



gwaandak
theatre

ANNUAL REPORT

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GWAANDAK THEATRE

Empowering Indigenous and Northern voices since 2000.

OUR VISION

Internationally recognized, Gwaandak Theatre illuminates Indigenous and Northern stories around the world.

OUR MISSION

Gwaandak Theatre develops, produces and tours professional plays to empower Indigenous and Northern voices.

Gwaandak Theatre’s programming includes new play development, readings, workshops, productions and tours.

The Society’s activity plan is centered on the following four points:

1. Develop new theatre with particular focus on revealing transformative stories, perspectives, voices (new play development and playwright residencies)
2. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Northern artists to gain professional experience and exposure on regional, national and international stages (productions, premieres, presentations, play readings, touring)
3. Foster relationships regionally, nationally and internationally with partners and communities in order to develop and share compelling stories
4. Offer professional training and mentorship opportunities to emerging and established artists (workshops, apprenticeships, internships)



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This annual report shows the principal activities that have taken place between April 1st 2013 to June 30th 2014 (15 months).

MESSAGE FROM MANAGING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & GENERAL MANAGER



This past year was filled with many highlights which truly spoke to our vision, mission and mandate. Our stories spread outside the Yukon from Toronto to Ottawa to Vancouver, and within the Yukon between Whitehorse and Dawson, connecting with a broad range of people and groups – always to youth, First Peoples, Yukoners of all backgrounds and theatre-lovers.

It was a long, busy and vibrant 15 month-year, from April 2013 to June 2014, as we completed our transition to a new fiscal year. On the artistic side, we toured two productions - *Justice* by Vuntut Gwitchin playwright Leonard Linklater to Ottawa for Northern Scene and *The Hours That Remain* by Metis playwright Keith Barker to Vancouver, Whitehorse and Dawson City. It was thrilling to see Yukon actors Christine Genier and Melaina Sheldon shine in lead roles in the latter, and to observe thoughtful community dialogue around the tough issue of unacceptable rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

We nurtured artistic and community partnerships. For example, with Yukon Arts Centre, Gwaandak co-presented *Body 13* with a bhangra-belly dancing Beach Dance Party. With Yukon Aboriginal women groups, we planned respectful outreach around *Hours*. Our 4th and 5th annual Aboriginal Summer Play Readings were a hit with participants and audiences alike. We continued our focus on new play development. Our New Yukon Voices playwriting group met regularly and we held an intensive workshop of Patti's new play *Paradise*, due for production this season. In training and professional development, we designed directing mentorships around *Justice* and play readings and welcomed 3 part-time Artistic Associates. Our acting and playwriting workshops brought in new community participants.

Gwaandak Theatre has solid foundations rooted in our ethical values and desire for professionalism; these were strengthened this year. Financially, we have grown in recent years and remain dedicated to the best possible management, while recognizing the challenges and complexities of securing and tracking numerous funding sources annually. Our agreements and contracts are carefully crafted in consultation with artists, consultants and partners. We held our first major fundraiser with valued volunteer involvement. Under Marjolene's leadership, we completed a strategic planning exercise which involved board, staff, other artists and a consultant, as we look to and dream for the next 5 years. We are grateful for the dedication and wisdom of our board of directors, offering guidance while also placing their trust in the day-to-day team. We bid a very warm farewell to founding board member Sharon Shorty, who has been a tireless advocate for Gwaandak.



Patti Flather



Marjolene Gauthier

Board Members – Since AGM of September 2013

President – Melaina Sheldon

Vice-President – Sharon Shorty (Joella Hogan since May 2014)

Treasurer – Gayle Corry

Secretary – David Neufeld

Director – Jacqueline Bazett

Director – Leonard Linklater

Director - Cheryl McLean

TOURING

Justice by Vuntut Gwitchin playwright Leonard Linklater, directed by Yvette Nolan and featuring Rob Hunter, Chris McGregor, Phillip Nugent and Corey Payette was produced again with a new vision, an updated script and a new director in April 2013 for presentation at Northern Scene's National Arts Centre. This play is inspired by the true Gold Rush story of a tragic cultural misunderstanding and clash of Aboriginal/settler justice systems leading to the Yukon's first hangings, of two young Tagish men.



