



For immediate release – November 18, 2015

## ***Our Voices, Our Stories***

### **Powerful examination of residential school legacy wins American Indian Film Festival award**

*Our Voices, Our Stories*, a new film by renowned director Barbara Cranmer that exposes Canada's brutal residential school history, has garnered the award for Best Documentary Short at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco.

An estimated 9,200 children passed through the doors of St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Alert Bay, British Columbia between 1929 and 1975. Numbers replaced their names, their aboriginal languages were forbidden, family ties broken and histories denied. Scores of children died at the school, many were abused and many never returned to their families; following generations continue to be fractured by the horrors of the colonial government and church mandated residential school system.

*Our Voices, Our Stories* features the powerful accounts of residential school survivors including Evelyn Voyageur, Margaret Wilson, Edward Dawson, Hank Nelson, Bobby Joseph, Mary Speck, Stan Humchitt, Stanley Hunt and Janice Grant, and family members Roberta Wildman, Carla Voyageur, Kodi Nelson and Jasmine Hanuse. Director Cranmer (T'lakwagilogwa) is a member of the 'Namgis First Nation and lives in Alert Bay.

During a special ceremony for the residential school survivors in the 'Namgis 'big house', the film records the poignant words of the late Chief Frank Nelson: "Let the healing begin... Now we can look proudly at our children and know they will never be taken away from us again."

In 2015, another important step was taken towards healing for coastal First Nation communities when the looming old Anglican school building was finally demolished. St. Michael's brick walls tumbled down as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada prepared its comprehensive call to action 'to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.'

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has pledged to act on the TRC recommendations, including to end chronic underfunding of First Nations education, launch a national public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Watch the *Our Voices, Our Stories* film trailer at <https://vimeo.com/141833166>. Five other films by Cranmer have been honoured with AIFF top awards or nominations in previous years.

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**CREDITS:** *Our Voices, Our Stories* (39 minutes)

**Director:** Barbara Cranmer (T'lakwagilogwa) is an award-winning writer, director and producer whose original productions include 'Namegan's Om Dlu'wans Awinagwisex (*We Are One With the Land*), *I'tusto* (*To Rise Again*), *T'lina* (*The Rendering of Wealth*), *Qatuwas* (*People Gathering Together*), *Gwishalaayt* (*The Spirit Wraps Around*), *Laxwesa Wa* (*Strength of the River*), *Mungo Martin: A Slender Thread* and *Potlatch: To Give* (Pt 1 & 2). See many of these films [here](#).

**Producer/Distributor:** 'Namgis First Nation

**Director of Photography/Editor:** Brent Craven

**Theme song:** Murray Porter (lyrics by Murray Porter & Elaine Bomberry)