



## Yorkton Film Festival

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### **WAPOS BAY: RAIDERS OF THE LOST ART**

Wapos Bay Productions / National Film Board of Canada

Category: Documentary: Children's Production

Producer: Anand Ramayya, Dennis Jackson, Melanie Jackson, Derek Mazur

Director: Dennis Jackson

Running Time: 24:00

This review should be prefaced by noting a definite soft spot in terms of animation in general and stop-action animation in particular. This preference probably goes back to watching Gumby and Pokey as a kid, although that is something I wouldn't tell everyone.

So that brings us to Wapos Bay. This is a show that should really have a far higher profile than it does, in particular here in Saskatchewan where it is produced.

I recall interviewing Dennis and Melanie Jackson a few years back after the Wapos Bay Christmas Special did well at the Yorkton Film Festival. At the time, the show was a pilot of a then just dreamed of series. Fortunately, the pair were able to forge ahead and the series was born.

We often hear a lot in this province about the fact that Corner Gas and Little Mosque on the Prairie have been filmed here. While it is great that they are shot here, it seems we push locally created series to the back burner as we enthuse over the bigger broadcaster productions.

That is too bad because we really should celebrate efforts such as Wapos Bay, which brings me back to the Raiders of the Lost Art episode. In general terms, Wapos Bay tells stories that have a message. These stories are told through the cast of characters in Wapos Bay, a fictional First Nation community in Northern Canada. In the Lost Art episode, a school bird-watching group stumbles upon ancient Aboriginal hieroglyphs which are seen as both an important historical and cultural find.

At the same time, Wapos Bay is being hit by graffiti and three young boys, the central characters of the series, set off to 'finger' the culprits.

Along the way they get helped by the Three Norsemen, a set of characters which borrows directly from the Lone Gunmen (the reoccurring trio from X-Files), which is a nice touch for adult viewers. The show is overall more geared to children of course.

In the end the graffiti artists are found out. Instead of being punished, they get to do a school mural because art is seen to be important based on the hieroglyphic find. It's a neat way to tie the two ideas together and truly makes one wonder if well done graffiti is really just a social statement much as ancient cave rock paintings were to a different era. The story is well done, the animation excellent and the message positive. That makes the film a winner, just as it took the Golden Sheaf for Children's Production this year.

By Calvin Daniels