



Immediate Release

Laura Robinson receives Debwewin Citation for journalism excellence

GARDEN RIVER FN (November 9, 2010) - Laura Robinson, an outspoken advocate for First Nation access to performance-level sports facilities, is the seventh winner of the Debwewin Citation for excellence in reporting on First Nations issues.

Robinson was accredited to report on the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games for the Anishinabek News, published by the Union of Ontario Indians for the 40 member communities of the Anishinabek Nation. She produced articles before, during, and after the Olympics about Anishinabek and First Nations participants in Games-related cultural activities, and a number of stories and columns that questioned the lack of even a single aboriginal member of the Canadian team.

Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee presented the award during a special fall assembly of the Anishinabek Nation.

"Debwewin means 'truth' in our language," said Madahbee, "and these awards celebrate First Nation and other journalists in our territory who do outstanding jobs of telling our stories – something mainstream media have not historically done very well. We congratulate Laura Robinson on her contributions."

Robinson's writing credits include the play Niigaanibotawaad: Front Runners, which has been made into a film about ten young First Nation residential school survivors who ran the Pan American Games torch from Minnesota to Winnipeg in 1967, only to be told they were not allowed to bring it into the Pan Am Games stadium.

Toronto Sun columnist Mark Bonokoski and freelance writer/cartoonist Perry McLeod-Shabogesic of Nipissing First Nation were awarded Honourable Mention citations.

McLeod-Shabogesic has been a frequent contributor to the Anishinabek News, including coverage of this year's Anishinaabemowin Teg language conference, and his Baloney and Bannock cartoon panels are among the newspaper's most popular features.

Mark Bonokoski's "Red Road" – a 15-part Sun Media special report – probed the tragic human consequences behind Canada's collective failure to confront socio-economic challenges facing urban First Nations citizens.

The Debwewin Citation top award was first presented in 2002 to Toronto Star journalist Peter Edwards for his reporting on the events that led to the 1996 death of Anthony "Dudley"

UNION OF ONTARIO INDIANS

Head Office: Nipissing First Nation
P.O. Box 711 North Bay, Ontario P1B 8J8
Phone: (705) 497-9127 Fax: (705) 497-9135
E-mail: info@anishinabek.ca <http://www.anishinabek.ca>



Anishinabek

George in Ipperwash Provincial Park. Winners have included Lynn Johnston, who introduced Anishinabek characters and communities into the storyline of her world-famous comic strip "For Better or For Worse".

Anyone may submit a nomination for the awards, but nominations must be seconded by Anishinabek Nation citizens.

Debwewin is an eastern Ojibwe word which translates into "truth" in English, but which literally means "speaking from the heart". Truth is one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinabek people, who believe that living a good life can only be accomplished through wisdom (nbwaakaswin), love (zaagidwin), respect (mnaadendmowin), bravery (aakdehewin), honesty (gwekwaadziwin), humility (dbaadendiziwin), and truth (debwewin).

According to the Debwewin Citation terms of reference, "For journalists, "truth" should mean more than accuracy; it also implies fairness, balance and context."

Rationale for the Debwewin Citations:

Due to the deficiencies of mainstream education curricula, most Canadians have been exposed to inaccurate and incomplete portrayals of aboriginal culture, tradition, and contemporary issues. As a result, mainstream media reporting is the primary public education source for information about Native issues, often with disastrous results.

"Aboriginal people are not well-represented by or in the media. Many Canadians know aboriginal people only as noble environmentalists, angry warriors, or pitiful victims. A full picture of their humanity is simply not available in the media. Mainstream media do not reflect aboriginal realities very well, nor do they offer much space to aboriginal peoples to tell their own stories."

– Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 40 member First Nations across Ontario. The Union of Ontario Indians is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact.

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For more information: Marci Becking
Communications Officer
Union of Ontario Indians
Phone: (705) 497-9127 (ext. 2290)
Cell: (705) 494-0735
E-mail: becmar@anishinabek.ca
Follow AnishNation on Twitter

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