

De-ba-jeh-mu-jig joins innovative global theatre project

by Robin Burridge

MANITOWANING—The outreach and education department of De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Company, called the Storytellers, in Manitowaning has been invited to join The Worldwide Virtual Theatre Carrousel (WWVTC)—a global project combining six professional theatre companies around the world, connecting and engaging youth through their unique national cultural and environmental heritages.

“Our group was invited to join while performing in Rotterdam in the Netherlands,” explained Joahanna Berti, outreach and education director of De-ba-jeh-mu-jig. “They were looking for a Canadian partner for the program and we were honoured to accept the invitation.”

Ms. Berti explained that Bruce Naokwegijig, arts animator at De-ba-jeh-mu-jig, travelled to Antwerp, Belgium last fall to participate in workshops and to develop De-ba-jeh-mu-jig’s relationship with the five other partners of the WWVTC.

“While he was there, Bruce did a lot of work with the technological interfacing that will be a key element to the program, connecting all the youth through computers,” added Ms. Berti.

The other theatre partners in the WWVTC include Sering, located in Antwerp, Belgium; Arena y Estera in Lima, Peru; Teatro Pre-gones, a theatre company in New York City; and Tswelopele Performing Artists in South Africa.

Locally, Pontiac School’s Grade 7 class in Wikwemikong and Assiginack Public School’s Grade 7/8 class in Manitowaning will be working with De-ba-jeh-mu-jig and participating in the program.

“The idea is that all the children are the same age, working on the same project, connecting and expanding their understanding of who they are and how they fit into the global picture,” explained Ms. Berti.

“The Worldwide Virtual Theatre Carrousel fosters and harbours artistic collaborations that are rooted in community and that also involve in-person and virtual transit across languages, geographies, historical experience, and modes of expression,” explains WWVTC artistic director Mia Grip of Antwerp, Belgium in an information package on the project.

“The Carrousel also serves as a forum to discuss and formulate widely applicable guidelines for arts-centered community consciousness-raising.”

The project will be two years in duration, beginning this past week. It will continue intermittently until June 2012 and then again during the 2012-2013 school year. Same groups of international students, following their experience from Grade 7 through to Grade 8.

The fundamentals of the project are global symbols, language and music.

De-ba-jeh-mu-jig began phase one of the project this week, meeting with participants at Assiginack Public School and Pontiac School.

Students were given a general overview of the project and listened to two stories, the first from Mr. Naokwegijig about the legend of the frog monster and how Manitoulin Island was created and the second from Ms. Berti, who shared a Belgian legend about giants.

Students were asked to close their eyes during the stories and use their imaginations to envision the characters.

During discussion later in the workshops, the students were asked to think about the emotions of the two main characters and talked about the similarities and differences of the characters.

Next, Ms. Berti read a Belgian tale entitled, ‘Bottomless Treasure of Greed,’ where a man loses his heart, only to be told that in order for him to get his heart and his emotions back, he must have 13 dozen willing hearts.

Ms. Berti told the students that the students were the willing hearts and that during their next workshop with the De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Storytellers, they would discuss what the students felt were the two greatest wishes of the frog monster and giant, as well thinking of 10 things the students feel they need to survive, given as simple words.

Ms. Berti explained to The Expositor that the list of essential words determined by the different students throughout the globe would be unique to their life and context.

At the end of phase one, the groups will create and share their lists via the WWVTC, discussing with the other student why they chose certain words and gaining understanding of why certain words and con-



Bruce Naokwegijig, on left kneeling with hand drum, of De-ba-jeh-mu-jig collaborates with Oupa Malatjie, centre foreground, standing, from Tembisa Township in South Africa, in a Grade 6 classroom in Antwerp, Belgium.

photo supplied

cepts are important to each of the groups.

Phase two of the project will deal with visual representations and will begin in March and go until the end of April. Students will establish visual symbols of their words and share them with the other students through the WWVTC, and determine collectively which symbols are the clearest and most “universally understood for what they represent,” explains the project overview.

The final phase of the project for this school year will go from May until June.

“Each individual symbol will have the word in all participating languages written below it as text, as well as an audio recording of each word pronounced in each different language,” further explained the project overview. “Students will compose and express ideas by selecting the appropriate symbols in a sequence and choosing one of the audio representations of the word.”

