

# PEOPLE



Contributed photo

These Highland dancers - Danielle Truscott, Makayla Bergen, Melynda Bergen and Christa Powers - along with their teacher Heather McCracken, recently returned from the 2006 ScotDance Canada championship series in Calgary. Dancers were entered from all over Canada, the US and Scotland, making it the largest Highland dancing competition in the world. The local dancers placed very well in their age categories, bringing home numerous medals long with fond memories and new friends.



Contributed photo

**Photo left, dancers from the Move Dance Centre recently returned from competitions in Red Deer, Edmonton as well as competing here in Fort St John. The group of 30 students proved themselves against as many as 25 other studios bringing home mostly gold medals as well as some overall awards to be proud of. Students at The Move will be showcasing their talents at the North Peace Cultural Centre June 4th and 5th.**

## Jellison returns again for a jazz dance session

**MATT MOLLOY**  
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Professional dancer and local boy L.J. Jellison left Fort St. John Tuesday morning after conducting a successful jazz dance seminar at The Move Dance Centre.

Jellison, along with a number of other professional dancers, conducted a week-long summer camp at Studio 2 Stage in August.

"This was very similar but it was strictly jazz," said Karen Schoepp, who works in office management at The Move Dance Centre. "He also did some group choreography that we will use at a competition."

Participating in different seminars in the Energetic City within four months means a lot of travel for Jellison, but his presence proves that local dancers can make it if they have the right attitude and skill set.

"I think it's great. He had a really good start here and was able to take his dancing out there in major cities," said Schoepp.

"He's in New York now and he had a studio in Las Vegas, and he loves to come back to teach what he has learned."

When asked how the kids responded to Jellison, Schoepp said

they simply loved what they learned and the environment it was taught in.

"Obviously he brings a lot of energy," said Schoepp with a laugh. "Every one of the kids simply fell in love with him. He was so good with the kids and even had nicknames for all of them. But at the same time he taught them so much and they came out of it knowing so much more – just new things that he got out of being in the city."

Besides showing what hard work and dedication can do for a local dancer, Jellison's appearance may draw more male dancers to The Move Dance Centre, which only has a few registered males.

"I think there are a lot of guys who would like to try it, but I'd say it's the northern mentality – so it's very hard for them," said Schoepp. "There is some break-dancing going on, which brings hip-hop in, which is a great way for the guys to start because it's more street."

The Move Dance Centre, which is a non-profit organization, is busy preparing for one of their biggest fundraisers of the year – their Christmas basket sale.

The baskets are available now until Christmas and can be purchased by calling Schoppe at the Move Dance Centre at 787-7754.

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—Karen Schoppe



Sonya Beale leaps through the air during the final jazz dance session that was taught by L.J. Jellison.

Matt Molloy/AHN

# ARTS



photo courtesy Fort St. John Community Arts Council

Pictured from left to right are Caitlin Beale, Michaela Wandling and Shannon May, three local dancers from Studio 2 Stage who have been recently accepted to study next summer at Canada's two most prestigious ballet schools. Caitlin will go to the National Ballet of Canada and Michaela Wandling and Shannon May are going to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

# Arts spotlight is focused on our youth

FORT ST. JOHN — December focuses the arts spotlight on our youth.

School musicals, choral concerts, dance school recitals, and school Christmas concerts take to the stage at the North Peace Cultural Centre. Children are busy in art classes making crafts to hang on trees and talented young artists such as those from the School District No. 60 band and Watt School of Irish Dance are performing at many social gatherings this month.

Music, theatre, visual and literary arts programming are available to youth in Fort St. John and we have come to expect high standards from our instructors and students. Fort St. John has excellent dance studios with Studio 2 Stage, The Move Dance Centre, Watt School of Irish Dance, Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance and Heather McCracken School Highland Dance providing professional instruction for youth in hip hop, ballet, tap, contemporary, Irish and Scottish Highland Dance

and even break dancing. Fort St. John also boasts a Fine Arts School, Ecole Central Elementary School of the Arts, and Artspace classes for children in the Cultural Centre. Musical opportunities for children in both voice and instrument are available through the School Band Program and the North Peace Music Teachers Association.

North Peace Secondary School students shone this past week in their production of Mikado. The talent of our artistic youth is of such a high caliber, often these youngsters move out of Fort St. John and perform at a regional, provincial, national and sometimes world level. On Dec. 21, Stephen Barradell and Katherine Eady — two promising young singers from Victoria — will be presenting a recital, On the Stairs, at the North Peace Cultural Centre. They will be singing Mozart, Verdi, Monteverdi, Schumann and more. Both singers are currently studying at the Victoria Conservatory, as well

as developing their professional careers. Stephen Barradell is originally from Fort St. John and his voice is captivating. Many will remember Stephen for the role he played in South Pacific, a past NPSS musical production.

Josue Laboucane, who starred in the NPSS production, The King and I, is now acting professionally in Vancouver. He was featured recently on CBC for playing Horatio in the Bard on the Beach production of Hamlet. A once quiet student from Fort St. John is now a confident rising star in Vancouver.

The Watt School of Dance students consistently qualify to compete in Ireland every April at the world level. Carmen Timmins, Amanda O'Toole, Emmett McCormack, Ciara Watt and Aisling Watt have all gone on to dance with Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance Troupe. Crystal McDonald left Fort St. John to join With Celtic Fire based in San Francisco, California.

Studio 2 Stage ballet students annual-

ly audition and are accepted to study at the prestigious Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the National Ballet School. Fort St. John dancer, Tiffany Bilodeau, studied and graduated from the Royal Winnipeg School and now dances with Ballet Kelowna Troupe and tours the province. Two students, Shannon May and Michaela Wandling have recently been accepted to attend summer school at Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Caitlin Beale will attend the National Ballet of Canada.

The arts teach our youth about discipline, athleticism, public performance, and musical skill and luckily some local artists stay in Fort St. John and mentor the youth. Ashley Okrainec, a former national tap dancer, teaches at The Move Dance Centre and Shaelan Pomeroy teaches at The Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance. The arts are intended for an audience, and this month there are many opportunities to celebrate the talent of our youth.