

Moose sighting

Canadian playwright's *Moose on the Loose* a slice of True North strong and free in L.A.

LOS ANGELES — If you let a moose loose in la-la land, will anyone even know what it is?

That's the question I asked of Los Angelenos who attended the world premiere of a bright new play called *Moose on the Loose*, a comedy about an Italian-Canadian immigrant family who hails from fictional Way Up Bay, Ont.

"I know what a moose is, of course, and I thought the play was very funny, but I was a little lost with some of the references to Canadian culture," said Michele Shultevoerder, who bought tickets to the production because she was attracted by the play's title.

Some of these "obscure" references include temperature in degrees Celsius (in L.A., it's measured in degrees Fahrenheit); Tim Hortons coffee (just Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts here); Molson Canadian beer (don't ask) and especially the tedium of having to take your snowy boots off before you enter the house and put them back on when you leave.

In the big picture, the play's moose — who gets trapped in someone's backyard — is a metaphor for the wave of immigrants who moved to Canada's most northern regions during the 20th Century and,



LINDA MASSARELLA

like the displaced moose, were trapped in another culture's backyard.

It is a testament to the feistiness and talent of Thunder Bay, Ont., born-and-raised playwright and actress Dina Morrone that she was able to mount this very Canadian piece of theatre in a city that can be rather culturally insulated.

Indeed, *Moose on the Loose* is playing in a good-sized theatre in Hollywood, is in the middle of a successful seven-week run and has attracted some top actors for the roles.

"When I wrote *Moose on the Loose*, I didn't try to change the Italian-Canadian dialogue and the references to make it sellable in Los Angeles. That's not what I do," said Morrone, who was last seen on the American and Canadian stage in her one-woman show, *The Italian in Me*. "But I live in Los Angeles and this is where I was able to get the world premiere."

Morrone, whose parents still live in Thunder Bay, makes her main living in L.A. doing commercial voice work.



Moose on the Loose playwright Dina Morrone.

The Canadian-ness of *Moose on the Loose* aside, theatregoers here have been attracted to the mad-cap story of a chaotic, but loving family trying to come to terms with issues of joblessness, isolation, an unmarried daughter's pregnancy and a son who won't get his lazy bum off the sofa.

The best thing about the play is the moose, who acts as the play's narrator. Really, the character of a beer-swilling, wry-humoured moose is a stroke of comical genius and keeps the audience in stitches.

Morrone, who had a hand in the casting, managed to

nab Eric Allan Kramer — who, among other things, currently stars as Bob Duncan in the popular Disney Channel series, *Good Luck Charlie* — for the role of the moose.

Kramer, 49, was an interesting choice because not only is he as big as a moose, his Canadian father, Mike, was a former football player with the Toronto Argonauts, and Kramer grew up in Canada.

Once the Los Angeles run ends next month, Morrone said she'll start contacting Canadian theatre companies in order to bring the production home.

"Do I want to show it in Toronto where the audience will understand everything?" the adorable Morrone gasps. "Absolutely!"

Linda Massarella, a Canadian writer in Los Angeles, writes every Sunday about notable Canadians living in L.A.

massarella.linda@yahoo.com



Cheap Smarm & Gossip WILL RETURN



John Cygan (foreground) plays an Italian-Canadian father who wants to kill a trapped moose for meat. The moose (Eric Allan Kramer) manages to talk him out of it.