

The BTC 150 Vignettes Project

Bite-Size History Plays for All

Overview

When Col Moody brought the Royal Engineers in 1858 to establish the settlement that was to become New Westminster, his contingent included a theatre group. In spite of limited resources, one of the first things his men did was to build a “theatre”—that tradition lives on in New Westminster!

History can be dry as dust to many people—theatre makes it come alive, makes it real.

The Backroom Theatre Club is issuing a **Call for Plays** to the many playwrights in New Westminster to write short **play vignettes**, of about 10 minutes duration, on any New Westminster history theme of their choice. These vignettes will be produced throughout 2009 to celebrate New Westminster’s 150th anniversary.

It is expected that the vignettes will provide theatrical snapshots of what life was like in New Westminster in the past 150 years.

Project Objectives

The overarching objective of the BTC Vignettes Project is to be a fun, year-long series of events that will be:

- ◆ inclusive
- ◆ cross-generational
- ◆ free to enjoy (i.e. it will depend mainly on volunteers and in-kind donations)

With this project, the BTC will:

1. involve all citizens of New Westminster, thus increasing the appreciation of our historical heritage, and making it come alive
2. strive, as facilitator, to stage as many of these plays, as often as possible, throughout the NW 150 celebration year
3. collaborate with all theatre groups in New Westminster to put together theatre teams to present the plays
4. collaborate with other groups who are putting on events, to include the vignettes as part of the events
5. host acting workshops throughout the year to introduce new actors to the world of theatre, and using the vignettes as their “graduation” performance
6. actively encourage the many multicultural groups in New Westminster to participate in the project

Project Description

The BTC is issuing a Call for Plays to playwrights to write short vignettes on a New Westminster history theme of their choice.

A Vignette Project Committee will manage the project.

Detailed guidelines for the Call for Plays, including an example vignette and application form will be available on the Arts Council website.

No submissions will be turned down, unless they do not meet the BTC's history criteria. The vignette committee may provide feedback to the playwrights on their submitted vignettes to assist them to fine-tune their work.

At the end of the year, all the vignettes will be collected and published in a booklet form, together with a pictorial synopsis of the year's events. Each playwright will receive a free copy as a memento.

To keep the cost of the project to a minimum, the staging will be simplified. Many of the vignettes will be put on at the Backroom Theatre. The BTC will also look for staging opportunities in the different communities of New Westminster to provide broad access.

Marketing costs will be kept to a minimum by extensive use of the Internet, and collaborating with other groups and the City to promote the BTC 150 Vignettes Project in their newsletters and websites.

Historical Criteria

The BTC would like to give vignette writers as much flexibility as possible.

If a vignette is about an actual historical person or persons, then the vignette must use accurate historical facts and must not be slanderous.

If the vignette is fictitious, then it must still be historically accurate in terms of dress, customs of the day and physical location.

"...Amongst the other buildings, a store house used as a theatre was shewn us. It is of course exclusively for the Engineers - officers and men, and we hear the acting is admirable."

-- 6 march 1861, Sophia Cracroft