



*For Immediate Release*

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## **Mo`olelo Receives \$30,000 Grant from The James Irvine Foundation**

**Funds will commission playwright Chantal Bilodeau to write a play  
on race, poverty and environment**

**Thursday, June 18, 2009 - San Diego, CA** - Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company, San Diego's community-focused, socially-conscious, Equity theater company, today announced The James Irvine Foundation has awarded the Company a \$30,000 grant over two years to commission a new play by Chantal Bilodeau. This grant is made as part of the Irvine Foundation's Creative Connections Fund, which was designed to reach small and midsize arts organizations pursuing a diversity of projects and ideas.

The funds will support the commissioning, work-shopping and development of an original script by Ms. Bilodeau that focuses on the contemporary debate over the Northwest Passage and the intersection of climate change, commercial opportunity and the survival of Inuit peoples native to the region. Through the play development process, Mo`olelo will engage San Diego's Native American populations and environmental organizations to contribute to the evolution of the script through public readings and discussions.

Mo`olelo launched a greening initiative in 2007 to identify how theater can be created without damaging the long-term health of our communities and the environment. In addition, central to Mo`olelo's mission is to select plays that focus on diverse communities and allow the Company to engage local, nontraditional theater audiences.

"Commissioning this play will provide an opportunity for Mo`olelo to draw the connection between issues of race, class and the environment," said Seema Sueko, Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Mo`olelo. "This will allow us to support on stage, through content, the greening work we are doing backstage."

The commission will launch in July 2009, with a first workshop and public reading of the script tentatively scheduled for June 2010. Revisions and adjustments will be made and a second workshop and public reading is scheduled for May 2011. The script is expected to be completed by June 2011.

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**Chantal Bilodeau** is a playwright and translator originally from Montreal, Canada. Her plays include *Pleasure & Pain* (Magic Theatre; Foro La Gruta and Teatro La Capilla, Mexico City), *The Motherline* (Ohio University; University of Miami), *Tagged* (Ohio University; Alleyway Theatre), as well as several shorts that have been presented by Brass Tacks Theatre, City Theatre Company, The Met Theater, Philadelphia Dramatists, Raw Impressions, and Women's Project. She has been a fellow in the Women's Project Playwrights' Lab, the Lark Playwrights Workshop and at the Dramatists Guild and has received grants from NYSCA, the Canada Council for the Arts, Stichting LIRA Fonds (The Netherlands), the Quebec Government House, Étant Donnés: The French-American Fund for the Performing Arts and Association Beaumarchais (France). Her translations include plays by Quebec playwrights Larry Tremblay and Catherine Léger, French-African playwright Koffi Kwahulé and Jean Cocteau. Current projects include the book for the musical *The Quantum Fairies* in collaboration with composer Lisa DeSpain and lyricist Mindi Dickstein and the translation of four more plays by Koffi Kwahulé.

**The James Irvine Foundation** is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society. The Foundation's grantmaking focuses on three program areas: Arts, California Democracy and Youth. Since 1937 the Foundation has provided over \$1 billion in grants to more than 3,000 nonprofit organizations throughout California. With \$1.4 billion in assets, the Foundation made grants of \$78 million in 2008 for the people of California.

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**About Mo'olelo** - *Mo'olelo* means *story* in Hawaiian. Selected as the inaugural Resident Theatre Company at La Jolla Playhouse, Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company is a socially-conscious theatre organization dedicated to broadening the scope of San Diego's cultural environment by telling powerful stories that are as diverse as the islands of Hawaii, by paying Equity wages to local actors and developing environmentally-friendly theatre practices. A recipient of the Patté, San Diego Theatre Critics Circle, McDonald Playwriting and the Anti-Discrimination Awards, its mission is to create new works based on research within various communities, produce lesser-known works by master and contemporary playwrights, and educate youth. To learn more, visit [www.moolelo.net](http://www.moolelo.net) or call 619-342-7395.