Justice, Northern Scene's National Arts Centre, 2013
Credit: Andrew Alexander

HIGHLIGHTS

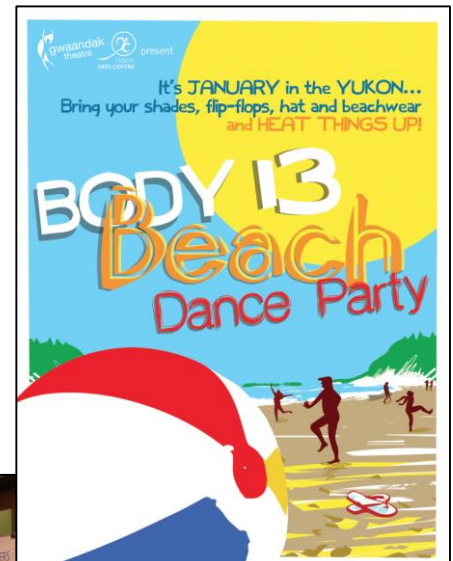
- > More play development to strengthen the play with new Director Yvette Nolan and Dramaturg DD Kugler
- > Full venue every nights (3) with 80 people each night and great response from the audience
- > Nolan brought the production to another level, performers were well-directed, set design was revisited and had more details, overall production was of a high artistic quality

CO-PRESENTATION

Body 13 is a culturally diverse ensemble creation directed by Majdi Bou-Matar and was co-presented with The MT Space's Body 13 and the Yukon Arts Centre. It was an innovative, expertly choreographed and beautifully performed ensemble piece accompanied by a live band. *Body 13* features a diverse group of characters spending a day at the beach, from funeral to wedding, as a metaphor for life in Canada. We organized a community Beach Dance Party after the second night show, featuring bhangra and belly dancing.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Extensive outreach to diverse Whitehorse communities including First Nations, Filipino-Yukoners, international students, immigrants and others. Very good attendance for this type of theatre: 173 people on opening night, 55 on second night and 73 on closing night.
- > Raised profile of Gwaandak Theatre



Beach Party, Opening Night of Body 13, 2014
Credit: Leonard Linklater

The Hours That Remain by Keith

Barker, directed by David Storch was presented to more than 900 people, including over 625 Yukoners, almost 150 of them youth. This production and tour was a resounding success overall. This powerful play by Metis playwright Keith Barker explores the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in an intensely personal and moving way. It featured Yukon First Nations actors Christine Genier and Melaina Sheldon in lead roles alongside Eli Ham of Toronto, with other Aboriginal artists in key positions including designers Andy Moro and Isidra Cruz, stage manager Aaron Shingoose and study guide writer Angela Code.



HIGHLIGHTS

- > 4 shows at Full Circle First Nation's Performance's Talking Stick Festival in Vancouver
- > 3 shows at Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre in Dawson City
- > 5 shows at Yukon Arts Centre Mainstage in Whitehorse
- > High school matinees and school artist outreach in both Dawson City and Whitehorse, with a comprehensive school study guide
- > Public talk with the playwright and the performers after each show
- > Counsellors at Whitehorse shows, and willow display in the Arts Centre lobby, with Cultural Resilience worker Naomi Crey from Northern Cultural Expressions Society

“... That was one of the most heart-wrenching productions I have ever seen and one that I know I will remain deep in my memory. What a critical and brave piece; a story screaming to be heard.”
- Audience member in Whitehorse

