



**For Immediate Release
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ESPLANADE 10-DAY OPENING “A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS”

Medicine Hat – Public attendance and participation made the ambitious 10-day opening of the Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre in Medicine Hat a tremendous success.

The Esplanade Gala Committee was charged with planning and executing 10 days of events to showcase a wide variety of interests.

“The events were well-attended, and there was truly something for everyone. It’s so gratifying to finally see the building come alive with excitement and enthusiasm,” says Chairman Wayne Craven.

Overall attendance during the 10 days amounted to thousands.

- Over 500 residents and visitors lined up on the front lawn to watch Mayor Garth Valley cut the ribbon to officially open the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre on Saturday, Oct 22.
- More than 300 people took in the opening receptions for two Art Gallery exhibitions *Momentum* and *Eight Miles of Barbed Wire*, and Museum exhibition *Fifties Forever* on Sunday, Oct. 23.
- During the week, 1,036 students enjoyed school tours, and approximately 650 people took advantage of the guided tours for public.
- Attendance for Sunday, Oct. 30 included approximately 125 people for the film “The Canadians” in the Studio Theatre and over 60 for the launch of the book “The Bear and the Bone King” which was edited by local “Hatter” Malcolm Sissons. The book is available at the Esplanade Gift Shop. Fifty-five books were sold at the launch.
- Multicultural Teas held each weekday in the Ewart Duggan House were sold out – a total of 150 people throughout the week.
- Small groups enjoyed two lively presentations about Alberta’s 100th Anniversary by Alberta 2005 Centennial Ambassadors in the meeting room on Monday, Oct. 24 and Thursday, Oct. 27.
- The Free Stage in the Studio Theatre gathered large crowds each day over the noon hour.
- Four out of the eight Theatre Performances were sold out, including: Randy Bachman, Celebration Symphony, Best of Broadway and Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s Dracula. Total attendance over the 10 days totaled 4,724. As well, the Box Office was busy over the first 10 days, selling more than 3,700 tickets to upcoming shows for future revenues of approximately \$130,000.

Fifty-five volunteers were on site for the opening day, and more than 40 offered their services on each of the remaining nine days of the gala as tour guides, ushers, gift shop and café attendants, physical labourers, and greeters.

“We could not have taken on such an ambitious schedule without the commitment of these volunteers,” says Natalie Sauer, Community Education/Volunteer Coordinator for the Esplanade.

“The Esplanade Steering Committee saw this project through to completion and the Gala Committee planned an incredible opening to truly unite the interests of our community with the potentials of this building. We are truly grateful for their time and effort.” says Mayor Valley.

Hundreds have enjoyed the ambience and convenience of the Esplanade Café to relax or meet friends before an event. The café serves snacks and refreshments from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and noon to 4 p.m. on weekends and offers beverage services during Theatre events. The café will also offer light lunches in the near future.

The Esplanade Gift Shop also enjoyed 10 days of success with sales exceeding expectations.

“Although we can consider today ‘normal’ operation compared to the last 10 days, we are still not set into full, day-to-day operations,” says Carol Beatty, Manager of Cultural Development with the City of Medicine Hat.

She references the fact that the Esplanade has extended its free school tours until Jan. 1, 2006 and free admission to the Museum and Art Gallery until the opening of the Archives and Permanent Museum Gallery which is expected in early December.

“Elements of construction are ongoing, staff are moving in and collections will be moved gradually through to the end of the year,” adds Beatty.

Local performances in the main theatre included: “Celebration Symphony” on Monday, Oct. 24, which included a massed choir of over 100 voices from the community accompanied by the Medicine Hat Concert Band and the Medicine Hat College Academy Orchestra; “Best of Broadway” on Friday, Oct. 28, which brought together a potpourri of Broadway musicals produced by the Medicine Hat Musical Theatre over the past four decades; and the “Saturday Night Serenade,” which showcased the jazz/swing talent of the Medicine Hat Big Band, along with special guest performances from Senator Tommy Banks on the piano and vocals from Louise Rose. Many local performances, including some from the Medicine Hat and District Live Music Club, graced the free stage in the Studio Theatre each day over the noon hour.

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