

Ist Northern Drama Festival a Huge Success

Congratulations to the four northern drama groups involved in the Northern Drama Festival on April 24 & 25 at Rossignol High School in Ile a la Crosse: *A Voice Within* by Valley View Community School in Beauval; *Wapikwanis* by Rossignol High School, Ile a la Crosse; *Murder at Mystery Mansion* by Charlebois Community School, Cumberland House; and *Make Up Your Mind – A Story About Choice* by Senator Allan Bird Memorial School in Montreal Lake. The Festival started with rehearsals on Friday, followed by the performances from all four groups that evening. The Northern Drama Festival was emceed by Maureen Belanger and Duane Favel, aka “Alphonse and Ernestine” who kept the audience laughing throughout the evening and in between the four drama groups performances. A performance from the local group “The Kokums” was also a great start to the evening. The local talent and support from the host community of Ile a la Crosse was fantastic, with an estimated audience of 200 people filling the chairs and most of the bleachers in their beautiful school gymnasium. On Saturday, production workshops with the adjudicators were held for all four groups, followed by an awards program.

Although the competitive aspect of the Festival was minimized, congratulations to Cumberland House drama group, *Murder at Mystery Mansion*, who came away the winner of the Northern Drama Festival. They will take part in the Provincial Drama Festival on May 7-9, 2009 in Regina. Runner Up was Ile a la Crosse for *Wapikwanis*. There were many other awards and certificates presented to actors, for visual and technical aspects of production, stage management, spirit of the festival awards and most courteous cast and crew.

“It was a great Festival! The youth in the four northern drama groups, including the Beauval dance group did an awesome job with their performances. The leaders should be commended for their time and commitment to this drama opportunity for the youth. Ile a la Crosse and Rossignol High School were excellent hosts, from their facility to food and the warm welcome and stay we all received ... and finally, Roy and Donna Challis’s mentorship to the groups was very much appreciated.”, said Judy MacLeod Campbell, Program Manager for Culture and Community Development at the Northern Sport, Culture and Recreation District.

“I saw so much improvement from the first workshop in each community to their performance ... it was really great and I commend these youth and their teacher leaders for their work”, said Roy Challis, Mentor with the Northern Drama Project and Front of House Adjudicator at the Festival. “It was an awesome experience and I would like to be doing it more. We met a lot of people and had so much fun”, says drama participant Kara Tobac from Ile a la Crosse. “It was very exciting ... I really enjoyed Ernestine & Alphonse and it was something that I never expected to come to and I hope to be back”, said Rayne Bo Favel from Cumberland House.