

## Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival 2006 – Community Outreach Co-ordinator Report

### Vision:

The Community Outreach Co-ordinator's responsibilities is to promote the film festival through educational and cultural venues. In keeping with the festival's mandate of increasing the understanding of the work of Asian and Asian-Canadian film makers, it is believed that exposing public school students and cultural association members to the festival will help to foster, not only a general interest in film, but also to engage them in critical thinking skills: skills that can be applied to the educational experience.

### Contacting Public Schools:

Working from a database of public schools within the Toronto District Schoolboard (TDSB) created in 2005 by the previous Community Outreach Co-ordinator, the contacting of schools began in September 2006 in order that teachers would have adequate time within which to plan attending the workshops and screenings. This process took into consideration teachers planning their school year from a thematic context, which Festival film topics may be relevant, obtaining necessary permission from school administration and parents, and consultation with their students about this project. Contact was initiated by e-mail, then by e-mail and phone once interest was generated and teachers requested further information. A notice with programme description, times, dates, and venue of the workshops and screenings was either faxed or e-mailed as attachments to individual teachers. A registration form with date and time options and fee schedule was also included with this subsequent notice.

### Youth Programme:

The Youth Programme component of the Festival, co-presented with the National Film Board of Canada Mediatheque, provides opportunities for youth to focus on a variety of social issues, as well as the viability of career options within the film industry. It does this, not only by exposing them to a wide range of film genres, there is also the opportunity to create films – in this case, workshops that teach how to create public service announcements. Further, students may also question film makers in attendance at screenings about the making of their films. Lastly, instructors may be apprised of the films their students will be seeing in order to prepare suitably-themed lessons that further explore social issues that specific films address, thereby providing an associative context from which students may benefit. This year, the Youth Programme Co-ordinator created a unit that emphasised critical thinking, writing, and grammar. Such a unit could be adapted by teachers participating in the Youth Programme. In advocating the educational benefits of film, the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival fulfills an important social responsibility that transgresses the traditional notion of film as mere entertainment.

### Workshops (co-presented with the NFB Mediatheque):

This series is an innovative, hands-on production workshop for teens entitled '**Animate the Issues**'. In this workshop, students were challenged to take on social issues and confront them through the medium of stop-motion animation.

After learning the basics of animation and brainstorming ideas, students will work in teams to create their own animated public service announcements (PSA). The PSA's created by the students were screened as part of the Reel Asian Youth Screenings on November 24th and 25th.

### Screenings (co-presented with the NFB Mediatheque):

These screenings showcased the diversity of Asian culture, focusing on a variety of social issues, from issues of identity, generational, gaps, and relationships. Such films provided impetus to discussion about such issues, particularly with those film makers in attendance. In so doing, we also hoped to demonstrate to students that the film industry presents viable career opportunities for them. These screenings took place on Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, with 7 films, and Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, with 7 films.

### Youth Programme Schedule:

The workshops and screenings were held at NFB Mediatheque, with the workshops facilitated by staff of the NFB. The cost to students was \$5.00. The schedule and participants were as follows:

Workshops: Please note that final numbers of participants are not confirmed in this report.

Thursday, Nov. 16 (10 AM)

<b>Workshop 1</b>	<b>Status: Full</b>			
<b>Name of School</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Notes</b>
William Lyon Mackenzie CI	20	Susan Morrison	416-395-3330 x 20100	workshop
Malvern CI	18	Marie Axler	416 393 1480 x 20090	workshop

### Follow-up Survey:

A survey which asks for feedback from the participating public schools is being vetted prior to being sent out.

