

**Is gambling
affecting your
priorities?**



Call our Help Line at
1-800-306-6789



*Healthy People.
A Healthy Province.*



Hbc proudly presents

AUDITIONS

Renowned accredited national college for actors, singers and dancers

March 2, DSI Centre

1998

CELEBRATING OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY

2008

To register: 250.595.9970
or admin@ccpacanada.com

Canada



Canada Trust

Investors Group

VICTORIA FOUNDATION

**LOOKING FOR A NEW GIG?
SINGERS WANTED.**

CANADIAN IDOL AUDITIONS
Saturday, February 17th &
Sunday, February 18th

Market Mall
8am - 4pm

INSTRUMENTS WELCOME

More information at idol.ctv.ca

bluesfestival



GLAMOUR? Oh yeah, we got that—just look at us!

Blues 101

**BLUES IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM TEACHES
MUSIC—AND MUCH MORE—TO LOCAL
STUDENTS** by Caitlin Ward

This year marks the Saskatoon Blues Society's (SBS) fifth annual Blues Festival, a testament to the hard work of a lot of dedicated Toon Town blues lovers. However, 2007 also marks the five-year anniversary of what's likely a slightly less-known SBS program—but one that's no less important in terms of both keeping the blues alive in Saskatoon, and opening some minds to the wider world. It's the Blues In The Schools program (BITS), and along with acting as a vehicle to get local students interested in the blues, it's also an extremely effective way of providing students with valuable education regarding racism, class conflict and music history, in an accessible and interesting format.

Blues In The Schools is an international youth outreach program dedicated to teaching school-age kids about blues and blues history. Though the program has existed in various incarnations for thirty years, it was only in 2002 that the SBS first began their own BITS program.

When the local program began, the SBS brought blues artists to Saskatoon to conduct workshops (called "Blues 101"), including such notables as Fruteland Jackson—the so-called "Grandfather of Blues In The Schools"—and Big Bill Morganfield (son of Muddy Waters, and a well-renowned bluesman in his own right). In more recent years, Blues 101 has been hosted by local blues musicians such as Randy Hawryliw (known in blues circles as Freight Train Wayne).

In terms of educating students about the blues as a style of music, SBS board member Gord MacAulay points out that the genre has often been misunderstood.

"Most people think of blues

music as sad music—like, 'I got the blues,'" he says. "But most blues is actually quite happy. It's real life music. What people see, feel, and do."

In many ways, the visceral nature of the blues makes it the ideal musical genre to communicate larger ideas about society and humanity. BITS is a multidimensional program that aims to teach youth about history, sociology, and music through the medium of the blues.

"The blues is really the only musical form that originated in North America, and it's branched out in many places. That's something to be proud of," MacAulay says. "Its history is inseparable from North American history—it's the history of the hardships suffered by African American slaves, the lives of pioneers, of working men and women."

BITS takes that history and uses it to discuss larger social issues. Blues 101 mixes performance and lecture together to create a presentation that touches on difficult concepts, most notably racism.

"It's really easy for people to understand the discrimination that blacks have suffered. Kids really get that," MacAulay says. "So we can take that, and then say, 'okay, so how does that apply to First Nations people in Canada? How does that apply to the way people treat Moslems?' We've had a very positive response from teachers who've told us that after Blues 101, their classes have had really lively discussions about intolerance."

Blues In The Schools is most high profile around the time of the Blues Festival, when SBS invites a musician or group to be "musicians-in-residence" for the duration of the festival. During the week, SBS offers

ten presentations to schools throughout the city. This year's bluesmen in residence are the New Brunswick band Glamourpuss, who offer a unique opportunity for BITS in that they're the first bilingual musicians-in-residence for the Saskatoon program.

"We're really excited to be able to offer meaningful presentations in French," MacAulay says. "We've had a lot of interest from schools."

The group will split up throughout the week in order to offer varied presentations. Glamourpuss pianist Roger Cormier will be doing a special workshop called "Colour of Keyboards," which will teach the history of the blues and piano. MacAulay hopes this particular presentation will expose students to the varied aspects of piano playing.

"A lot of kids are put in piano lessons because that's what they're supposed to do, and it's not always a great experience," he says. "We want to show the different colours—different flavours—of the keyboard. There's so much more to the piano than just classical music."

Ultimately, Blues In The Schools hopes to educate students about independence and choice—both in terms of music and their view of society as a whole.

"We want to say, 'listen to all sorts of music, then decide what you like,'" MacAulay says. "Don't listen to something because your friends decided that Britney Spears was cool. We want to show kids all sorts of different directions, to help instill some confidence so that they can make their own choices, instead of just following the crowd."

HAVE YOUR SAY:
feedback@planetsmag.com