READINGS

4th Annual Summer Play Reading Series

Savage and *Annie Mae's Movement* by Yvette Nolan and *Burning Vision* by Marie Clements were featured in June 2013. Gwaandak offered director mentorships to Yukon theatre artists Melaina Sheldon (Tlingit), Genevieve Doyon and Patti Flather who directed these readings. Mentors were Yvette Nolan and Mary Sloan. We also supported playwright Renelta Arluk (Dene/Inuvialuit) with a residency to work on her play *Tookoolito* and organized free public readings with Arluk in partnership with Yukon Libraries and Adaka Cultural Festival in both Whitehorse and Teslin.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > More than 100 people attended this 4th Series
- > Attendance of donors, public funders and Aboriginal people
- > Well cast characters
- > These readings featured more new faces including Christine Genier, Elizabeth Smith, Alexandria McKenna and Gurdeep Pandher



5th Annual Summer Play Reading Series

2014's Readings at The Old Fire Hall included *Salt Baby* by Falen Johnson, directed by Melaina Sheldon, and *Thunderstick* by Kenneth T. Williams, directed by Patti Flather. We offered an encore reading of *Salt Baby* presented by Adaka Cultural Festival on July 2.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Total attendance was more than 150 people over 3 nights
- > More tourists than usual, and many young and Aboriginal people at the Adaka reading especially
- > More new faces as actors, including Kelly Panchyshyn and Nicholas Mah



Aboriginal Summer Play Readings, 2014
Credit: Marjolene Gauthier

PLAY DEVELOPMENT

New Yukon Voices

New Yukon Voices is a playwriting circle. This mentored program received numerous registrations and began in October 2013. We adjusted the framework for our play development and this program, in response to the wishes, desires and experience levels of the participating playwrights. While some had playwriting experience, others were more at beginning stages. This group met regularly until June 2014.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > 9 participants, including 7 Aboriginal participants, some youth,, one elder and one rural resident
- > Sessions were co-facilitated by Managing Artistic Director Patti Flather and Artistic Associate Genevieve Doyon
- > Participants met with playwright Keith Barker
- > We held a playwriting workshop with Governor General's award-winning playwright Clem Martini, attended by both New Yukon Voices members and others in the community

Paradise

We partnered with Yukon Arts Centre and MT Space to hold a play development workshop and a public reading of *Paradise*, a new play by Yukon playwright Patti Flather, directed by Majdi Bou-Matar. We held an intensive five-day workshop at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, involving reading and discussing the play and then rehearsing specific challenging sections with extensive physical improvisation and exploration.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Included Yukon artists (David Skelton, Andra Hunter) and guest artists from MT Space, Waterloo region
- > Artistic Associate, Andra Hunter (Tlingit), took a lead role in logistics and coordination
- > Good attendance at the public staged reading and lively talkback session
- > Excellent opportunity for the playwright, director and other artists to test out our rapport together, which led to our joint decision to proceed with a full producing partnership



Paradise Reading
Feb. 2014
Credit: Bruce Barrett

WORKSHOPS

Theatre Workshops for community and high schools

Gwaandak Theatre partnered with the Yukon Arts Centre, l'Association franco-yukonnaise (l'AFY) and Wood Street School Music Art and Drama Program to offer Theatre Workshops with artists from MT Space, while they were in Whitehorse performing *Body 13*. These workshops proved to be extremely popular and well-attended by youth and adults, including Aboriginal participants. Trevor Copp gave physical theatre workshops in both French and English. Nada Humsi gave workshops in theatre games. Jennifer Jimenez gave a workshop in building theatre together with community participants (based on techniques of Augusto Boal and others).



*The Unexpected Body with Trevor Copp, Feb. 2014
Credit: Bruce Barrett*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training and mentorship in directing



*Training in directing with Yvette Nolan and Richard Cliff, Ottawa, April 2013
Credit: Patti Flather*

During Northern Scene we offered mentorship/training to four Yukon theatre artists in directing. They completed an intensive 10-day director mentorship during the rehearsals for *Justice* in Ottawa, with director Yvette Nolan and stage manager Richard Cliff. Three of the mentees are of Yukon Aboriginal ancestry.