## **NFB Workshops and Youth (Shorts) Program Screenings (2006) - Overview**

### **What Worked This Year:**

#### Planning:

1. The scheduling of the workshops and screenings were co-ordinated so that student groups would have access to both workshop and screening on the same day. This schedule also facilitated schools who could only attend screenings as they could arrive for these in the afternoon and be accommodated together with those who had participated in the workshops due to the theatre's ample space.
2. Teachers were contacted this year via e-mail based on last year's database. This initially proved effective, obviating time spent playing telephone tag with teachers, which happened last year. Over 25 teachers were contacted by e-mail.
3. Programming of the Youth (Shorts) Programme took place early enough in the late summer to facilitate extensive consideration and decision making. Also, the range of films, which included works from emerging (youth) artists and covered a range of themes – from parent-child dynamics to identity to notions of belonging – were well chosen.
4. A new educational component of the programme, with its emphasis on lesson-planning collaboration between Reel Asian and participating schools, and which drew its themes from the Ministry of Education's curriculum for the Arts, was initiated this year. Teachers from participating schools were invited to take advantage of this option if it proved relevant to their lessons (see attached Unit).
5. Discussion Topics based on the themes of the Shorts Programme was created and passed on to the screening facilitators to help initiate the post-screening discussion.

#### Workshops and Screenings:

1. According to reports from facilitators and speakers, the NFB-Sponsored workshops and screenings were well received by the audience and a lively post-screening discussion ensued thanks to facilitators Heather Keung and Grace Shen. Public Service Announcements created by students during the workshops were later screened during the Shorts Program. Director Vincent Lin from Taiwan fielded questions about his film "Jesse".

2. Effective and immediate attempt at resolution initiated when a double booking occurred during the Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup> workshop. NFB contacted the Youth (Shorts) Programme Co-ordinator who immediately contacted Reel Asian office to confirm the oversight and initiate a series of letters of apologies to the teacher/class concerned, the NFB, and the Reel Asian staff.

### **What Didn't Work This Year:**

#### **Planning:**

1. The simplified schedule, because it was streamlined, may have rendered the Youth (Shorts) Programme inaccessible to many schools because of scheduling conflicts.
2. Due extenuating circumstances, the Youth Program Co-ordinator didn't have enough time to review the films considered for programming, resulting in the inability to provide a personal overview of these films to those making inquiries.
3. Contacting teachers by e-mail, though more efficient and convenient, didn't produce more response: only two teachers responded out of a possible 25.
4. Teachers submitting registrations by fax and or in person did so at the Reel Asian office, not to the Youth Program Co-ordinator directly. Due extenuating circumstances, the Youth Program Co-ordinator did not see these registration forms personally, so relied exclusively on Reel Asian administrative staff to confirm receipt of and attribute registration forms to the teachers. Confirmations were relayed via e-mail.
5. Youth (Shorts) Program Co-ordinator's work/study schedule prevented him from fully participating in this year's planning/screenings of the Youth Program. He had to rely heavily on Reel Asian staff and volunteers to conduct tasks.

#### **Workshops and Screenings:**

1. E-mail confirmations between Reel Asian staff and Youth Program Co-ordinator resulted in confusion, mix-ups, and the eventual double-booking of two classes for the same NFB workshop. Due to lack of space, one class was not able to participate in the workshop and was very disappointed.

### **What To Do Next Time:**

#### **Planning:**

1. Youth (Shorts) Program Co-ordinator should have more presence in the planning process/stage.
2. A system of contacting and following up with schools/teachers should be devised. Telephone contact should be prioritised over e-mail to ensure more response as in the previous year.
3. Confirmation of registrations should be conducted by the Youth (Shorts) Program Co-ordinator in person at the Reel Asian offices, not exclusively by e-mail/phone.
4. Regular meetings between Youth (Shorts) Program Co-ordinator prior to the event should be held as a way to confirm procedures, generate ideas, follow up on tasks, and cultivate a sense of cohesion/collaboration.

## **Action that Needs to be Taken Before 2007:**

### Planning:

1. Follow-up with participating teachers/their classes. Conduct evaluation of Youth (Shorts) Program in order to improve it.

### Issues to be Discussed:

1. Brainstorm ideas for how to encourage more school participation: could the limited programming schedule be a hindrance?
2. Devising a more effective promotional campaign; perhaps we need to expand beyond the schools within the TDSB in order to generate more interest.
3. Ways to update our schools contact database. What does this entail?
4. Re-visit our expectations. Is it really practical to put into effect the educational component of the Youth Program?

### Acknowledgements:

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Respectfully submitted,

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Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival