

No Offense... uses theatre to tackle racism at First Nations youth gathering

Winnipeg, August 3, 2010– *No Offense...* an interactive theatre performance at this year's *FemFest 2010: On the Edge* pulls out all the stops in its exploration of racism in Manitoba high schools. The power of the piece has been recognized by requests to have it tour around the province. In fact, prior to its debut at *FemFest*, *No Offense...* will perform a reading on August 17th at the 8th Annual Traditional Youth Gathering in Fisher River Cree Nation. The event invites 130 First Nations youth from across Manitoba to camp, interact in a natural setting and partake in activities that encourage exploration of their identity and culture.

For those interested in seeing the presentation in Winnipeg the *No Offense...* show times during *FemFest 2010: On the Edge* are Sunday September 26th at 2pm, and Tuesday September 28th at 2pm. *No Offense...* will then be touring throughout Manitoba high schools until November 12th.

The piece was collaboratively created by Sarasvati Productions with Fringe Benefits Theatre along with 30 youth, artists and community members. *No Offense...* is a no holds barred approach to theatre, and to maintain realism it explores the use by teens of derogatory terms such as “drunken Indian”, “two-bit ho”, and “stupid white trash.” It also includes an exciting interactive component following the performance, during which the audience can step in and provide solutions to the racist behaviour in the play. “We don’t shy away from controversial issues, in fact, we use theatre as a powerful way to provoke discussion in the community,” says Artistic Director, Hope McIntyre.

“The play really speaks to me and will certainly have a lasting effect on high school audiences,” says Mary Black, a 17-year old who plays the role of *Charlotte* an aboriginal teenager experiencing racism from her classmates in the production. Black, a mother and freelance actor who resides locally in Elmwood credits acting opportunities such as these for her ability to overcome a drug and alcohol addiction. She is now in a position where she hopes to inspire others to do the same. “I overcame it and now I want to inspire others through my work, that’s why I am so excited to be a part of *No Offense...* it’s all about destroying the stereotypes about Aboriginal youth, and I can’t wait to tell the story,” adds Black.

Tickets for *No Offense...* at *FemFest* are available by phone at 586-2236 or at the box office an hour before the show, and are priced at \$10 for general admission, and \$5 for high school students with proof of identification. *FemFest 2010* runs from September 25th to October 2nd at the Canwest Centre for Theatre and Film (at the University of Winnipeg, 400 Colony Street).

About Sarasvati Productions: *Sarasvati Dramatic Theatre Productions and Repertory Inc.* (founded in Winnipeg in 2000) seeks to inspire artists and audiences through the use of theatre and to provide a place where artists can develop, showcase their skills and celebrate their creativity.

About FemFest: Founded in 2003 by Sarasvati Productions, *FemFest* presents the work of both established and emerging artists from across Canada. The festival’s mandate is to produce one-act plays by women and showcase women theatre artists.