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Learning, observing and interacting with the entire team in a “hands-on” manner let me really come to the understanding of the role that the Director plays in a production. I feel that my hands-on experience has rounded out my understanding of theatre and only furthers myself as an asset to theatre in the Yukon and Canada. It was priceless to work so closely with Yvette behind the scenes and to gain knowledge of how much weight of a production that a director actually carries.”

– Melaina Sheldon about her training during Northern Scene

The Succession Plan

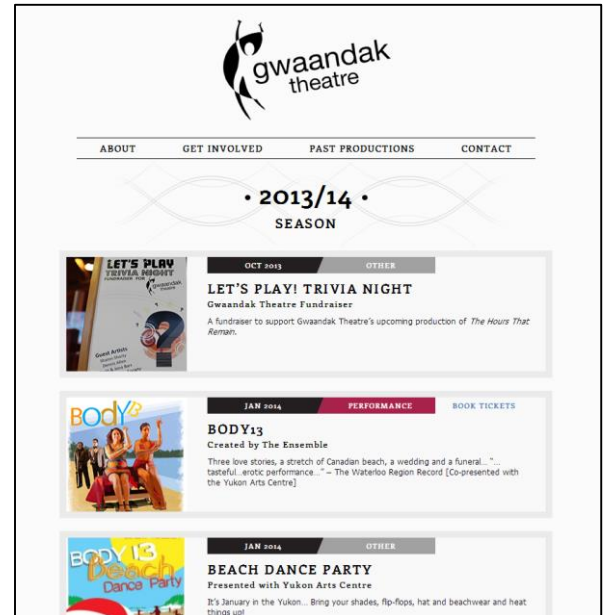
Our General Manager participated in CAPACOA’s program called *The Succession Plan* during Northern Scene. Marjolene had the chance to meet and work with well-known Arts Managing Consultant Victoria Steele.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

We expanded use of social media and increased involvement of community and First Nations partners. We launched our new website in January with detailed content on current and past activities, and are almost ready to launch our regular newsletter. Slowly but surely, we have implemented the Marketing Plan prepared in fall 2012.

ADMINISTRATION

- > We employed General Manager a minimum of 20 hours/week and Managing Artistic Director a minimum of 15 hours/week as planned for basic running of the company, with modest amount of additional wages allotted to special projects.
- > We also hired 3 Artistic Associates part-time: Andra Hunter (Tlingit/Indo-Canadian), Genevieve Doyon (francophone) and Gurdeep Pandher (Indo-Canadian). Our priority was to hire at least one Associate of Aboriginal ancestry. We had several strong applicants from Aboriginal and other diverse backgrounds, and decided this was a vital opportunity to invite more artists to participate in a larger capacity with the company, as we look at succession planning. They worked on a combination of community outreach, program delivery and artistic discussions.
- > We hired a Yukon Summer Career Placement student intern, Emerald Kains (Ktunaxa) for 12 weeks in the summer 2013. Kains is a Whitehorse resident studying business at the University of Calgary, and was a valued addition to Gwaandak as a young Aboriginal student with strong marketing and administration skills.
- > We also hired two different young people on term positions in marketing funded by Service Canada's Career Focus program.
- > We continued and consolidated our five-year strategic planning. This included working with consultant Patti Balsillie and holding a weekend retreat in April.
- > We applied to Revenue Canada for charitable status. This was declined but we received feedback on how to reapply and improve our success.
- > We requested and received a new officer at Canadian Actors' Equity Association and relations with this organisation are much better in terms of securing artist contracts.
- > We have a stable and supportive board of directors.
- > Our General Manager cleared all the books with our bookkeeper and treasurer and continued improvement and efficiency in office systems and templates.



