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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications  
Phone: 320-589-6414, [weberm@morris.umn.edu](mailto:weberm@morris.umn.edu)

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer  
Phone: 320-589-6068, [jrray@morris.umn.edu](mailto:jrray@morris.umn.edu)

**Film director Chris Eyre to kick off 31st Annual World Touch Cultural Heritage Week**

*Summary:*

(March 10, 2004)-Director of three films, including his groundbreaking screenplay “Smoke Signals,” Chris Eyre will be the keynote speaker to kick off the 31st Annual World Touch Cultural Heritage Week at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Eyre will speak at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 22, in Edson Auditorium of the UMM Student Center.

This year’s World Touch Cultural Heritage Week theme is “Cultural Preservation through the Indigenous Peoples of the World.”

Eyre, an Indian of Cheyenne-Arapaho descent, grew up as the adoptive son of white parents in Portland, Ore. After graduating with a master’s degree from New York University, Eyre became inspired by Sherman Alexie’s book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and eventually co-created the screenplay “Smoke Signals.”

Eyre is also known for his other film “Skins,” and television production “Skinwalkers,” based on the book by Tony Hillerman. His films will be shown as a preview to the week’s events. “Smoke Signals” will be shown at 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. Wednesday, March 17, in Edson Auditorium. “Skins” will be shown at 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. Thursday, March 18, also in Edson. Eyre’s presentation is co-sponsored by the Campus Activities Council Convocations Committee.

The mission of CAC Convocations is to challenge conventional thought and promote a diverse community by presenting a year-long series of various speakers and events.

The views expressed by the visiting speakers of the UMM Convocations Series do not necessarily reflect the views of the Regents of the University of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota, Morris students, staff or faculty, or the UMM Convocations Committee.

Diversity consultant, Hmong storyteller, comedian, and rap artist, Tou Ger Xiong, will provide pre-World Touch Cultural Heritage Week entertainment at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 18, in Oyate Hall of the Student Center. Xiong says that his program is not so much about diversity training as it is a cultural experience. Through laughing, listening and learning, he hopes to help people learn about culture and the issues of diversity.

On Tuesday, March 23, author Christina Garcia will speak at 7:30 p.m. in Edson Auditorium. Author of *Dreaming in Cuban*, *The Aguero Sisters*, and the recent popular hit *Monkey Hunting*, Garcia is a powerful speaker whose work illuminates the complexities of multicultural identities and details her outlook on exile and the immigrant experience.

Mixed Blood Theatre will perform “Daughters of Africa,” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 24. The performance is an eye-opening history of African American women from slave ship survivors to stars of the silver screen.

Also on Wednesday, the film, “Ringu,” Japan’s all-time box office horror hit, will be shown at 9 p.m. in the Science

Auditorium.

The 21st Annual Circle of Nations Indian Association 3K Peace Run will begin at 3 p.m. Thursday, March 25, in front of the Minority Resource Center on the campus Mall. Later that evening, at 7:30 p.m. in Turtle Mountain Café, Denise Sweet, associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, will give a poetry reading.

Poet, creative communications consultant, and associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Denise Sweet will give a poetry reading at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, in the Turtle Mountain Café, UMM Student Center. An Anishinaabe (akd Ojibwe) enrolled at White Earth, Sweet has presented over 200 public readings throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, and Great Britain.

An invitational Ethnic Dinner will be held at 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 26, in Oyate Hall. Graduates of the Minority Student Program at UMM will be recognized. Following dinner, an inter-organizational dance mixer, at which individual ethnic dancers will perform, will be held.

World Touch Cultural Heritage Week will culminate on Saturday, March 27, with the annual CNIA Pow-wow. Grand entries will begin at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. in the P.E. Center.

Unless otherwise specified, World Touch Cultural Heritage Week events are free and open to the public.

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](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.