



FRONTLINE

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INDEPENDENT LENS

FRONTLINE and INDEPENDENT LENS Present
Kind Hearted Woman

Monday, April 1, 2013, from 9 P.M. to 11 P.M. and
Tuesday, April 2, 2013, from 9 P.M. to 12 A.M. on PBS
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Acclaimed filmmaker David Sutherland (*The Farmer's Wife*, *Country Boys*) returns to FRONTLINE with *Kind Hearted Woman*, a special two-part series that creates an unforgettable portrait Robin Charboneau, a 32-year-old divorced single mother and Oglala Sioux woman living on North Dakota's Spirit Lake Reservation. Sutherland follows Robin over three years as she struggles to raise her two children, further her education and heal herself from the wounds of sexual abuse she suffered as a child. The programs air Monday and Tuesday, April 1 and 2, at 9 P.M. ET on PBS (check local listings).

Viewers first meet Charboneau as she trudges across Spirit Lake Reservation in minus-eight-degree weather, returning home after a 20-day stay in rehab. "Now I'm sober, and I'm really, really scared I'm going to start drinking again." The series follows Robin as she confronts the aftereffects of the sexual abuse she suffered as a child and fights to keep her family together through a custody battle with her ex-husband over their two children, Darian and Anthony — all while pursuing her dream of a college degree and a career as a social worker.

When Robin's daughter reveals that her father has sexually abused her, echoing Robin's own childhood abuse, it ignites both emotional turmoil and a dramatic criminal trial in federal court, during which Darian will have to testify against her father.

After having already lost custody of her children to the tribe, a move Robin believes is the result of her ex-husband's connections to tribal leaders, Robin's ex-husband is convicted of abuse sexual contact with his daughter, she regains custody and moves to International Falls, Minnesota, for a fresh start. Robin then finds work as a supervisor of visits between troubled families and as a sexual abuse educator. She also enters into a relationship with a new man, Darren, and begins a long, arduous journey to heal herself and her children — and her community. Robin's daughter, Darian, organizes an international basketball tournament fundraiser for domestic abuse victims, and the family participates in a community walk to help raise awareness. "A march like this could never happen on the Spirit Lake Reservation," Robin observes, "because there, we just don't talk about abuse."

Sutherland's film of Robin's journey is told with the disarming intimacy that riveted viewers of his previous films, *The Farmer's Wife* and *Country Boys*. Viewers gain access to heartbreaking scenes of Robin returning her children to her ex-husband after a Mother's Day visit; of intimate discussions between mother and daughter about how Darian can

protect herself from further abuse; of the agonies of Robin's young son, Anthony, as he struggles with the emotional pain of not being able to see his father; and of scenes deep inside the relationship between Robin and Darren, as they face their conflicts and their fears. "As in my other films profiling rural poverty," says Sutherland, "in *Kind Hearted Woman*, I was trying to reach out to another forgotten corner of the American landscape, this time to put a face on a Native family so that we could see them close-up with all the detail that illuminates the rich reality of their lives."

Robin's ultimate emergence as a powerful public speaker on abuse provides a final sign of her growing emotional health and personal triumph as both a professional and a mother.

In her first major public presentation about her own childhood abuse, Robin concludes: "The last thing that I need to say that I still struggle with is not just how to build a family and to be a mom, but ... also the boundaries, the boundaries within a relationship. Nobody never taught me how to be a wife or a mother, because it was married men who were molesting me. So I still have a long way to go. I still have a lot of things to learn. But it's just one step at a time."

Kind Hearted Woman is a David Sutherland Production for WGBH/Frontline and the Independent Television Service (ITVS). The series is produced, written and directed by David Sutherland. The executive producer for ITVS is Sally Jo Fifer. The senior series producer for INDEPENDENT LENS is Lois Vossen. The Frontline executive producer for special projects is Mike Sullivan. The deputy executive producer of Frontline is Raney Aronson-Rath. The executive producer of Frontline is David Fanning.

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