

SACRED GROUND

SYNOPSIS

Critically acclaimed as one of the year's most significant Aboriginal films – **Sacred Ground** tells the true story of an oppressed people fighting to hold onto the last remnants of their ancient heritage and culture.

This is a unique Australian film – there are no other Australian films like it.

Quenten Agius discovers his ancestor's ancient skeletal remains in the middle of a multi-million dollar housing development. This life changing moment forms the central story of his emotional journey. In the midst of a development boom, the film follows Quenten over 4 years as his heritage group struggle to save their ancestor's burial grounds and other ancient sites from destruction.

Aboriginal heritage - Australia's ancient heritage, is the heart, soul and spirit of this land. The ancient sites of the first people, their beliefs and traditions, are not being respected or protected. Their sites are living breathing museums in the sand. Much of their heritage has been destroyed, so what they have left is precious to them.

Sacred Ground is a universal story that exposes the shameful truth and injustices being perpetrated on Aboriginal heritage and culture, supported by government. When Quenten speaks we can see and feel his pain. There are many powerful and personal moments that connect us to his culture and enable us to begin to understand the importance of preserving his people's ancient heritage for future generations.

In the lucky country, 40,000 years of ancient heritage, culture and traditions are being swept away – it's a national disgrace. Quenten's mob are witnessing the desecration and destruction of the last remaining heritage and cultural sites on their traditional lands - sites that are vital to their Dreaming stories and cultural beliefs - stories and beliefs that have been handed down from generation to generation for thousands of years.

Never before documented scenes of ancient Aboriginal ceremonies, Dreaming stories and chanting in the Adjahdura language, are important elements of this significant and multi-layered international award-winning documentary.

5 years in the making, **Sacred Ground** is a deeply moving story. From the opening scenes to the thought provoking climax, it takes us into an Aboriginal world that is rarely seen or heard. Quenten and his mob have the guts to stand up, to speak out and express their views, to fight for what they believe in - **Sacred Ground** is their story.

Sacred Ground was developed and produced in association with the SAFC South Australian Film Corporation, ABC Australian Broadcasting Corporation and AFC Australian Film Commission (Screen Australia).

AWARDS / FESTIVAL SCREENINGS / BROADCASTS

- WINNER Grand Prize (Special Jury Selection Award) – Global Green Indigenous Film Festival (Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA) - April 2008.
- WINNER Special Jury Prize – Pacific International Doco Film Festival (FIFO Tahiti) - Feb 2008.
- NOMINATED for BEST INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY: International Film Festival England - June 2008.
- OFFICIAL SELECTION: Reel Earth Aotearoa Environmental Film Festival (New Zealand) - May 2008.
- OFFICIAL SELECTION: Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival (Kathmandu) - June 2008.
- OFFICIAL SELECTION: Globians World and Culture Documentary Film Festival (Germany) - August 2008.
- WINNER Best Documentary - 2007 National Awards (AVPA Australian Video Producers Assoc).
- WINNER Best Broadcast TV Pgm - 2007 National Awards (AVPA Aust Video Producers Assoc).
- BROADCAST: ABC TV Australia - July 2007 (2x 26mins version).
- BROADCAST: EM TV Papua New Guinea - March 2008 (55min version).
- BROADCAST: Maori TV New Zealand – broadcast date to be confirmed.

QUENTEN AGIUS – CENTRAL CHARACTER

Quenten Agius is a direct descendent of the Adjahdura mob (also known as Narungga) – Aboriginal traditional owners of Yorke Peninsula in South Australia.

For 40,000 years Quenten's ancestors lived and hunted on these lands. Today, he walks in his ancestor's footsteps. He possesses great knowledge of his country, Dreaming stories, heritage and cultural sites - knowledge that's been handed down from generation to generation, for thousands of years.

For Quenten, Dreaming is his bible, an invisible force that guides him through life and connects all things. Quenten is the keeper of his ancestor's Dreaming stories. It's his role to hand this knowledge down to the next generation, keeping their culture and traditions alive. Added to Quenten's responsibility is the pressure of knowing that he is witnessing the desecration and destruction of the last remaining heritage and cultural sites on their traditional lands - sites that are vital to the Dreaming stories and beliefs of his people.

Quenten Agius (central character)..... "I'm proud of who I am, the colour of my skin and my community. I'm proud of this film and our story and I hope this film inspires other communities and Aboriginal peoples to have the guts to stand up for what they believe in, to take the criticism, not just from our own people, but black and white. I urge people to get a copy of the film and sit down and watch the film, so they can understand our feelings and our fight".

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Kim Mavromatis (Producer/Director/Cinematographer/Writer /Editor) – International award winning South Australian filmmaker, with 30 years experience in content creation.

Critically acclaimed as one on the most significant Aboriginal film's of the year, **Sacred Ground** has been purchased by over 40 Australian and International educational institutions, including: Monash University, Macquarie University, University of New South Wales, University of Technology Sydney, Australian Catholic University, University of South Australia, Southern Cross University, University of Southern Queensland, Edith Cowan University, Massey University, State Library of South Australia, National Library of Australia, TAFE Library Services, State Library of Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Digital Educational Services, Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts and Australia High Commission in Port Moresby.

Sacred Ground is the confronting story of an oppressed people with little voice, having the guts to stand up, to speak out and express their views, to fight for what they believe in - **Sacred Ground** is their story.

Sacred Ground is a rich film, a film of personal struggle, of pain and sorrow, but most of all it's a major achievement for Quenten and his family and I'm proud to have helped them bring this story to national and international attention - exposing the desecration and destruction of Aboriginal heritage - Australia's ancient heritage - that is occurring in this country.

The reaction at screenings has been extraordinary – people have connected with the film, have cried and been angry - and we've received emails like this one from Natalie Ball:

for quenten : song and a handshake

My name is Natalie ball. My people are the Modoc and Klamath tribes of Oregon, USA. I watched your film last week at a film festival in Palmerston North, New Zealand. Your movie means a lot to me. So I sang your people a song and I know that it reached you but I can only hope that this email does as well. sepk'ee'c'a - Natalie
: : N a t a l i e B a l l : : www.natalieball.otherpeoplespixels.com

At the time of Quenten's discovery I was filming another story. I was at the burial site within 1 hour of the discovery. For the next 4 years I documented Quenten's struggle. Throughout most of the filming process I was the entire crew. Financially and emotionally it was difficult. Just like Quenten and his mob - I felt their pain and their anger. They are still fighting today - but things are getting better – they are much stronger and they now have a voice – I'm glad to say **Sacred Ground** has made a big difference.

Throughout the whole process I had great support from my entire crew. One of Australia's most gifted documentary editors, Andrew Arestides ASE, edited and helped shape the story. 150 hours of footage was edited into one compelling hour of viewing. Two versions of the film have been produced (2 x 26min & 1 x 55 mins).

The film asks many questions and exposes the mistakes and lack of proper consultation by current and past governments. I ask this question; What right does one culture have to destroy the burial grounds and ancient sites of another culture?