



## MEDIA RELEASE

### MESSAGE STICKS NATIONAL TOUR

Film Festival: 13<sup>th</sup> May – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011

The Message Sticks Film Festival will tour nationally from 13th May – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011 and will visit various locations from Blacktown, New South Wales to Yirrkala in the Northern Territory. The Tour promises to showcase Indigenous excellence in the filmmaking arena and all screenings are Free. Message Sticks is Australia's only annual Indigenous film festival, with all films exclusively created by Indigenous people.

This year GenerationOne has come on board as principle sponsor, enabling the festival to build its film program for secondary students. The specially curated schools program is an investment in developing new audiences for Indigenous film, but also gives young Australians a broader understanding of Indigenous people and culture, from the perspective of Indigenous people themselves.

The festival tour program will see the premiere of a major new Australian feature film as well as showcasing other Indigenous films and film makers from Australia and abroad, illustrating the depth and diversity of Indigenous culture and artists.

The tour gives audiences and viewers the opportunity to hear from Indigenous filmmakers who will be talking about their films and stories during the program. A wide range of content and stories are on offer this year from the Australian bush to the arctic wilderness of Alaska USA – festival goers will be surprised.

Indigenous filmmaker and festival programmer, Rachel Perkins said: *"Indigenous storytellers continue to surprise and move us with extraordinary stories from the cities and the bush. From traditional dreamtime tales to the challenges of contemporary Indigenous life, our filmmakers give an insiders view of what it means to be a Black Australian in the twenty first century... Message Sticks reaches out to audiences everywhere."*

Opening at the Sydney Opera House then touring over the 4 months from May to August, the Message Sticks Film Festival will be on the road promoting Indigenous Australian stories and Indigenous content from around the world. The Festival is free, and the line up this year features the headlining feature film "Here I am" directed and produced by Indigenous filmmaker Beck Cole, who stated:

*"Before Message Sticks Film Festival I had never stepped foot into the Sydney Opera House- that was twelve years ago. I've been fortunate enough to screen a number of films at Message Sticks over the years and look, Here I Am, again"*

Pauline Whyman who hosts the tour added:

*"To witness a film that gives voice to stories of my own people can resonate inside me for days, weeks, months and years. The films at Message Sticks have replaced the lifetime of images that I grew up with that had previously dominated and shaped the nation's opinion of our people",*

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INDIGENOUS FILM FESTIVAL

Beck Cole's feature ***Here I Am*** tells the story of Karen, a young woman with a dark past and a burning desire to turn her life around. When released from prison she begins the difficult journey of reconnecting with her mother and daughter. Soon she has to face the difficult truth that shame is a powerful force and sometimes the most important person to forgive is yourself. Shot by Warwick Thornton (*Samson and Delilah*), the film marks the return of Professor Marcia Langton to the screen.

From well known film maker Ivan Sen, who has recently had his film ***Toomelah*** selected for the prestigious Cannes Festival, comes the documentary ***Shifting Shelter 4***. It is the world premiere screening of the latest instalment in a documentary series which follows the lives of four young Aboriginal people living in rural New South Wales. From the teenagers full of hopes and dreams in the first Shifting Shelter in 1995, to today's adults dealing with the harsher realities of life and raising their own families, Shifting Shelter charts the lives of Aboriginal people in a way that no other documentary program ever has.

Fresh from the Berlin Film Festival, where it was awarded the Crystal Bear and best first feature, ***On The Ice***, comes an engrossing and suspenseful feature film debut by **Andrew Okpeaha MacLean** from the Inuit nation. The first of six Australian premieres, it follows two teenage boys who go about their lives in the comfortable claustrophobia of an isolated Alaskan town. Early one morning, on a seal hunt with another teenager, an argument quickly escalates into a tragic accident. Bonded by their dark secret, the two best friends are forced to create one fabrication after another in order to survive.

In a special event, Message Sticks celebrates the landmark achievement of 'Nganampa Anwernekenhe' (meaning 'Ours' in the Pitjantjatjara and Arrernte languages) which is Australia's first *and* longest running Aboriginal television series. In its 21<sup>st</sup> year and with over 200 episodes, all in Indigenous languages, this series has launched the careers of many Indigenous filmmakers and makes a major contribution to Australian culture. Two episodes from the most recent series will have their world premiere at Message Sticks. Firstly, David Tranter's ***Crookhat and the Kulunada*** and also ***Tales From the Daly – 'Naiyu Nambiyu'***, directed by Steven McGregor,

The Message Sticks National Tour, 2011 also features:

***Grab*** (USA)– Directed by Billy Luther

***Tears*** (Australia)– Directed by Iven Sen

***And The River Also Flows On*** (Mexico)– Directed by Carlos Pérez Rojas

***Biggest Port*** (Australia)– Directed by Elizabeth Wymarra

***Wappaweka*** (Canada) – Directed by Danis Goulet

***Stones*** (Hawaii) – directed by Ty Sanga

***Two Worlds*** (Australia) – Directed by Lorraine Coppin

***Ebony Society*** (New Zealand) – Directed by Tammy Davis

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<b>MESSAGE STICKS NATIONAL TOUR 2011 PROGRAM</b>		
<b>Blacktown</b>	Blacktown Arts Centre	May 13 – 14
<b>Brisbane</b>	Powerhouse Museum	May 14
<b>Canberra</b>	The Arc Cinema – NSFA	May 15 & 21
<b>Melbourne</b>	Capitol Theatre and ACMI	May 20 – 22
<b>Broome</b>	Sun Pictures	May 27 – 28
<b>Perth</b>	Cinema Paradiso	May 29 – 30
<b>Townsville</b>	Dance North	June 3 – 4
<b>Alice Springs</b>	Araluen Arts Centre,	July 7 – 10
<b>Yirrkala</b>	Garma Festival	August 8
<b>Cairns</b>	Centre of Contemporary Arts for Cairns Indigenous Art Fair,	August 20 – 21
<b>Darwin</b>	Deckchair Cinema, for Darwin Festival	August 23 – 24

## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

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The tour is presented by Blackfella Films in association with Screen Australia, The National Film and Sound Archive, Screen NSW, GenerationOne, SBS and NITV



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