

THE SUN TIMES

Filmmaker goes to the extreme to promote movie

By L. Bradley

In Cinefest's 18-year history, Sue Kenney is surely the only filmmaker to walk 130 kilometres to make it to her screening.

She'll arrive bearing her 20-pound backpack and leaning on her walking stick, with two of the pilgrims featured in her documentary, *Las Peregrinas...The Women Who Walk*, for its 12:30 p.m. start time Tuesday. It's being screened as part of the film festival's Northern Connections program.

She's calling the five-day walk, which began Friday from Gulliver's bookstore in North Bay, where she signed copies of her book, *My Camino*, a pilgrimage.

"A pilgrim is someone who is on a journey with intention, with a destination in mind," she said. The pilgrimage to Cinefest is to highlight the benefits of walking, as well as to "generate awareness about the need to support independent artists in Canada," she said.

Las Peregrinas tells the story of a group of first-time women pilgrims who walked 250 kilometres on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, a medieval pilgrimage in Spain people have been undertaking - mainly for religious reasons - for 1,200 years. Each year, some 130,000 pilgrims undertake the journey on this ancient route.

Making the documentary was her fourth time undertaking a walking pilgrimage in the country. Her first experience was a 780-kilometre walk, which became the fuel for her book, *My Camino*. Her own personal story has recently been optioned to

make into a feature film by Cirrus Productions in Montreal. Kenney is co-writing the script. "It changed my life," said Kenney. "It slowed me down. Before I was going 120 kilometres an hour and then I was moving four or five kilometres an hour."

The walk brought her from always living in either the past or future, into living in the present. It also appeared to be the key to unlocking her creativity. Later, Kenney learned Beethoven had been paid by three Austrian businessmen to walk, not write music. She believes there is a correlation between the act of walking and the creative process.

After hearing her story, women began asking her to take them on a pilgrimage. But Kenney would always refuse. "No, you have to go alone," she told them. Then she realized it wasn't up to her to decide how they would make their own pilgrimage. She agreed and the idea for the documentary was born.

The women undertook the journey for various reasons - some religious, others to achieve physical goals, some for personal transformation. Most of it was shot in the mountains. It wasn't an easy journey. Each day, the women put in distances of between 15 and 35 kilometres, all the while carrying their belongings on their backs.

"Everyone has their own Camino. Each experienced something different," Kenney said. "There is this expression: 'You don't walk the Camino. The Camino walks you.'"

THE SUDBURY STAR

Your news. Today.

Author uses festival for book launch

By Joel Desbois
EXCERPT

On Tuesday, she finished a 130-kilometre trip from North Bay to get here, but Kenney didn't let that show as she set up a table of her work at Cinefest Sudbury.

The 51-year-old mother of three was all smiles as she greeted the curious who stopped to ask about her books, her work and her journey before the screening of her documentary "The Women Who Walk" at 12:30 p.m.

"This is my theatrical screening of a documentary that I produced and directed called 'Las Peregrinas' in Spanish or 'The Women Who Walk' in English," Kenney said. "So, I am absolutely thrilled to be here because I walked from North Bay."

Along with two other women, Kenney left Gulliver's Bookstore in North Bay on Friday and has been walking her way to Sudbury since. She arrived shortly after 11 a.m. Tuesday at the front steps of SilverCity as though it was no big task.

After all, walking is her thing.