



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)



Paradise by Patti Flather,
Yukon Arts Centre, 2015
Credit: Bruce Barrett

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This annual report shows the principal activities that have taken place from July 1st 2014 to June 30th 2015.

MANAGING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patti Flather".

Patti Flather

GENERAL MANAGER

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marjolene Gauthier".

Marjolene Gauthier

Board Members – Since AGM of September 2014

President – Melaina Sheldon
Vice-President – Joella Hogan
Treasurer – Gayle Corry
Secretary – David Neufeld

Director – Jacqueline Bazett
Director – Leonard Linklater
Director - Cheryl McLean

TOURING

Nakhwatsii, Nakhwatsuu *Googwandak Play Readings*

during the international Biennial Gwich'in Gathering in Old Crow, hosted by Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Gwaandak shared excerpts from *Justice* by Leonard Linklater, *Sixty Below* by Patti Flather and Leonard Linklater, and *Lear Khekwaii*, a Gwich'in adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* by Allan Hayton and Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre, at Old Crow Community Hall. Some community members and delegates participated in the reading, including Youth Director Dana Tizya-Tramm as a reader, Princess Lucaj and fluent Gwich'in speakers singing a Gwich'in hymn. Gwaandak also held youth theatre workshops led by Melaina Sheldon, Leonard and Patti.



Old Crow Play Readings, 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

- > High attendance for small community - 50 people attended the community reading
- > Strong community support including a guaranteed fee, some travel expenses covered, excellent support of gathering organizers, youth director and VGFN staff
- > 2 theatre workshop activities for youth at Youth Centre

Mayo Play Readings

The Aboriginal Summer Play Readings ON TOUR visited Mayo on June 21st for National Aboriginal Day, hosted by First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun. Gwaandak shared excerpts from *The Ministry of Grace* by Tara Beagan at NND Government House during Mayo Aboriginal Day festivities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > High attendance for small community - 50 people attended the reading
- > Strong community support including a guaranteed fee, excellent support of celebrations organizers, and NND staff
- > 3 community members featured as actors in the reading, including NND Deputy Chief Millie Olsen

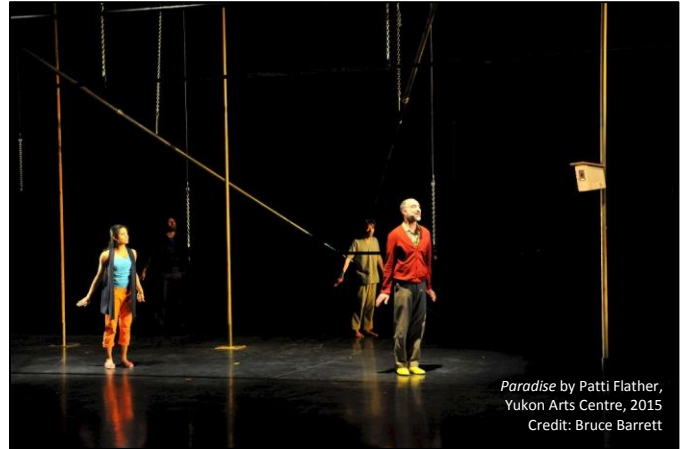


Mayo Play Readings, 2014
Credit: Gwaandak Theatre

CO-PRODUCTION/TOUR

Paradise by Patti Flather, directed by Majdi Bou-Matar was shared with more than 440 Yukoners, including many youth, Aboriginal, rural and culturally diverse citizens, in March 2015. This was a co-production with MT Space, Kitchener's acclaimed multicultural theatre company, in association with the Yukon Arts Centre, as part of the Northwestel Behind the Curtain Series. This production and tour to Haines Junction, presented by Junction Arts & Music, was a resounding success overall. The

script is a challenging one which the playwright revised in rehearsals in collaboration with all team members. Overall, the artistic quality of the production was high with all elements being strongly integrated in a physical, imagistic, intense, emotionally moving, fast-paced and layered piece. Audience members responded very positively overall with extensive discussion and reflection on both the subject matter, style and complexity of the production. Also, for the first time, we rehearsed the play for more than 3 weeks. (4-week rehearsal in Whitehorse and 3-week workshop in Kitchener).



