

Ryerson grad creates film fest

November event showcases deaf artists' work

By JILL ANDREW
for Metro Toronto

Several months ago, Catherine MacKinnon had an idea to create a national and interna-

Catherine MacKinnon

JAM PRODUCTIONS PHOTO



tional arts and film festival.

What would make this one special is it would showcase the artistic contributions of deaf artists around the world, like MacKinnon, an award-winning deaf filmmaker.

For some, the idea seemed too large a feat for the recent Ryerson fine arts graduate to accomplish. But after sharing the idea with Karyn Goldstein, cultural arts director for the Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf (OCSD), MacKinnon got just the support she needed to move from idea sharing to making her dream come true.

Today, MacKinnon is the festival director of the first annual Toronto International Deaf

Film & Arts Festival (TIDFAF), while Goldstein sits as an OCSD board representative on the TIDFAF board and is also TIDFAF's general manager.

On Nov. 10, TIDFAF will launch their first festival fundraiser with a star-studded schmooze party and silent auction at the Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art as the kickoff to the festival happening next May.

"This festival isn't only about showcasing deaf artists making films or art work about being deaf. This festival is also about showcasing works made by deaf people about topics that have absolutely nothing to do directly with being deaf," MacKinnon says. "We (deaf artists) aren't only credible on topics related to deaf culture. We want to bridge the gap between deaf and mainstream arts audiences to celebrate our similarities as well as our differences."

The festival also hopes to create more public awareness around issues explaining the lack of larger representation of deaf artists in mainstream culture and also hopes to act as a mentoring and resource partner for deaf students and artists seeking assistance on getting their projects seen and heard.

Recently, TIDFAF has been doing outreach to community and arts organizations like the Toronto International Film Festival Group and the

response has been overwhelming.

"We've already received early submissions and interest from Japan, England, Sweden, Ireland, Nepal, the (United) States and Africa, and everyday our e-mail inboxes continue to grow. For us, we know of the calibre of work within the deaf culture internationally, but this festival, a first for the city, will hopefully be a continued wake-up call to acknowledge the talents right here, too," MacKinnon says.

On Nov. 10, those in attendance will have the opportunity to learn from industry insiders how to distribute and market films, get film funding and build an international festival from scratch. They will also witness the unveiling of a 30-second theatrical trailer at the launch event in celebration of TIDFAF.

Some star guests include local deaf actress Vanessa Vaughn, who has worked with Kiefer Sutherland along with deaf actress and activist Marlee Matlin; and Los Angeles actress Terrylyne whose acting credits include AfterImage, Natural Born Killers, ER and Cagney & Lacey.

"The deaf community has highly anticipated this festival," Vaughn says. "As a performer, it is a dream come true to finally be able to see our rich cultural mosaic embracing deaf voices."

festival not only about film

● On Nov. 10, the Toronto International Deaf Film & Arts Festival (TIDFAF) will launch their first festival fundraiser with a star-studded schmooze party and silent auction at the Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art as the kickoff to the festival happening next May.

● TIDFAF films will be screened at the Isabel Bader Theatre, Victoria College at U of T; art exhibition will be held at the coming Deaf Culture Centre at the Distillery District.
● Visit www.tidfaf.ca or e-mail info@tidfaf.ca.

JILL ANDREW FOR METRO TORONTO

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