

SOMETHING'S MOVING (7:14 minutes)

Directed by Randy Vasquez

Produced by Jonathan Skurnik

Winner of the Unspoken Truth Award



About the Film

Imagine being taken from your family before the age of seven and sent to live in a cavernous dormitory where you are beaten for speaking the only language you know. This massive, but tragically failed effort to assimilate American Indians was US government policy until the 1970s. *Something's Moving* explores the reality and legacy of American Indian boarding schools through the voices and stories of survivors, and follows their courageous attempts at healing themselves, their families, and their communities from this little-known and seminal 20th century trauma.

My inspiration for this film was the discovery that the cause for the main stereotypes of Native Americans -- alcoholism -- is in large part due to the boarding school experience. It's as if this reality had been kept a secret from me as well as the rest of the country. And, like shedding light on the Salvadoran experience in my previous film *Testimony: The Maria Guardado Story*, I wanted to do the same with this film.

For over a hundred years and well into the 1970s, Native American children were removed from their families and enrolled in US government and church-run boarding schools, which were usually cold brick buildings where they were brutally punished for engaging in any aspect of their cultural heritage. Those that didn't die of disease or suicide entered adulthood with untreated complex post-traumatic stress that was unconsciously inflicted upon the next generation through alcoholism, drug addiction and child abuse.

Through the vivid stories of our main characters -- 65 year old Walter Littlemoon, Lakota of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and Kateri Walker, 40, Saginaw Shippewa from Midland, Michigan -- and the supporting voices of other boarding school survivors, *Something's Moving* tells the stories of Native youth who were separated from their families, their culture, their spirituality and their identity.

The reaction to this film has been one of encouragement from the Native community. Many Native academics and counselors have shown much interest in the project as an educational tool. Kateri Walker's efforts to save her boarding school in Michigan failed and the building was demolished last November.

Filmmaker Bios

Randy Vasquez, Director

Randy Vasquez grew up on the beaches of southern California and in the mountains of North Carolina. He has been an actor in Los Angeles and New York for twenty-seven years. His first documentary, made in 1996 was *Concert of the South*, which contrasted the original Zapatista

movement during the Mexican Revolution with the current one in Chiapas. *Testimony: The Maria Guardado Story* (2001) was his first feature documentary that traces the journey of a Salvadoran political activist from being kidnapped and tortured by death squads in 1980 to her immigrating to the US in 1983. It won best documentary at the 2002 New York Latino Film Festival.

Jonathan Skurnik, Producer

Jonathan Skurnik has produced, directed and shot numerous award-winning documentaries and has recently completed his first two fiction films as writer and director. His two most recent documentaries include: *The Elevator Operator*, a documentary about a Ukrainian immigrant who runs a manual elevator in Manhattan. It has screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, won Best Documentary at the Urban TV film festival in Madrid and had its broadcast premiere on PBS and Ukrainian TV; and the award-winning *Spit It Out* which was broadcast on PBS in 2007. Jonathan is currently directing *Ice Music*, an hi-defintion documentary about an ice music festival in Norway. He is also wrapping up production on the full length version of *Something's Moving*.

Take Action

Dakota-Lakota-Nakota Human Rights Advocacy Coalition
(http://www.dlncoalition.org/dln_issues/boardingschool.htm)

Follow the legal ramifications of this class-action lawsuit through the Dakota-Lokota-Nakota Human Rights Advocacy Coalition that seeks damages on behalf of all the students who were allegedly abused at these Indian Boarding Schools.

Survival International (<http://www.survival-international.org>)

Survival International's 'Walk your Talk' is a simple downloadable guide, full of fresh ideas and useful advice to help further the movement for tribal peoples and way to be active in your local area.

University of Illinois

(http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/erdrich/boarding/gallery.htm)

Follow the stories and images of other tribes integrated into Indian Boarding Schools in North America through this online photo gallery.

Running Strong (<http://www.indianyouth.org/our-work.html>)

Running Strong strives to build the capacity of communities, grassroots Indian organizations, families and individuals to leverage their strengths and solve problems. Connect with other Running Strong communities in your area through their Interactive map.

For more information about *Something's Moving* and the other films from the eighth annual Media That Matters Film Festival, visit www.mediathatmattersfest.org or contact us at festival@artsengine.net.

