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World Touch Cultural Heritage Week

Summary: The 36th annual World Touch Cultural Heritage Week will offer a tour through a diversity of cultures, presented by way of fashion, writing, song, humor, food and more. The public is welcome to attend these events, which will be held on campus Monday through Saturday, March 23-28.

(March 12, 2009)-By Ruth Hamberg '09 -- The 36th annual World Touch Cultural Heritage Week (WTCH week) will offer a tour through a diversity of cultures, presented by way of fashion, writing, song, humor, food and more. The public is welcome to attend these events, which will be held on campus Monday through Saturday, March 23-28.

The theme of this year's event, "Diversity Is Yours To Discover," is an invitation to investigate the diversity that surrounds us. In planning the logo, student designer Katie Froiland "immediately thought of a magnifying glass" (shown below). During WTCH Week, speakers, entertainers, students and community members unite around the goal of recognizing and celebrating diversity. "I think that World Touch Cultural Heritage Week is not only a learning experience but also a way to bring everyone together," said Froiland, a junior who's majoring in computer science.

"World Touch Cultural Heritage Week was my introduction to the campus last year, when I started my job here," added Hilda Ladner, assistant to the chancellor for equity and diversity and director of the Multi-Ethnic Student Program at Morris. "I remain completely impressed by the quality and quantity of events and by the campus commitment to this long-standing week of cultural celebration and education. World Touch Cultural Heritage Week, now in its 36th year, demonstrates our strong tradition of valuing diversity at UMM."

"Global Fashion Rocks the Runway" will open the festivities on Monday, March 23, at 7 p.m. in Oyate Hall. There will be a display of traditional and contemporary fashion, as well as a design competition sponsored by Fashion Cents, a downtown Morris business. Entertainment will include a belly dance act, a tribute to late fashion icon and songstress Selena, and D.J. Snuggles with Adonis Frasier and Toki Wright from Minneapolis hip-hop group The C.O.R.E. Admission is \$3.

Sandra Benitez, bi-lingual author and motivational speaker, will deliver the keynote address, "The Saving Grace of Stories," on Tuesday, March 24, at 11:30 a.m. in Edson Auditorium. Benitez is the author of four novels. In 2004, she received the National Hispanic Heritage Award for literature at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Also in 2004, Hispanic Business Magazine named her one of 100 Influential Hispanics in the U.S. In the address, she will share the story of how she started to write at the age of 39 and affirm that we are never too late to begin doing what we have passion for. A question and answer session, along with a book sale and signing, will follow the presentation. This event is co-sponsored by United Latinos.

All are invited to participate in the 25th annual Circle of Nations Indian Association (CNIA) 3K Peace Run. NOTE: Due to weather, the Peace Run is being rescheduled to next week on Thursday, April 2, at 3 p.m. The run will begin on Cougar Circle in front of the Multi-Ethnic Resource Center. Registration fee is \$7 and includes a shirt as long as supply lasts.

Also on Wednesday, John Trudell (Santee Sioux) will be in Edson Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Trudell is an acclaimed poet, national recording artist, actor and activist whose international following reflects the universal language of his words, work and message. He was a spokesperson for the Indians of All Tribes occupation of Alcatraz Island from 1969 to 1971 and served as chairman of the American Indian Movement (AIM) from 1973 to 1979. In 1982, Trudell began recording his poetry to traditional Native music and in 1983 released his debut album, "Tribal Voice," on his own Peace Company label. Trudell has also played roles in a number of feature films, including a major part in Sherman Alexie's "Smoke Signals." This event is co-sponsored by CNIA.

Stand-up comedian Eliot Chang will perform a one-hour comedy show at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 26, in Edson Auditorium, followed by a diversity question and answer workshop, titled "Asians in the Media." Chang is featured on Comedy Central's Hotlist 2009 he attended medical school and worked as a Wall Street stockbroker before breaking into comedy. TV appearances include Comedy Central's "Premium Blend," MTV's "FN MTV," and NBC's "Law & Order SVU." This event is co-sponsored by the Asian Student Association.

United Latinos will co-sponsor the annual invitational World Touch Cultural Heritage Week Closing Dinner at 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 27, in Oyate Hall. Graduates of the Multi-Ethnic Student Program will be honored.

The West African drum group Hayor Bibimma will perform in Edson Auditorium on Friday, March 27, at 7 p.m. The Twin Cities-based group is directed by renowned drummer and dancer Francis Kofi, a dancer and master drummer with the Ghana Dance ensemble for many years, originally based at the University of Ghana. Since then, he has dedicated himself to bringing cultural awareness to local communities through drumming and dance workshops, classes, and performance. This event is co-sponsored by Black Student Union.

The 25th Annual CNIA Powwow brings the week to a close on Saturday, March 28. The Powwow will be held in the P.E. Center gymnasium with grand entries at noon and 7 p.m.

Photo by Nic McPhee: CNIA Powwow

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.