FUNDRAISING

Let's Play Trivia Night

Gwaandak Theatre held its first-ever fundraising event. We raised about \$1,000 in a trivia night at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre with live music and appetizers. We reached our objectives that were to increase Gwaandak's profile, develop a formal connection and relationship with Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre as a First Nations cultural organization, identify numerous corporate/government interests and receive strong media coverage. Trivia teams were from different parts of the community – diverse audience (young, older, Aboriginal, Caucasian, French and English) and did not all have a past relationship with us. The emcees and performers included many talented Aboriginal artists - Sharon Shorty, Dennis Allen, Boyd Benjamin, Kevin Barr – as well as the Brass Knuckle Society, featuring live acoustic world music.



Donors & Foundations

We raised \$4,825 from individual donors, \$2,595 from corporate donations and \$1,000 from a foundation in 2013-2014.

Sponsors

We raised \$5,415 from corporations and businesses in 2013-2014. Here are the loyal sponsors of this season:

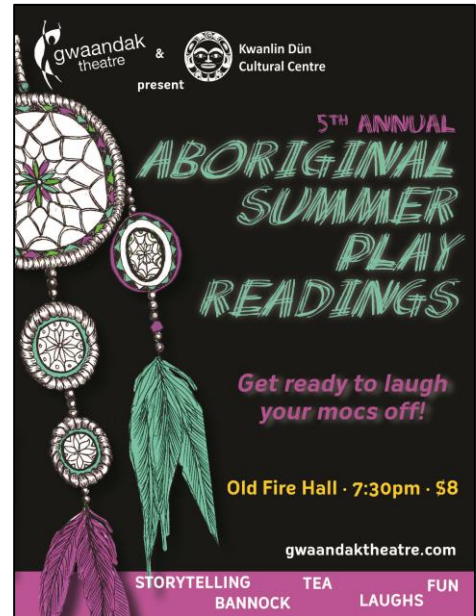
- > Air North
- > Archer Cathro & Associates (1981) Ltd.
- > EBA Engineering
- > Holland America Line
- > Laura Cabott Professional Corp.
- > Yukon Energy

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We had two main season partnerships this year: one with the Yukon Arts Centre and one with the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre. We received venue space in exchange for visibility, plus value activities and titled events. Both were very successful and have promising chances to be renewed in 2014-2015.

We also maintained connections with the following artistic and social organizations:

- > Adäka Cultural Festival – Summer Play Readings 2013 and 2014
- > Danöjà Zho Cultural Centre and Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation – *The Hours That Remains* co-presentations
- > Northern Cultural Expressions Society – *The Hours That Remain* workshops and lobby display
- > Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council – *The Hours That Remain* workshops and outreach
- > Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle – *The Hours That Remains's* workshops and outreach
- > Educational institutions: Department of Education, schools and teachers in Whitehorse and communities, Yukon College – *The Hours That Remains* presentations to high schools students
- > CAIRS
- > MT Space – *Paradise* play development and reading
- > Full Circle First Nations Performance – *The Hours That Remains* presentations in Vancouver



PUBLIC FUNDERS

FEDERAL FUNDERS

- **Canada Council for the Arts**
 - Aboriginal Arts Office
 - Capacity Building
 - Theatre Section
 - Multi-year Grants to Professional Organizations (2013-2015)
 - DSATO (Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations)
 - Travel Grants for Theatre Artistic Directors, Administrators and Presenters
- **Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) (formally Human Resources Development Canada)**
 - Career Focus

YUKON FUNDERS

- City of Whitehorse (project)
- Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund (project)
- Cultural Industries Training Fund (training)
- Culture Quest (project)
- Department of Education (Study Guides)
- Lotteries Yukon (project)
- Women's Directorate (project)
- Yukon Arts Fund (project)
- Yukon Arts Operating Fund (operating)
- Yukon Touring Artist Fund (project)

*Gunelchish, Sharon Shorty for all of your
years of support!*



**Thank you! | Shähw níthän | Gùnèlchish
Máhsin cho | Sógá sénlá' | Gunalchîsh
Màhsi' choo | Mähsi' cho | Tsin'jj choh**

**to everybody involved
in the 2013-2014 season!**

Gwaandak Theatre

Empowering Indigenous and Northern voices since 2000.

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