



## EVENTS

### ANIMETHON RETURNS TO MACEWAN UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 5, 2017 | THAI SIRIKOONE



**Once a year, MacEwan University is overrun with big swords, sexy robots, and pointy hair.**

MacEwan hosted the 24th annual Animethon convention Aug. 11 through 13. The convention featured artists and performers including, among others, singer-songwriter Mika Kobayashi, voice actor Max Mittleman, and J-pop boy band The Sixth Lie. However, the convention finds its heart in the attendees.

Now is the best time to be a fan of Japanese culture. Between services like CrunchyRoll and Funimation, most anime shows are available online in near synchronicity with their official Japanese releases. Video games from Asia are increasingly available in the West due to publishers re-releasing classic games and making pushes to bring games to niche markets.

Fans in Edmonton are certainly not lacking in enthusiasm. Even Mayor Don Iveson and Consul-General of Japan Kunihiro Tanabe acknowledged Edmontonian fans' passion with friendly forewords in the Animethon program.







The Sixth Lie

Overall, the convention is made up of six different parts: guest events, special events, panels, video programming, gaming events, and miscellaneous events.

Among the events were anime viewing parties, tournaments for games, kimono fittings, tabletop games, merchandise vendors, and artists selling their works.

The "Artist Alley" that was set up in the Building 9 cafeteria during the convention is one of the busiest attractions that Animethon boasts. Multiple independent artists from around Canada came to display and sell their varying styles of fan art.

One illustrator, Mel Hohn, noted that she has always enjoyed vending at Animethon.

"This (was) my first ever convention in 2012 and it's always been the one I've been trying to get back to because it's one of my favourites. Everyone here is so nice. The people that walk by are so friendly," Hohn says.

"It's always definitely been a really good show for me. There's a lot of opportunities (to get) custom work from me as well, so it's possibly a way to improve yourself as an artist."

Aside from a few events, most panels are run by anime fans and enthusiasts, which brings a sense of tangible community to the busy convention.

Animethon has been a mainstay in Edmonton since 1994. As such, many of the panelists are accustomed to settling in easily for comfortable dialogue with welcoming audiences made up of their fellow enthusiasts.

"As someone running a panel, at first, it was a little bit stressful because I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but I've been running (panels) for a few years now so we kinda see familiar faces and get to interact with people in a much different way," Alia, a panelist from Women of Evangelion, says.

"It's nice being able to talk about my favourite series and have people interact with me and be interested as well. It's a good way to meet new people," she says.

For some, Animethon is a place to discover a community that they don't normally have access to.

"I live in the country, so I don't really get the chance to meet a lot of people with the same interests as I (have)," says Caleb, a game enthusiast. "Also, it's great to find some real competition for the fighting games they have here."



Animethon allows for a diverse group of fans to celebrate what they love in their own way.

As is standard at both similar conventions and previous years of Animethon, cosplay — a portmanteau of costume and play — maintains a large role in the convention. Not only do patrons of Animethon get to create costumes and role play as their favourite characters, but cosplayers can also participate in many different events and attractions.

This year, cosplayers could participate in costume contests, play cosplay chess, take advantage of the cosplay repair room, and pay for professional cosplay photo shoots.

Despite the apparent simplicity and whimsy of cosplay, it isn't all fun and games. In fact, it can be quite difficult, especially considering the effort involved in constructing solid costume pieces such as armour and large props.

"It's hard work, it's sweat, sweat, and sweat," Randal, a cosplayer, says. "You work so hard on your cosplay and you're finally able to show it. It's the most amazing thing in the world."

Among the crowd were cosplay veterans and amateurs alike. Many fans cosplayed as characters from popular video games such as Halo, Overwatch, and Diablo.

The disparity between high-quality costumes and those quickly thrown together did not faze convention attendees. At Animethon, all forms of participation are encouraged and celebrated every year.

Next year, Animethon will be celebrating its 25th anniversary. In the meantime, A Taste of Animethon 2018 will be taking place Jan. 19-20, 2018.

Photos by Thai Sirikoone.



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