

Tackling big issues through films

Locally-made videos debut at film festival

by Roxanna Thompson
Northern News Services
Lilidli Kue/Fort Simpson

An audience of approximately 50 people responded with laughter and applause as locally-made short films with both supportive and cautionary messages flickered across a screen.

The audience was packed into the Thomas Simpson School library during lunch hour on April 27 for the touring Reel Youth Film Festival. The festival was the follow-up to a video-making workshop held in the village last month.

In March, as part of a Department of Health and Social Services project, two facilitators with Reel Youth, a not-for-profit organization based in Vancouver, worked with four youths and four adults in the village to create films based on the theme of drug and alcohol awareness. Participants worked through the entire process of making a film from brainstorming to final editing.

The results, seven short films, debuted at the film festival along with six other films made by youths ages

19 and younger from across North America. Last Ride, a cautionary tale about the results of mixing snowmobiles and drinking, was Quinlan Kidd's favourite.

Kidd was one of the students from Thomas Simpson School who participated in the project. Using chalkboard drawings and stop motion animation, Last Ride shows a group of people partying and drinking and one driving away on a snowmobile only to meet a tragic end after plunging over a steep hill.

The group came up with the idea for the film after thinking about how people still drive their snowmobiles after drinking and often crash, said Kidd. The film, which ended with the caption "drinking and driving Ski-Doo's is mindless," lasted less than a minute but took two and a half hours to film.

Kidd, who started his own film label - Shadow Point - to make primarily skateboard films, said the workshop helped him improve his filming techniques. "I had a great experi-



Michael Gast, left, Tyler Sibbeston, Victoria Williams and Quinlan Kidd were among the developing filmmakers in Fort Simpson who had their videos screened in the touring Reel Youth Film Festival.

ence doing it," said Victoria Williams, one of the adults who took the workshop. Over the course of a week-end the adult group made four films in three languages, including English, South Slavic and Chipewyan with messages to encourage both youth

and adults to make healthy decisions. Videos are a great way to get messages across, said Williams who is hoping to do more filmmaking. The films, which will now be put online, struck a note with some members of the audience "I think they were really

powerful," said Pat Waugh. Waugh was particularly stuck by The Blair Twitch Project. The film, which was created by Aaron Nadia, Michael Gast and Kidd, stars Kidd as Arthur White, a teenager who goes on an overnight winter nature quest with

a supply of crack cocaine. Filmed in the same handheld camera style as the Blair Witch Project, the video ends with White freezing in the snowy woods. People do freeze to death here which makes the message a powerful one, Waugh said.

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