

*For Immediate Release*

## **2016 BUFFYS A SOLD OUT SUCCESS THAT CELEBRATED THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ARTS COMMUNITY**

(Fort McMurray, AB – October 28, 2016) On October 22, Arts Council Wood Buffalo (ACWB) transformed the Suncor Energy Centre for Performing Arts into an extraordinary scene, created to amaze all the guests of the inaugural Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards. The sold out “Midnight Circus” themed awards showcase event treated guests to a breathtaking evening that included several high energy performances from a variety of disciplines, a visual arts display, a delectable assortment of carnival foods and for the main act, the presentation of 13 awards.

The Arts Awards, AKA the “Buffys”, were presented to 13 local artists who have shown outstanding achievement and accomplishment in the arts. Each award was hand crafted by local Aboriginal artist Kathleen Marsel. The 2016 award categories and winners are Arts Administration - Ana Maria Mendez; Arts Education - Marie Gazzard; Creative Collaboration - “Fanny & Manny Tie the Knot” dinner theatre by Theatre; Just Because and Waypoints; Dance - Kim Hurley; Fine Craft - Leo Parent; Literary Arts - Kevin Thornton; Media Arts - Sean McLennan; Music - Dan Gillies; Theatre - Michelle Thorne; Visual Arts - Carol Breen; Traditional Aboriginal Arts - Lily Marcel; Rising Star - Avery Rex; and Arts Champion - Loraine Humphrey. 12 of the categories were open to nominations from the community, while the Arts Champion recipient was chosen by the ACWB board of directors to acknowledge an individual, small business, corporation, social profit, or foundation which has strengthened arts and culture in Wood Buffalo through their support and commitment to the sector in the past year.

The focus of the Arts Awards event is to celebrate the achievements of local artists through an artist showcase and to place tangible value on the essential role the arts play in creating a balanced community. The showcase included a visual art display, live theatrical performances, film, instrumental music, song, poetry, duets, and collaborations from different performing arts disciplines. The audience was made up of members from all facets of the community, not just the arts.

Diana Moser, interim executive director, explains that “ACWB's mandate is to champion investment in the arts in the region and the Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards is designed to do exactly that. The Buffys provide artists with an opportunity to build their portfolios through the recognition gained as an award nominee and recipient, as well as by performing or exhibiting during the showcase event.” The Arts Awards is an annual program that will continue to recognize the achievement and accomplishments of the arts in the region year to year, invest in the future of the growing arts community, and allow artists to compete and thrive within the region and even beyond the borders of Wood Buffalo. “We look forward to the partnership opportunities and relationships we will continue to build to make the awards and the showcase event an on-going meaningful experience for our community,” says Moser.

ACWB thanks the 2016 Arts Awards sponsors, the team at SECPA, the event coordinators, various partners, all the artists, the volunteers, ACWB staff and board, and of course, the Wood Buffalo community.

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*Arts Council Wood Buffalo is a social profit organization that supports and promotes arts activity, development, and exploration in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.*