

For immediate release

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Filmmaker Sarah Abbott receives Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor's Arts Award

Regina-based filmmaker Sarah Abbott received the Lieutenant Governor's Arts Award for Arts and Learning at a gala celebration of the arts hosted by the Saskatchewan Arts Board on Tuesday, September 18, 2012. Lieutenant Governor Vaughn Solomon Schofield, the direct representative in Saskatchewan of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, presented the Arts and Learning Award. In attendance were representatives of the Saskatchewan government, Regina and Saskatoon city councils, arts organizations, artists, academics and others appreciative of the arts.

Abbott, Associate Professor in the Department of Media Production and Studies at the University of Regina, received the award for her filmmaking endeavors, innovative teaching methods, ability to bridge cultures, commitment to empowering people, and passion for communicating hard-hitting issues. Her projects have had a far-reaching impact on communities across Saskatchewan.

"I feel very honoured and celebrated for making my work," Abbott says. "Filmmaking is a powerful teaching tool and way to generate awareness, discussion and positive change on difficult issues."

Abbott is well-known for two ambitious, critically-acclaimed film projects, *Out In the Cold* (2008) and *This Time Last Winter* (2010). Both films were created through a teaching model she devised wherein her students work alongside local industry professionals in a rigorous professional production environment. While learning valuable aspects of independent filmmaking, Abbott's students were also exposed to ideas and issues important to their development as citizens. In *Out In The Cold*, themes of loss, memory and disregard are explored in a story inspired by the Saskatoon freezing deaths of First Nations men, allegedly at the hands of police. *This Time Last Winter* looks at interracial relationships and the moment of choice we face when the urge to be violent erupts.

Following the Saskatchewan premiere screenings of both films, Abbott organized historic panel discussions on Aboriginal/police relations and relationship violence, which drew the participation of the Saskatoon and Regina police chiefs. Audience numbers ranged from 270-450 and donations were collected for local social health organizations.

Abbott has engaged a number of other social and teaching initiatives, including *Tide Marks* (2004), a feature documentary examining human rights abuses, oppression and social/political issues in post-apartheid South Africa that is accompanied by a study guide she developed. The film *In the Minds of All Beings: Tsogyal Latso of Tibet* (2011) raises awareness and funds for a nunnery and sacred site in Tibet. Abbott guest curated *The Last Fish* (2008), an exhibition of works from the collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery that considered environmental destruction and the way we used to think of the future as infinitely abundant and secure.

"Sarah Abbott has made a tremendous impact on individual lives and on an extensive range of communities in Saskatchewan," says Dr. Sheila Petty, Dean of Fine Arts at the University of Regina. "As an educator and artist, she is widely respected for her passion, sensitivity, courage and generosity of spirit. She is an inspiring leader in Saskatchewan."

For more information, please contact Sarah Abbott at 306.585.4437 and visit www.sarahabbott.ca