HIGHLIGHTS

- > One show at the St. Elias Convention Centre and one theatre workshop with drama class in Haines Junction
- > Open rehearsals with visits from high schools, community partners and focus group members
- > Community partners included Mental Health Association of Yukon, Second Opinion Society, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition
- > Talkbacks with artists after each show and special community focus group discussion one evening
- > Professional artists from other regions: actors were Pam Patel and Nicholas Cumming of Kitchener, Aldrin Bundoc of Toronto and Michael Peng of Edmonton
- > All designers were from the Yukon: Set, Properties & Lighting Designer David Skelton, Sound Designer & Composer Jordy Walker and Costume Designer Melaina Sheldon
- > The team members were of many different cultural backgrounds including Indigenous, Indo-Canadian, Filipino-Canadian, Lebanese-Canadian, anglo-Canadian and franco-Canadian, with strong representation from women as well as men.

... Paradise is a powerful play that talks about some important issues while giving no easy answers. It is also a very effective and powerful character study... It deals with the issues involved in a way that pulls no punches..." – Zeb Berryman, The Evening Starr

READINGS

6th Annual Aboriginal Summer Play Reading Series

The Ministry of Grace by Tara Beagan and *Crees in the Caribbean* by Drew Hayden Taylor were featured at our popular annual readings at The Old Fire Hall in June 2015. We also offered a free public encore reading of *Ministry of Grace* at Adäka Cultural Festival, for the third year in a row.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > More than 80 people attended this 6th Series
- > Radio ads on CKRW for the first time attracted new audience
- > More tourists and Aboriginal people than past years
- > Well-cast actors for each role
- > These readings featured more new faces including, Claire Anderson, Carrie Boles, Andrameda Hunter, Sarah Maningas and Arpi Singh
- > Opportunities for emerging Yukon directors Geneviève Doyon, Patti Flather



PLAY DEVELOPMENT

New Yukon Voices – Year 2

New Yukon Voices is a playwriting circle. This mentored program received numerous registrations from Yukon playwrights, including youth and Aboriginal playwrights. In the fall Patti Flather facilitated a six-session playwriting circle with participants including 4 Aboriginal participants. We also offered a weekend intensive with two outstanding guest theatre artists. In January five playwrights with advanced scripts had one-on-one dramaturgy sessions with Yvette Nolan, an experienced Indigenous dramaturg currently based in Saskatoon whom we brought to the Yukon for one week.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Public reading of works with actors at Rah Rah Gallery on Dec. 12 featuring new writing from four of the playwrights: Wren Hookey, Kevin Kennedy, Leonard Linklater and Roy Neilson. The venue was at full capacity with about 30 people attending
- > Well-attended *Writing Home* weekend workshop led by Indigenous theatre artists Tara Beagan and Andy Moro, of Toronto-based Article 11 theatre company, at Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre
- > Young playwright Wren Hookey grew up in Whitehorse and Skyped in from her home in Winnipeg



Paradise

During the season we continued developing this new work by Yukon playwright Patti Flather, directed by Majdi Bou-Matar, towards a premiere Yukon production in spring 2015. MT Space hosted a 3-week workshop in Kitchener in November-December 2014 with actors, director, playwright, and designers, focused on integrating the script and physical vocabulary of the piece. The actors worked intensively on physical motifs for their own characters as well as for the play overall. The playwright trimmed the script. Yukon designer David Skelton spent one week in the workshop and developed a set/lighting design concept to support the play's themes.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Good attendance at the public performance/talkback on Dec. 6 at The Courtyard at Bonnie Stuart in Kitchener, Ontario



WORKSHOPS

For the community

Gwaandak Theatre delivered three major training workshops in Whitehorse, in association with partners Yukon Arts Centre and Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, with emphasis on outstanding Indigenous facilitators sharing their practice.

- > *Writing Home* weekend playwriting workshop led by professional theatre artists Tara Beagan (Ntlakapamux/Irish) and Andy Moro. Nine people attended (two Aboriginal).
- > *Scene Study for Actors* workshop led by director Yvette Nolan (Algonquin/Irish). Ten people attended. Half were of Aboriginal ancestry, another a member of a visible minority.
- > *Movement for Performers* workshop led by Ka:hawi Dance Theatre Artistic Director Santee Smith (Kenien'kehá:ka/Mohawk). Ten people attended. Half were of Aboriginal ancestry.
- > Strong demand for workshops and increase in earned revenue from workshop fees



