



**Independent
Media Arts Alliance**
**Alliance des arts
médiatiques indépendants**

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Major National Festival, ON COMMON GROUND, Promotes Indigenous Media Arts and Cross-Cultural Exchange

KELOWNA, B.C. – The Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art is pleased to announce a major cultural gathering to celebrate Indigenous film, video, audio and new media art by international, national and local artists from June 10 to June 15, 2008.

On Common Ground is the national media arts conference and festival of the Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA), a non-profit organization that serves some 12,000 independent artists and cultural workers across Canada.

An inclusive celebration supported by local Indigenous communities, *On Common Ground* will welcome hundreds of groundbreaking artists for screenings, exhibitions, performances, keynote speeches, panel discussions and an exciting array of other cross-cultural exchanges.

The **six-day festival** – organized in partnership with the Ullus Collective, an aboriginal media arts group based in Penticton, B.C., the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition, and UBC Okanagan – is the largest media arts event ever held in the British Columbia Interior.

Indigenous filmmakers will showcase stories about social issues, political histories and cultural traditions as a way to foster understanding between artists and audiences from all communities, says organizer Tracey Kim Bonneau, a member of the Syilx (Okanagan) Nation and chair of the Ullus Collective.

“Any time we can eat together, any time we can be festive and celebrate together it brings us ‘on common ground,’” says Bonneau. “To reach that common ground we want to ensure the festival is a place to freely engage in important issues that are sometimes not easy to discuss – topics like racism, equality, censorship and cultural survival.”

On Common Ground kicks off Tuesday, June 10 with a **feast and honoring** at the En’owkin Centre, an aboriginal educational and cultural institution in Penticton, where Alanis Obomsawin, one of Canada’s most distinguished documentary filmmakers and recent recipient of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement, will deliver a keynote address.

The festival continues at the Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna with **panel discussions** on improving the visibility of aboriginal artists, establishing cross-cultural partnerships, mediating identity issues and protecting intellectual property rights, a hot topic in First Nations communities that want to control use of their cultural heritage.

Evening screenings feature work by Canadian aboriginal filmmakers Gail Maurice, Darlene Naponse, Zoe Hopkins, Wanda Nanibush, Helen Haig Brown, Reil Munro, Finlay Harper, Bernice Morin and Martha Stiegman. As well, a regional video commission by Jayce Salloum and emerging artist Bracken H’anuse Corlett will premiere at the festival.

In conjunction with *On Common Ground*, the Alternator is presenting a **special program of exhibitions**, *Edges of Diversity*, which features work commissioned from three leading B.C.-based contemporary artists – Dana Claxton, Jayce Salloum and Henry Tsang.

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The Alternator will also exhibit its **commissioned project**, *Fault Lines*, from June 8 to June 17 in the Galleria of the Rotary Centre. It features new work by eight local video artists who consider potential impacts of emerging mass-media technologies on individuals, cultural traditions, social networks and power structures.

Jennifer Pickering, Artistic and Administrative Director of the Alternator, says the festival is a major coup for the Okanagan arts community, and it will encourage a climate of reconciliation between diverse communities.

“Although this project has been a tremendous amount of work for a small and under-funded artist-run centre, our board of directors is convinced that it is an important initiative that will not only provide much-needed dialogue, but also increase the Alternator’s national profile as a centre that dares to challenge the status quo.”

The festival wraps up Sunday, June 15 with a **free outdoor cultural celebration** with a youth focus, organized by the Westbank First Nation, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, the En’owkin Centre and the Alternator. The party starts at noon at the Rotary Centre and includes music, drumming, dancing, storytelling, a children’s choir, a craft market and a fashion show.

For registration please visit www.imaa.ca or contact Claudine Douaire at info@imaa.ca or (514) 522 8240. Registration closes Friday, May 30th.

For information, visit www.imaa.ca, e-mail ocg@alternatorgallery.com or call the Alternator at **(250) 868 2298**.

The Alternator Gallery for Contemporary art is grateful for the generous support of Arts Partners in Creative Development, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Regional District of the Central Okanagan, Service Canada, the Province of British Columbia, the Audain Foundation, the Hamber Foundation, SW Audio Visual and Tree Brewing.

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Editors: Please see attachment for detailed program schedule. Interviews and photo opportunities can be arranged by contacting Event Coordinator Dorothy Spahan at ocg@alternatorgallery.com or at (250) 868 2298.