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For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom/

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/lost-sparrow

***LOST SPARROW TO PREMIERE ON THE PBS SERIES
INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16 AT 10 PM***

One Family's Tragedy and Subsequent Search for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

(San Francisco, CA) — Chris Billing was 16 years old on June 27, 1978, when a Conrail freight train struck and killed his two adopted brothers, Bobby, 13, and Tyler, 11 — one day after they had disappeared near the quaint town of Little Falls, New York. Without warning, the two Crow Indian boys had run away from the white, Baptist family that had adopted them and their sisters seven years earlier, spiriting them from a troubled Montana reservation family to an idyllic Victorian castle across the country. Devastating the family and shocking the town, the boys' deaths remained a mystery for decades.

Why did the boys run away? Why were they on the train tracks that day? Thirty years later, award-winning filmmaker Billing decided to search for answers: *Lost Sparrow* is his unflinching investigation into the dark family secret that prompted his adopted brothers to flee. But some answers are hard to take. A tale of tragedy and the search for redemption, *Lost Sparrow* premieres on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday, November 16 at 10 PM (check local listings).

Weaving together home movies, family photographs, newspaper articles, adoption records, police reports, and interviews with family members and key people involved in the lives of the boys, *Lost Sparrow* vividly portrays the tortuous path traversed by Bobby and Tyler during their brief lives.



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“Chris Billing has made a compelling and occasionally chilling documentary that unearths the secrets of one family, while also looking at the issue of interracial adoption,” said Lois Vossen, Series Producer. “What makes the film all the more effective is that the family in question is his own, and he shares this very difficult, personal story without bias. His decision to understand why his two adopted brothers died on a train track 30 years ago becomes a powerful exploration on reconciliation, forgiveness, and family.”

The Crow Indian term for children taken from the reservation, *Lost Sparrow*, is, in the end, a raw account of one family coming to terms with sins of the past — and finally laying the spirits of two lost sons to rest.

To learn more about the film, visit the *Lost Sparrow* interactive companion website (pbs.org/independentlens/lost-sparrow/), which features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmaker and links and resources pertaining to the film’s subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section, where viewers can share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

About the Filmmaker

Chris Billing (Writer, Producer, Director)

Prior to *Lost Sparrow*, Billing produced, directed, and scripted the full-length documentary *Up to the Mountain, Down to the Village* (2005), about Chairman Mao’s decade-long youth re-education campaign during China’s tumultuous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The film was distributed by WGBH International. Billing also worked for more than a decade as a China-based journalist, including a five-year stint as NBC News Beijing Bureau Chief (1996-2001).

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community, or moment in history. Presented by The Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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