



1,000 ISLANDS FESTIVAL OF STORYTELLING

Weaving Enchantment in Gananoque

By Lorraine Payette

Story tellers are coming to Gananoque, weaving some of the strangest and most amazing tales you've ever heard and creating a spell that will enchant all ages. Some stories will be quiet and intense, others loud and full of life and movement, for each teller is unique. The tales may be old as time or newly sprung from the tellers' soul.

On September 12-13, the Town Park on King Street will come alive with tents and pavilions as tellers from the US and all over Canada come out to share their gifts with all who care to listen. Called the 1,000 Islands Festival of Storytelling (FOS), it brings an ancient tradition to town in a new and vibrant form to tantalize and inspire modern audiences.

"A professional storyteller has the ability to deliver a varied program of told stories which reflect an understanding and respect for the lineage of the stories," said Ben Bright, chair and artistic director of FOS. "Festivals such as ours help to ensure the continuing development of the art of

storytelling, an integral aspect of many cultures around the world. A large part of a professional storyteller's purpose is to create an environment that encourages healthy communities and relationships in a safe environment.

"Remembering that in recognition of the Literacy and Storytelling link, an oral component has been added to the provincial school curriculum. Many reports have been produced showing the link between Literacy and Oral Storytelling," he said. "Schools now see The Festival as a great way to start the new school year and motivate their students to higher levels of achievement."

Dan Yashinsky, Deborah Dunleavy, LaRon Williams, Esther Osche, Marta Singh and Bill Lalonde - six top quality story tellers - will be gracing the stage. All have been selected for being the best at what they do, and are sure to delight all ages.

Yashinsky founded the Toronto Festival of Storytelling in 1979 and co-founded the

Storytellers School of Toronto. His work is known and appreciated internationally.

Williams is an American storyteller from Michigan who captivates audiences with his highly involved style. Using percussion instruments to backdrop his telling, he is sure to please anyone with a yen for a good yarn.

Osche is Ojibwa and hails from Manitoulin Island. Her stories are centred in the first nations' traditions of magic and connections between animals, earth and humanity.

Singh enjoys telling folk and fairy tales. Born in Argentina, she can tell in both Spanish and English, and is a delight to both hear and watch.

Dunleavy and Lalonde both live in and work out of Brockville. Dunleavy is a master story teller, well known in the area for her energetic and spell binding tales gathered from around the world. Lalonde is a familiar face in many schools where he enchants young people and opens their minds to a galaxy of possibilities through his use of accent, sound and gesture to augment the tales he has chosen to tell.

Scheduled to run two days, the event covers storytelling for all ages in several venues.

"At 9:30 a.m. (on the Friday) students from Linklater and St. Joseph Schools will be 'piped' to the Town Hall Park to hear story tellers in two separate tents," said Bright. "Storytellers will also visit two seniors' retirement/care centres in order to include seniors in the fun and delight.

"Friday evening is for the whole community, friends and visitors to Gananoque, live music with admission by donation, Saturday morning will feature workshops with professional storytellers for students, teachers, parents and business. Saturday afternoon and evening will present storytelling and live music."

Admissions vary, with students paying \$2 through their schools for participation and an arrangement made with the seniors' residences, then Saturday afternoon and evening at \$10 per adult, \$5 per young person 6-15, and ages 5 and under free. A family pass is \$30. A hand stamp allows unlimited access in and out all day on Saturday. The Friday evening community show is by donation, making it open to all who might not otherwise be able to afford to attend. **LH**

To learn more about
the Festival, check out
www.1000islandstorytelling.ca