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FIRST NATION FILMS AND GALA EVENT MARK START OF THE YUKON INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

WHITEHORSE – First Nations films and a gala event will mark the start of the Yukon International Film Festival on June 21 in Whitehorse.

In partnership with Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon and the Society of Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry, a free program of First Nations films and filmmakers will be presented on June 21 at the Westmark Klondike Inn. A panel discussion on aboriginal production funding begins at 11 a.m. and film screenings begin at 1 p.m.

“It is encouraging to see the increasing number of First Nations stories and traditions that are being produced and reflected on television and movie screens,” Economic Development Minister Jim Kenyon said. “With this festival we are able to inform producers and film artists from around Canada and the world about the wealth of First Nations traditions and stories here in Yukon.”

Screenings include the short film *Sigwan* (2005), by director, producer and writer Alanis Obomsawin. *Sigwan* tells the touching story of a young girl who is comforted and counselled by animals of the forest. Visually breathtaking, this film is a simple yet transformative parable of acceptance.

Also on June 21, a gala event to mark the start of the Yukon International Film Festival will be held at the Yukon Arts Centre starting at 6:30 p.m. The event features:

- Screening of the feature film *The Big White* with Executive Producer John Schimmel in attendance to introduce the Yukon premiere of this film.
- Displays of carved masks in the YAC Gallery with First Nation artists in attendance.
- Performances by Jerry Alfred, Diyet van Lieshout, Sharon Shorty and Duane Aucoin as “Grandma Susie and Grandpa Charlie”.
- Award and presentation of the winner of the Yukon International Film Festival Youth Trailer Competition.

The Yukon International Film Festival will present over 30 films and documentaries June 21 to 25 in Whitehorse. Combining a variety of indigenous, environmental and independent films with films shot in Yukon, the festival provides an opportunity to highlight location and filmmaking opportunities within the Yukon.

Tickets for the Yukon International Film Festival and the gala event are now on sale at Hougen’s Box Office and the Yukon Arts Centre. For a complete festival film schedule and a list of special guests and events, please visit www.yukonfilmfest.com.

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