Following the compositions, the students will share their representation on the WWVTC.

“Of all the partners we are the most connected to the natural world,” explained Ms. Berti. “One of the ideas behind the project is that children in many of the partner locations are not being taught

to sing and use their imaginations. We are unique in that we are surrounded by nature and will be able to share a very different daily experience based on our surroundings.”

Tessa Rose, age 12, from Pontiac School’s Grade 7 Class said she was most excited to connect with the students from Belgium.

“It sounds pretty cool,”

said Tessa. “I did a theater camp at De-ba-jeh-mu-jig last March break, so I think this should be good too.”

Shy Eagle, also from Pontiac School’s Grade 7 class, added that he was looking forward to connecting with the students from South Africa.

The De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Storytellers will meet again with students once weekly

until the end of the month, completing phase one of the project before moving on to the next phases.

Ms. Berti and Mr. Naokwegijig left for Peru the day following their first workshop with the Pontiac students to work with their WWVTC partners for a week on the project.



Joahanna Berti tells the Belgian legend of giants to Pontiac School’s Grade 7 class in Wikwemikong as part of The Worldwide Virtual Theatre project.

photo by Robin Burridge

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...Former MPP Mike Brown feted for service to Algoma-Manitoulin

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"Mike Brown gave voices to people who didn't have voices."

Former Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing MP Brent St. Denis, who lost his own seat a couple years before Mr. Brown, reiterated his words from his own retirement party. "Losing sucks," he said, "but I can tell you that there is life after politics and that life is good." Mr. St. Denis noted that among the many things that would not likely be missed is the immense travel involved in representing a Northern constituency, although many of Mr. St. Denis' fondest memories were the conversations shared with Mr. Brown on long drives to mutual events in the territory they shared. "You don't miss the parades," said Mr. St. Denis. "You miss the people."

Tom Farquhar, long time riding president and former constituency office employee, acted as master of ceremonies for the event and described his own experiences as a provincial Liberal candidate and then watching the reality of the demands of the job. "I never regretted my decision to not run again," he said. "It takes guts and determination to represent a riding this size. You can drop all of southern Ontario into this riding. You can't imagine the time and effort that it takes."

Mr. Brown recalled his first introduction to politics by his grandmother "a true Grit," he said. His grandmother had taken him out of school for the day. "That never happened in those days unless you were going to the dentist or to the doctor," he said. Mr. Brown described being taken to a modest house a few doors down where the Leader of the Opposition at the time, Lester B. Pearson, was attending a barbecue.

"He took me aside and talked to me for what must have been five minutes," said Mr. Brown. "That could never happen today, with all of the handlers guiding your every move. I was hooked."

Mr. Brown described his first nomination meeting on April 6, 1987. "It was



Keynote speaker Ontario Northern Development and Mines Minister Rick Bartolucci was one of many community leaders lauding the accomplishments of Algoma-Manitoulin MPP Mike Brown during the 24 years Mr. Brown represented the riding at Queen's Park.

photo by Michael Erskine

attended by over 2,000 people. One thousand, six-hundred and eighty-four of those cast votes." In the end, Mr. Brown won the heavily contested nomination by a mere 80 votes. "Nobody was more surprised than I was," he laughed.

Shortly after Mr. Brown entered the legislature as an opposition MPP, news broke of the massive layoffs in Elliot Lake and he described the challenges facing a political representative in dealing with the tumultuous boom bust economy of the North.

"We have accomplished a lot together," said Mr. Brown, noting that there are 36 municipalities and 22 First Nations in the riding. "There have been ups and downs, especially in the forestry industry and it is down significantly lately." Mr. Brown went on to reference a new development taking place in the industry at the northwestern end of the riding. "It will change forestry and is recession proof," he said. "There is light at the end of the tunnel."

Mr. Brown described the great honour he felt upon being elected Speaker of the Legislature by his peers. He noted that while he could not speak on behalf of his riding in the legislature during his tenure as Speaker, he found that he was able to

accomplish a great deal on behalf of his riding. "No politician is looked after better," he said. "It allowed me to give Algoma-Manitoulin a prominence it probably has never had."

Mr. Brown went on to thank many of the people in attendance, including his office staff, the riding volunteers, such as long time chief financial officer Michael Addison, as well as the many municipal leaders in attendance, such as Gary Brown of Tehkummah. "Including some of you of different faiths," he quipped. "What I miss most of all is working with you."

"Right now, I can tell you that the most important thing in my life is my newest grandchild, Taylor," said Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown was born on April 18, 1950 in Sarnia. He was educated at the University of Western Ontario and Humber College before working as a funeral director. He was first elected to the legislature in 1987, where he served for 24 years until the riding was won by the NDP and Michael Mantha.

Mr. Brown served in a wide variety of capacities while in government, including Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Minister Responsible for Aboriginal

Affairs and the Minister of Transportation. In opposition, he stood as critic for all of those ministries.

During the 38th Parliament, Mr. Brown was elected as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Chair of the Board of Internal Economy and a member of the Standing Committee on Government Affairs. As Speaker, he often served as a diplomatic representative of the province both overseas and at home.

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...AOK gets premission to submit late comments concerning wind project

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properly informed to endorse or reject the project, leaving them to ask for a suspension to the REA process, thus giving them time to properly consult with band members and gather information prior to submitting their comments.

"The council feels the duty to consult and offer the community an opportunity to fully understand the impact of wind farms is a fundamental requirement," Chief Corbiere previously told The Expositor.

On February 7, Chief Corbiere received notification from the MOE Environmental Approvals Branch, reiterating that the 60-day public comment period had ended on January 27, but that aboriginal consultation is very important to the MOE.

"We would be happy to receive any comments, questions or concerns that you have about the project," responded Kristina

Rudzki, senior project evaluation with the MOE Environmental Approvals Branch.

Chief Corbiere said that she was happy with the MOE's response and will be holding a meeting for all registered band members of AOK to hear their direct input on the project.

"This issue is about community communication," explained Chief Corbiere. "The community needs to be given a chance to come forward and share their thoughts. The wind farm is going to be in our backyard. There hasn't been a public meeting and information session for our community and we need to become better informed on the issues before we form an opinion."

The AOK meeting, only open to registered band members, was held on Tuesday, February 21 at the AOK community centre. For more information contact the AOK band office at 705-368-2228.

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...NP fails to contact Canadian Pacific Railway prior to deadline

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seeking intervenor status and responsibly requests additional time to prepare and file a formal letter of intervention."

The letter states that since CP did not receive notice until February 1 and has not had sufficient time to fully review and consider the materials provided by Northland.

"We respectfully request that the timelines that have been identified be extended," the letter further reads.

Northland Power responded to CP's claim, recognizing that they did fail to notify CP within the outlined timelines.

"McLean's had determined that it inadvertently neglected to deliver this material to CP Rail," writes Gordon Potts,

director of business development for McLean's Mountain Wind Limited Partnership in his correspondence with CP. "As a property owner with land directly affected by the proposed transmission line and facilities, you should have received notice of this proceeding, and we apologize for this omission."

Rick Martin, manager of the McLean's wind farm project, commented to The Expositor that, "it was an unfortunate oversight."

"Unfortunately mistakes happen when humans are involved," Mr. Martin added.

Mr. Martin declined to comment further, referring questions to the documentation of the incident and Northland

Power's comments on the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) website.

"All the correspondence is contained on the OEB website," concluded Mr. Martin. "It is a very open and transparent project."

When The Expositor contacted the OEB regarding the status of CP's request, Kirsten Walli, board secretary, replied that she was only able to comment that CP's letter had been received and that the request was "under consideration."

To read CP and Northland Power's correspondence on the issue visit www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/OEB.

...MCSEA references OFA wind statment calling for delay of wind farm

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resents over 200 farmers on Manitoulin Island and that "many of the concerns in the OFA position paper echo those of MCSEA."

They also reference their petition, signed by over 1,100 people, calling for a halt to the development of further industrial wind facilities on Manitoulin Island.

"MCSEA is now asking for a motion from NEMI council, calling for a delay in approval of the McLean's Mountain wind project until such time as the above issues are resolved to the satisfaction of the community," concluded MCSEA's letter.

The request caused a great deal of debate among council, leaving many asking for two separate motions rather than the proposed motion to, "support the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and MCSEA in a call for the delay of the McLean's Mountain wind farm project until the attached concerns are addressed." The wording of the motion was proposed by Mayor Joe Chapman. It was moved by Councillor Bill Koehler and seconded by Councillor Christina Jones.

"I would like to make a friendly amendment to simply support the OFA," said Councillor Mike Erskine. "They are two separate motions as far as I am concerned."

Councillor Al MacNevin agreed, referring to the OFA's position.

"There has been a lot of media coverage with Mark Wales, the president of the OFA, over this statement," began Councillor MacNevin. "He has clarified that the OFA is not against wind energy or wanting to stop projects that are already in the works. In various interviews he has said that the OFA is just calling for the government not to issue any more FIT contracts. Either way, the statement was recently released and it's a bit early to suggest that the OFA is opposed to all wind projects."

Councillor Marcel Gauthier also spoke adding, "you don't have to be a scholar to see that the OFA is just addressing proposed projects, not existing ones."

"You're putting two things together in the same basket," added Councillor Erskine. "I would support the OFA, but not in conjunction with MCSEA. Again, they should be two separate motions. The motion that is on the table is something that is not true. I can't vote for a motion that it a blatant lie because OFA did not say that they are against the McLean's Mountain Wind Farm."

Great Canadian Adventure Tour features Island sailing

by Stacey Lavallie

MANITOULIN—This past summer, two travellers stopped on Manitoulin Island. What no one knew was that they were more than just tourists—they were two brothers, one the host of Outdoor Life Network's 'Which Way To' television program.

Jeff and Chris Eager, plus a small crew, were in the process of travelling across Canada as part of the Great Canadian Adventure Tour (GCAT).

It began after Jeff Eager moved back to the Maritimes after hosting his international travel show. According to a press release, he was "eager" to rediscover Canada.

As of The Expositor's press time, the brothers are in the Yukon. This summer they were introduced to Manitoulin Island's sailing life by Little Current resident and Cruiser's Net host Roy Eaton.

The article and video written by the Eager brothers is available on the GCAT website available at www.great-canadianadventuretour.com.

"Whether you drive to the Island, sail there on your own or land there on a cruise ship, you are going to have a memorable time," reads the website. "Famous throughout Canada and the world as an incredible sailing destination, Manitoulin Island has lots more to offer. Natural beauty, a vibrant Native culture, friendly people and a laid back atmosphere all make Manitoulin Island a very special place."

The journal entry about Manitoulin goes on to highlight the unique facets of Island life, such as the "bucolic villages and harbours," world-class sailing that is second only to Greece and the unique cultural region, "where Native life and legend meld with European history to provide an unforgettable experience."

To read the article and see the video, visit <http://ow.ly/8UkKJ>.

"This highlights the wind industry in Ontario," replied Mayor Chapman. "It has pinned farmer against farmer, neighbours against each other, and even divided this council."

Despite Councillor Eskine's comments that the motion should be amended, it went forward with council defeating the motion.


Councillors Christina Jones, Bill Koehler and the mayor voted in favor of the motion, while Councillors Erskine, Gauthier, MacNevin, Dawn Orr and Paul Skippen voted against. Councillor Bruce Wood abstained from voting, declaring a conflict of interest.

The Expositor spoke with Mr. Wales after Tuesday's meeting, explaining the situation and asking for clarification on the OFA's position on industrial wind turbines.

"We are not saying stop all wind projects," explained

Mr. Wales. "We are just saying don't issue any more FIT contracts until they deal with the various outstanding issues. We know that wind energy will be an important source in the future, but the process needs to be slowed down and looked at more carefully. We don't need all the power from wind turbines right now due to the recession, but when we get out of this we will."

Mr. Wales added that the OFA is strongly in support of green energy, but simply wants the entire process "slowed down" before moving forward with any new projects. He also stated that the government has actually not issued any FIT contracts since October 2011 and is hoping that the OFA's position will prevent any projects in the queue from moving forward until the OFA's issues with respect to noise, price and community involvement are addressed by the Ontario government.



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