



PUBLICITY RELEASE

FOR RELEASE MON JULY 3 TO SUNDAY JULY 9

BLACK ROBE

A sprawling recreation of Canada's turbulent history in the 17th century unfolds this Sunday on Maori Television's Sunday Feature **BLACK ROBE** (Sunday July 9 at 9.00 PM).

In 1634, Jesuit missionary Father Laforgue (Lothair Bluteau) arrives in the New World, hoping to convert the Huron Indian tribe to Catholicism. Regarded with a combination of warmth and wariness by the natives, Laforgue and his fellow priests are referred to by the natives as "black robes".

Laforgue's mission is to travel across Canada to Quebec on four canoes led by Algonquin chief, Chomina, whose wife and lovely daughter, Annuka (Sandrine Holt), are also along. Laforgue is aided by a teenage translator, Daniel (Aden Young), who falls in love en route with Annuka.

Padding up the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, Chomina and Laforgue get to understand each other less and less. The priest's reading from a book (the Bible) confirms the illiterate Indians' belief that he is a demon, as does his baptising of a dead baby. The Algonquins had their own religious beliefs and gods - even a dwarf shaman who counselled them to kill the black-robed demon in their midst.

BLACK ROBE director Bruce Beresford filmed several other inter-cultural dramas about modern Australia (*The Fringe Dwellers*), colonial Africa (*Mr. Johnson*) and segregated America (*Driving Miss Daisy*). Shot in Canada's freezing wilds, **BLACK ROBE** portrays the perilous Jesuits' journey up river with gritty realism. There is nothing much to indicate the presence of 20th-century filmmakers -- no revisionist apologies, no polite

courtships, no clean clothes, no cute animals. It's as raw as attending to one's toilette off the side of a canoe.

While Daniel quickly adopts the Algonquins ways, Laforgue fears their primitive lifestyle and the desire it awakens within him. In a communal tepee there is no privacy when lovers grunt rapturously in the cosy stink of methane and feet.

The religious crisis that follows brings Laforgue to terms with his harsh new environment, but it takes the harsher medicine of the priest-torturing Iroquois to teach him to love the people he wants to subjugate.

For a realistic slice of life in 17th century Canada, don't miss this Sunday's feature film **BLACK ROBE** (Maori Television July 9 at 9.00 PM).

Ends

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR BLACK ROBE

Censor	Adults Only (AO)
Duration	Two hour film
Language	English

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