



## **The AFN's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala**

November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008

For immediate release - Nanaimo, B.C.

On **Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup>**, Nanaimo's Francophone Association (L'AFN) celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Gala evening at the **Grand Hotel** in Nanaimo.

The celebratory festivities began with a champagne toast, which set the mood of true French flair for the remainder of the evening. A delicious maple flavoured banquet dinner was appreciated by the 150 guests, as was the local entertainment which ranged from cool jazz by the Nico Rhodes Trio; to graceful ballads by 9 year old Mario Mercier and Miss Nanaimo Ambassador Brittany Hannah; and culminating with Parisian torch songs by Joëlle Rabu and her band.

Among the many Nanaimo residents and AFN members present, were provincial government representatives, municipal politicians, and delegates from the B.C. Federation of Francophones who were in town over the weekend for their bi-annual Rendezvous of the Presidents.

The Gala evening provided an opportunity for BC Minister of Intergovernmental relations, Joan McIntyre, to announce a \$65,000 contribution from the Province of British Columbia to the Association des Francophones de Nanaimo, which will support the 2009 Maple Sugar Festival and tourism promotion projects. The funding to support these programs is provided under the Canada-B.C. Cooperation Agreement on Official Languages.

The Gala was, for the Francophone community, a great opportunity to share its joie de vivre with the community at large while highlighting the AFN's many achievements over the past three decades, most notably the Maple Sugar Festival du Sucre d'Érable now entering its 9<sup>th</sup> year and recognized as one of the most vibrant bilingual events in Western Canada. A new initiative, honouring exemplary individuals and volunteers who are considered the heart the Festival, was officially introduced during the celebrations. Twenty citizens became the first recipients of the Order of Toffy (the Festival's mascot) and the Order's theme song, composed by Joëlle Rabu, was premiered.

Launched simultaneously was the AFN's revamped website, which can be viewed at [www.francophonenanaimo.org](http://www.francophonenanaimo.org).

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