

# The Intelligencer

## Documentary kicks off women's film festival

Posted By Luke Hendry

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When Sue Kenney went walking, she reached an unusual destination: herself.

The Orillia-area resident is the director of *Las Peregrinas: The Women Who Walk*, a documentary on the bill for the annual Voices and Views women's film festival. It starts this Friday in the upstairs gallery of The Penguin restaurant downtown.

Kenney's film is about a group of women she led along Spain's Camino de Santiago de Compostela, a 1,200-year-old route for pilgrims of all kinds.

But before that walk, Kenney tackled the trail alone in what became a journey in more than one way.

"I had a profound, life-altering experience," Kenney said Tuesday from her home in Washago.

She said her trip to Spain came just five days after her corporate marketing job was eliminated by downsizing in December 2001.

"I didn't know what to do with myself, and I had seen the Camino on a television show about walking trails in Spain," said Kenney.

Wearing a backpack with 20 pounds of supplies on her back, Kenney trekked 780 kilometres along the trail, passing through forests, three mountain ranges, ancient villages, farms, and along highways. "I had time to be with myself," said Kenney. "With every step I took forward, I actually took one step back to myself, so that by the time I arrived in Santiago, I had walked back to myself, and I had a really clear sense of who I was.

"It was nothing new; it was just increasing my sense of awareness of what that was."

Kenney returned home with no desire to return to corporate life; instead, she explained, she wanted a simpler, more artistic one, and jumped into it.

"What I found was the more I surrendered the more power I had - which was the opposite of what I thought would happen."

As she told others about her experiences on the trail, they encouraged her to publish them. Not being a writer, Kenney was apprehensive.

For *Las Peregrinas*, Kenney wanted "to give women another perspective about going on a life journey."

So with five other women in their early 30s to mid-50s, Kenney returned to the Camino.

She said the documentary isn't a travelogue and she's "not selling Spain," just using the trail as a metaphor for a person's path through life.

Kenney said she's just sold the film rights to her book, and is working with writer and actor Bruce Pirrie on the screenplay. It could be several years before that feature is released, she said.

And there is more walking ahead.

On Saturday, Kenney will lead a walk along Belleville's Riverfront Trail.

Walkers will assemble at 10 a.m. in the municipal parking lot across from the Empire Theatre on Front Street, then head out for a roughly two-hour walk on the city's paved trail system.

The screening of *Las Peregrinas* is at 3 p.m.; afterward, Kenney will answer audience questions. Anita Shuper, who appears in the film, will also attend.

Kenney said she also welcomes questions posed through her website at [www.suekenney.ca](http://www.suekenney.ca). A five-minute clip of the film is available on the site.

The festival, meanwhile, opens at 7 p.m. Friday and continues at noon Saturday. The Penguin, known formerly as the Bohemian Penguin, is at 399 Front St.

Organizing the event are women representing the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Three Oaks Foundation, the Sexual Assault Centre for Quinte and District, Quinte United Immigrant Services, and the Quinte Film Alternative.

Everyone is welcome. There is no admission, and refreshments will be available. Organizers note visitors can come and go, choosing which films to view.

For more on the festival, check the website at [www.voicesandviews.org](http://www.voicesandviews.org).

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