

Support for Film

Mr. Speaker, with the conclusion of the seventh annual Dead North Film Festival this past weekend, it is appropriate that I speak today on our vibrant film industry and its growing importance to our economy.

First, I'd like to congratulate all of the participants in this year's event. Nearly 40 films were submitted to the festival this year with entries from across the North, each region of our territory; and from as young as nine and ten years old.

Winners were recognized with Zombears. These awards recognize excellence in a variety of fields. In addition, the NWT Film Commission's Best Locations Award was presented for recognizing the use of the NWT's unique and world-class backdrops for film. This year's winner was a film called Long Story Short which offered an alternative telling of the story of the Mad Trapper.

The annual Dead North Film Festival is about more than just films and screenings. The festival hosts seminars, networking opportunities, and workshops. This year, the festival expanded its reach to include a photo competition, further engaging the arts community and offering the chance for creative growth and new projects. It was an opportunity for media artists from across the territory to showcase their talents; to encourage new entrants in the sector; and to build below-the-line production skills that will increase the capacity of our local industry.

It is precisely why our government, through the Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment; Education Culture and Employment; and the NWT Film Commission, are committed to supporting events like this. It offers yet another step in our mandate for greater economic diversity.

Mr. Speaker, the talent showcased at this year's festival underscores how far our film sector has come since the start of this Legislative Assembly. We have more producers in this territory than ever. We have a professional media association working in tandem with our Film Commission to promote our territory on the global stage. We have made-in-the-NWT films making waves in the festival scene and even realizing distribution contracts.

We have celebrated NWT filmmakers like Keith Robertson, who got his start at the Dead North Film Festival, moving on to a fellowship at the Banff Centre For The Arts And Creativity and even more success within the film industry. We continue to see award-winners like Yellowknife's France Benoit telling our NWT stories on the world scene.

To support the industry our government has developed the Film Apprenticeship Program in partnership with the NWT Professional Media Association, and enhanced the funding available to filmmaker. We have also partnered with producers and the industry to market our territory and its talent to Canada, and the world.

But Mr. Speaker, the credit really needs to go to the industry. The drive and resourcefulness demonstrated by the territory's pioneers and leaders are second-to-none. In some ways, the Dead North Film Festival, which is the only circumpolar film festival in the world that offers an excellent demonstration of the grit and determination that sets the North, and particularly the NWT film sector apart.

Our government will continue to support the film sector, push the media arts as a viable career path, and lay the groundwork for more growth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.