

## BLACK ROBE (1991)

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### Filmography

Studio: Samuel Goldwyn Co.  
Director: Bruce Beresford  
Screenwriter/Story: Brian Moore  
Producers: Robert Lantos, Sue Milliken, Eric Norlen, Stephane Reichel  
Director of Photography: Peter James  
Film Editor: Tim Wellburn  
Production Designer: Herbert Pinter  
Cast: Lothaire Bluteau (Laforgue)  
Aden Young (Daniel)  
Sandrine Holt (Annuka)  
August Schellenberg (Chomina)  
Tantoo Cardinal (Chomina's Wife)

Color, 101 minutes.

### Awards

#### Nominated

AFI (Australian Film Institute) Award, 1992, best actor (Bluteau), best supporting actor (Schellenberg), best director (Beresford), best film, best screenplay, original or adapted (Moore).

#### Nominated and Won

AFI Award, 1992, Best Cinematography (James).

Won, Genie Golden Reel Award, 1992.

Won, Genie Award, 1992, best cinematography (James), best director (Beresford), best film, best supporting actor (Schellenberg).

### Synopsis

The movie opens in New France (Quebec) in 1634. **Jesuit Father Paul Laforgue**, a young French missionary, is assigned by the famous explorer/statesman **Samuel de Champlain** to trek some 1500 miles into the interior to the **Huron Mission**. Blackrobe, as the Indians call him, is accompanied by eight canoeists of Algonquins and his young French translator Daniel. Throughout the film, Laforgue struggles between his ideals of Christian self-sacrifice and his desires of the flesh. But internal struggles are not the only impediments to Laforgue's quest. Because of Chief Chomina's mysterious and foreboding dream, the Algonquins believe that Blackrobe is a demon. After being abandoned, then recovered, by his Algonquin guides and his assistant Daniel, Laforgue and company are captured and tortured by the Iroquois. After escaping the Iroquois and resuming the journey to the Huron Mission, his remaining companions once again leave him to arrive alone. Encountering a Huron population devastated by plague, Laforgue says that he loves them and vows to remain at the mission for the rest of his life. At the request of the Hurons, who have heard that "water sorcery" will cure their disease, Laforgue baptizes them, the sick and the healthy. Titles reveal that within fifteen years of this baptism, the Iroquois wipe out the converted Huron population and the Jesuits close the mission, returning to Quebec. See: <http://www.prairienet.org/ejahiel/blacrobe.htm>; <http://www.lehigh.edu/~ineng/rok6/rok6-synopsis.html>

### Historical Background

The character of Laforgue is loosely based on **Noel Chabanel** (1613–49) a French Jesuit missionary in North America. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1630, came to New France in 1643, and worked among the Huron. He was captured by the Iroquois and put to death. Chabanel was canonized in 1930 with other missionaries (including Isaac Jogues and Jean de Brébeuf) and laymen. As a group they are known as the Martyrs of North America. Feast: Sept. 26 or (among the Jesuits) Mar. 16.

### Extra Credit Assignment

In a four-hundred word critique, evaluate how well the movie presents the contest of cultures in New France. You may want to visit the following website for assistance: <http://www.lehigh.edu/~ineng/rok6/rok6-title.html>  
An interesting review may be found at: <http://www.lehigh.edu/~ineng/rok6/rok6-issue.html>