



For Immediate Release
May 31, 2007

Scotiabank Wins Certificate of Creative Excellence from US International Film and Video Festival

Scotiabank has been awarded a Certificate of Excellence by the US International Film and Video Festival for its locally produced video-drama, *A Letter to Pearl*. The story was dramatised by internationally acclaimed storyteller, Amina Blackwood Meeks, and formed part of resource material given to over 285 schools participating in Scotiabank's recent Speak Up! Speak Out! National Primary Schools HIV and AIDS Debating Competition.

A Letter to Pearl is an innovative and creative take on the age-old Jamaican tradition of storytelling and a simple presentation of a childhood pleasure – the bedtime story. Reworking a Macmillan Caribbean original, *A Letter to Pearl* was translated into Patois and told in the rich, lyrical voice of Mrs Blackwood-Meeks, herself a master storyteller. *A Letter to Pearl* was shot in the lush setting of the Hope Botanical Gardens in Kingston with the magnificence of the Blue Mountains as a natural backdrop.

Schools received the two stories including a *Letter to Pearl* via audio, video and DVD tapes as part of supporting resource material in the Debating Competition, which was launched in December 2006. With the lyricism of Amina Blackwood-Meeks's delivery, illustrations from Macmillan Caribbean and music composed by Grub Cooper, one of Jamaica's most talented musicians, the primary school aged audience was immediately gripped by the video presentation. The Competition, which culminated on May 19, 2007, succeeded in raising children's awareness of HIV and AIDS and reduced Stigma associated with disease.

Produced with the co-operation of the book's publishers, Macmillan Caribbean, the stories were brought to life by Zoë Welsh, Programme Production Specialist at Scotiabank. Ms Welsh explained that there was no better way to get kids to listen to messages of HIV and AIDS awareness and anti stigmatisation than through the telling powerful stories based on real life human experience. She added that her inspiration in developing the stories came from "wanting to recreate the wonder and amazement of story times from my own childhood. Throughout, I fought to keep the execution simple, for me the subject matter was gripping enough; I was convinced the story could hold an audience without trying to be clever in the dramatisation and production."

President and CEO of Scotiabank William E Clarke noted that Scotiabank was proud to have organised the Debating Competition, and explained, "It was the most intensive and rewarding educational initiative that Scotiabank has undertaken. We are very pleased that

we were able to initiate discussions among students, teachers and parents on a most sensitive and ‘taboo’ topic.” The competition is expected to return for its 2nd staging in the 2007-2008 academic year.

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For more information, contact:

Simone Hull
Public Relations Specialist
Public, Corporate & Government Affairs
Scotiabank Centre
Tel: 932.0549; Mobile: 322.3233

Joylene Griffiths Irving
Director
Public, Corporate & Government Affairs
Scotiabank Centre
Tel: 932.0565; Mobile: 909.5211