

Theatre Wakefield
AGM
June 18th, 2009

President's Report for the Fiscal Year 2008

The last year of Theatre Wakefield has been an active one with the Players being busy with one project or another almost every month of the year. This was a year of firsts for the group, branching out into uncharted territory in many ways.

The year began with the inaugural Piggyback Fringe Festival, which saw the successful production of 16 shows (8 plays) in three venues over 2 days. Feedback from participating artists was encouraging and the majority expressed great appreciation for the warm reception and the large houses they experienced in Wakefield. A total of \$571 was raised for the Community Centre. Theatre Wakefield is now an official member of the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals, making Wakefield one of the smallest communities to host such a festival.

Following the warm reception of the Piggyback Fringe Festival, Theatre Wakefield was invited to play a larger role in a number of community events. A number of players posed for the 2nd annual Nudes of Wakefield calendar in July, with proceeds going to the community centre. Theatre Wakefield also participated in the 10th anniversary celebration of the Artists in the Environment Studio Tour in September. With a year of successful firsts, there were also some setbacks. Production on *The Royal Pardon* began in September and was cancelled shortly thereafter following news that Vorlage was closed for renovations, prompting the discussion once again of our need for a permanent home.

Autumn was a very productive period for Theatre Wakefield. Rehearsals for *Moo* began in October with one reading held at the Black Sheep in November. This event was extremely successful, especially given the weather that day. A total of \$580 was raised for the community centre. Theatre Wakefield continued to expand its horizons in the fall, with some members starting work on a tribute video montage of Phil Cohen's poetry. Furthermore, Theatre Wakefield spearheaded a community outreach program in an effort to unearth a greater understanding of local history and heritage with the project "Our Hidden Hills". The troupe also successfully experimented with a small touring production, staging readings of *A Christmas Carol* in Wakefield, Low and Chelsea. All three readings were well received, raising more than \$1500 for the construction of residences for seniors in La Pêche.

The New Year saw the release of *It Takes a Village to Make a Poet* which was officially launched at Dragon Fest. The video was exceptionally well received with \$2600 raised for the Community Centre at the launch, with DVD sales continuing at several local merchants in Wakefield. Production of *Corker* began in March with five shows performed throughout the month of May. The show was a break from Theatre Wakefield's usual comedic fare, with the actors and technical crew rising to meet the challenge of the complexities posed by the script. The show received glowing reviews and approximately \$1000 was raised for the Community Centre.

Theatre Wakefield continues to be a driving force behind the development and construction of the planned community centre. Members have been intricately involved in meetings with the community centre committee and the architect.

Theatre Wakefield has continued to forge new and productive relationships with other community centre stakeholders, such as the development of a storytelling series targeted towards local youth in partnership with Biblio Wakefield. Furthermore, Theatre Wakefield will support Rooney Productions in the delivery of a summer film camp for youth in partnership with the Wakefield Youth Centre.

On the financial front, Theatre Wakefield has improved its ability to garner financial support from a number of new donors. This new money has allowed Theatre Wakefield to maintain the production of its traditional programming in addition to supporting its expansion into new mediums and interests. As Theatre Wakefield continues to deliver quality programming, its ability to sustain this funding and seek out new sources of financial support is expected to improve. The municipality of La Pêche has contributed \$8000 for annual programming expenses; \$3000 of which is dedicated to supporting the programming of the 2nd annual Piggyback Fringe Festival. Theatre Wakefield also received grants of \$3000 from the CLD (Centre Local de Développement), \$1500 from the CREO (Conférence régionale des élus de l'Outaouais), and \$500 from the Caisse Populaire in support of the Piggyback Fringe Festival. Heritage Canada approved a grant of \$13,500 for Theatre Wakefield's "Our Hidden Hills" project. An additional \$400 grant from the Caisse Populaire was received for the refurbishment of the stage, and funding was received which allowed Theatre Wakefield to reinforce its goal of supporting youth engagement in theatre by hiring a student intern for the summer of 2009.

In the coming year, Theatre Wakefield expects to move forward on a number of ambitious projects while improving its capacity to deliver its current level of programming. The upcoming Piggyback Fringe Festival will expand on last year's successful format with the production of 24 shows (12 plays) in three venues over three days. Theatre Wakefield has collaborated with HCW Steam Train to offer a "dinner and a show" package for the closing night of the festival. In addition, Theatre Wakefield will host a Documentary Film Series to occur sometime in the fall, and preparations are under way for the Fall Mainstage production. Theatre Wakefield will sponsor Wakefest's upcoming film series on the covered bridge, and talks are underway to see how to expand upon the "Our Hidden Hills" project by supporting future development ideas of the CLCs (Community Learning Centres). Theatre Wakefield can continue to expect a bright future over the next year.

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