

## **Sarah Abbott's Acceptance Speech 2012 Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor's Arts Awards**

*The Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor's Arts Award for Arts and Learning was presented to Sarah Abbott by Lieutenant Governor Vaughn Solomon Schofield, the direct representative in Saskatchewan of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Representatives of the Saskatchewan government, Regina and Saskatoon city councils, arts organizations, artists, academics and others appreciative of the arts were in attendance at the gala celebration of the arts in Saskatoon hosted by the Saskatchewan Arts Board on September 18, 2012.*

*The following is Sarah Abbott's acceptance speech:*

It's really amazing to be here. I had no idea, really, what to expect. This really is a lovely thing that we have in this province: I found out that Saskatchewan is the only province that has this many recognitions of different aspects of the arts so I think we should all feel very proud of that. I feel honoured to be receiving this award; and Connie, your discussion of the jury process was very, very moving, and beautiful, so thank you for sharing that. Congratulations to everybody here tonight who was a shortlist-person, and a winner as well. I would like to say thank you to my friends and my colleagues who are here tonight, and my mother – who came from Calgary – and for all of the sponsorship we have received to be here tonight, as well as all of the publicly funded and privately funded sponsorship that we have received as artists in our careers. And for the artists who are coming up behind us, I hope that those structures remain in place in this province and in this country.

So it's just me up here tonight who cooked up these ideas to have my students work alongside local film professionals, working on films that dealt with the First Nations freezing deaths in this city, allegedly at the hands of the Saskatoon police, as well as relationship violence in interracial relationships. I cooked up the idea to have a panel discussion on Aboriginal/police relationships, and also violence in young relationships, and, collectively, those three premiere screenings -- in Saskatoon and Regina -- had approximately one thousand people attend, which is quite amazing. And behind me, really, are at least a hundred people. The director of *Out in the Cold*, Colleen Murphy, and Ann Verrall, who directed *This Time Last Winter*, and all of the students and local professionals who gave their time to guide the students; and everybody who helped in the production process, the post production process, and the distribution; and those who helped me get the panel discussions organized – and that includes the funders as well, organizations like SaskFilm and SMPA, Java Post Production and Talking Dog Studios, just to name a few. So really they're here behind me as well. And one person who was with me through it all is here tonight: Pamela Warden, thank you for coming.

I would like to take a moment to remember Gordon Tootosis. You saw him tonight in the poster for *Out in the Cold*. He had a huge impact on people in this province, and he's greatly, greatly missed.

Lyndon Tootoosis, I'd like to thank you for reminding us that we are on Treaty 6 land, and that everybody in the country is connected to the treaties.

Also, of course, as a filmmaker, I have to say that this award... I think I'm kind of in shock right now, so, probably it's going to hit me in a few days... but I feel very honored to be celebrated for making this work, which has been a powerful teaching tool, and also a way to communicate these issues and to enable people to talk about them in a way that feels safe and in a way that is productive.

It is greatly troubling to me, and my colleagues, to lose the Saskatchewan Film Employment Tax Credit. [long applause]

Without the industry in this province, I couldn't have made these films. We had people who had worked in the industry for twenty years helping the students for nothing, for free; working for four nights in February, outside, on the outskirts of Regina, to make *Out in the Cold*. We had William F. White give us equipment. Incredible, incredible learning experiences and growing experiences for young people.

I also raise money every year to send two students to the Women's in the Director's Chair program, which enables our students to go to Banff for about ten days to improve their filmmaking skills. I had the idea that maybe William F. White would be interested, I hadn't approached them before. I got a call back from somebody in Toronto who told me that they were not going to fund the fellowship, which covers everything so students can go for free. I asked why. William F. White is an international company with its head office in Toronto, and they felt slighted by the decision to cut the tax credit. And so, unfortunately, they felt that they were... I don't think it's valuable to have revenge in one's life, but they felt that they were hurt by the government's decision, so they were not going to give back to this province. And I felt really, really isolated here with that comment. I felt it was understandable, but wrong, to not support all of those people who worked hard to communicate to the government that it's important to have the film tax credit here, and how much they love being in Saskatchewan. They can go anywhere in the country, but they want to be working in Saskatchewan. And I really hope that something changes, and that our students don't have to go elsewhere when we train them in our Media Production and Studies program. So Kevin Doherty [Minister of Parks, Culture & Sport], I hope you can take that back, and know that there are people who love film being here. [applause]

Film is connected to all of the other art forms. And if it goes, then we're going to lose what people are loving so much in this room, and the people in this room represent a large number of people in Saskatchewan. [applause]

So, thank you very much for this award. And I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about the film tax credit, and I really appreciate this support that you're showing. Thank you.