukhumbu region, finishing with a climb to Everest Base Camp.

"The majority of the workers labour at the base camps, but there are some guides who summit Everest," Drury says, adding that despite being a marginalised community, these were some of the bravest people he'd ever met.

With the help of a crowdfunding campaign (chuffed.org/project/carrying-everest) Drury says he and his crew will be staying in local teahouses, hiring local porters and guides at fair wages and purchasing meals and supplies in local villages.

"In turn, this will provide an income and much-needed investment for these communities," he says. "The donations we receive will go straight into the pockets of the local communities we visit. As the region does not sit along the main tourist trail, the benefits will be real for these people."

Drury is quick to add that each crew member is paying his or her own way, and the money raised would go straight to the communities in Mahakulung.

"This is a huge task, physically and emotionally," Drury says. "And *Carrying Everest* will be formed by the experience. This is the Kulung people's story, told by them."

- Laura White



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