At Whitehorse Correctional Centre

Gwaandak Theatre delivered five 1.5-day Indigenous-centred theatre storytelling workshops at Whitehorse Correctional Centre's Healing Room. Our facilitators (the majority Aboriginal) were Geneviève Doyon, Charles Eshleman, Patti Flather, Christine Genier, Leonard Linklater, Sharon Shorty.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > Reading of the play *Sixty Below* by Linklater and Flather, which is the story of a Gwich'in man leaving jail, and *Trickster Visits the Old Folks Home* by Shorty, about an elder moving to a seniors' home
- > Exploration of Yukon Aboriginal storytelling traditions
- > Creating a safe space for inmates to tell their own stories
- > Strong response from inmates, with total attendance of 50 people – the majority Aboriginal
- > Diversification of revenue with guaranteed fee in a contract with Yukon Department of Justice to provide culturally relevant First Nations programming

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mentorship in costume design

During the *Paradise* production Gwaandak offered mentorship to Yukon costume designer Melaina Sheldon with experienced Indigenous designer Isidra Cruz from Toronto.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

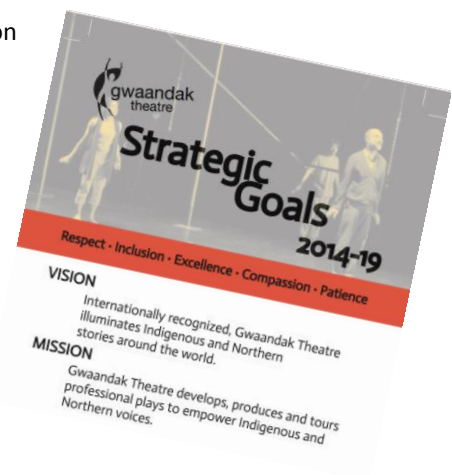
- > We continued to expand use of social media and increased involvement of community and First Nations partners.
- > We increased visibility of Gwaandak Theatre through ongoing activities (fundraising event, readings, touring to various communities, etc.)
- > We fully implemented our first Marketing Plan and updated our goals to create a second Marketing Plan to be implemented in 2015-2018.
- > We developed paper and digital tour booklets for three of our recent productions (*Café Daughter*, *Justice* and *The Hours That Remain*).
- > We continue to make excellent progress bringing more Aboriginal people (youth and adult) to the theatre.



Touring Booklets - Credit: Gwaandak Theatre

ADMINISTRATION

- > We employed General Manager a minimum of 22 hours/week, an increase of 2h/week.
- > We reached about 75 % of our strategic goals for 2014-2015 based on our five-year strategic planning.
- > For a fourth year, we have a stable and supportive board of directors.
- > We started to develop and update our HR Policies more with a consultant.



FUNDRAISING

We hired on contract a Marketing Assistant to help us with fundraising with some successes with new sponsors such as TD Bank and Northwestel. We have been extremely diligent and creative in diversifying our revenue sources.

Yukoners'Tall Tales (from when we were short)

We raised \$1,824 with this storytelling fundraising event at The Old Fire Hall in October, with storytellers, a silent auction, and significant volunteer contribution from staff, board, artists and community.

Indiegogo Campaign

For the first time, we launched an online fundraising campaign and raised \$3,476 for *Paradise*. The campaign also helped to get the word out about our production.

Donors & Foundations

We raised \$5,535 from individual donors, \$1,000 from corporate donations and \$3,000 from a foundation in 2014-2015.

Sponsors

We raised \$3,500 from corporations and businesses in 2014-2015. Here are the loyal sponsors of this season:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| > Northwestel | > Yukon News |
| > What's Up Yukon | > Driving Force |
| > Air North | > TD Bank |

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We had two main season partnerships in 2014-15: one with the Yukon Arts Centre and one with the Kwanlin Dün 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 2015-2016.

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

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| > Adäka Cultural Festival – Summer Play Readings 2015 | > MT Space Theatre |
| > Mental Health Association of Yukon | > Talking Stick Festival |
| > Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition | > Junction Arts & Music |
| > Second Opinion Society | > First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun |
| | > Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation |

PUBLIC FUNDERS

FEDERAL FUNDERS

Canada Council for the Arts - 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

YUKON FUNDERS

- City of Whitehorse (project)
- Yukon Health & Social Services (project)
- Cultural Industries Training Fund (training)
- Culture Quest (project)
- Lotteries Yukon (project)
- Women's Directorate (project)
- Yukon Arts Operating Fund (operating)

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

**to everybody involved
in the 2014-2015 season!**

Gwaandak Theatre

Empowering Indigenous and Northern voices since 2000.

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