



gwaandak
theatre

ANNUAL REPORT

16
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17



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)



*Map of the Land, Map of the Stars, KDCC, May 2017
Credit: Bruce Barrett*

CONTENTS

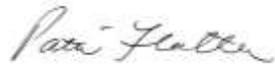
Touring.....	3
Creation, Rehearsals, Production and Yukon Tour.....	3
Readings	4
Play Development.....	4
Workshops.....	5
Special Initiatives: School and Community Workshops.....	5
Marketing & Communication.....	6
Administration.....	6
Fundraising.....	7
Partnerships & Community Relations	7
Public Funders.....	7

This annual report shows the principal activities that have taken place from July 1st 2016 to June 30th 2017.

>>> FORWARD TOGETHER

In the last year Gwaandak Theatre has matured into a company with a full season of artistic programming including extensive play development, training, productions and tours of new Canadian work in multiple venues and communities. Our artistic practice included collaboratively devised, interdisciplinary and highly physical new work and a play creation partnership with a First Nation in an Indigenous language. We reflected a high level of diversity in our project teams in terms of age, gender, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation and more, including Indigenous, francophone, culturally diverse, anglo-settler, LGBTQ2 and youth artists. We stressed connections between traditional storytelling and contemporary theatre in our programming to bridge barriers to theatre appreciation especially with Indigenous audiences.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature of Patti Flather in cursive.

Patti Flather

GENERAL MANAGER

A handwritten signature of Marjolene Gauthier in cursive.

Marjolene Gauthier

Board Members – Since AGM of September 2016

President – Joella Hogan

Vice-President – Cheryl McLean

Treasurer – Gayle Corry

Secretary – David Neufeld

Directors – Charlene Abraham, Jacqueline Bazett,
Leonard Linklater

TOURING

IPAA Intertribal Gathering

As a proud member of the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance and part of the Yukon advisory committee for this event, we were delighted to present performances to 66 people from across Canada, at this event hosted by Champagne & Aishihik First Nations. This included play readings of *Chance* by Melaina Sheldon and *Authentic Indian Ceremony* by Leonard Linklater, and an excerpt from our new play in development, *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars*. With this opportunity, we built on the theatricality of the play *Chance* in terms of staging and lighting design, and with additional rehearsals for Linklater as performer of his own work.



CREATION, REHEARSALS, PRODUCTION AND YUKON TOUR

Map of the Land, Map of the Stars

Our Whitehorse premiere and Yukon tour of *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* was a resounding success, with 10 sold-out shows in 3 Yukon communities, including a preview and three school matinees. We shared the play with over 690 Yukoners, including 215 elementary and high school students and 230 rural Yukoners. This production was in association with the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and the Yukon Arts Centre.

We also prepared a comprehensive School Study Guide with support from Yukon Education's First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit, available free and downloadable from our website. We had strong attendance from Indigenous and culturally diverse audience members, showing that all the outreach work we do to attract them was successful.



HIGHLIGHTS

- > Most ambitious creation and production initiative yet.
- > Team members were of many different cultural backgrounds, with Indigenous ancestry from the Algonquin, Cree, Tagish, Tlingit, Mi'kmaq, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Shinnecock, Vuntut Gwitchin peoples and more, as well as other roots: anglo-settler, francophone including Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Norway, Scotland, Spain, the Philippines, Trinidad, and the United States. The production had strong representation from women as well as men.

READINGS

12 days to end violence against women

We presented a reading of *Chance* by Melaina Sheldon at this event organized by Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre at Baked Café in Whitehorse. It was performed by Christine Genier and Léa Roy-Bernatchez in front of 60 people.



Chance by Melaina Sheldon
Credit: Gwaandak Theatre

Indigenous Summer Play Readings and Encore

Our 7th year, under the theme “Let us tell you a story,” was a great success. We presented three short plays over the evening of June 20 at the Old Fire Hall in Whitehorse, curated by Artistic Associate Melaina Sheldon. There were *Bear In Stream* and *Reeling*, both by Tlingit playwright Frank Henry Kaash Katasse, directed by Andrameda Hunter and Léa Roy Bernatchez, and *Two Indians* by Six Nations playwright Falen Johnson, directed by Christine Genier. We presented encore readings of Katasse's plays during the Adäka Cultural Festival on July 5 and at Haa Kusteeyí Celebration in Teslin on July 29.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > 90 people attended the readings
- > We cast a total of 7 Whitehorse actors. They ranged from age 18 into their 50s, from Indigenous and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- > For the first time, for this event, we had an extensive presence on social media with daily posts, photos and videos.
- > We offered mentorships to 3 emerging directors: Andrameda Hunter, Christine Genier and Léa Roy Bernatchez. They worked with experienced director Mary Sloan.



Indigenous Summer Play Readings 2017
Credit: Stewart Tizya

PLAY DEVELOPMENT

Yukon Voices

In February/March 2017 we offered Yukon Voices: New Year's Playwriting Boot Camp. This was a 6-session mentored playwriting circle open to Indigenous and northern playwrights and writers for performance. The program culminated in a public reading at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre on March 27, World Theatre Day. Five Yukon playwrights registered: Arlin McFarlane, Doug Rutherford, Roy Neilson, Lillian Nakamura Maguire, and Wren Brian. This was our 4th year offering playwriting support.



Yukon Voices Readings on World Theatre Day, January 2017
Credit: Gwaandak Theatre

Vuntut Gwitchin Stories for Theatre

With Vuntut Gwitchin Government's Heritage Department, Gwaandak's Leonard Linklater and Patti Flather completed three workshop phases in the Yukon's northernmost village of Old Crow, including celebration, storytelling evenings and adaptation of Long Ago Stories into scripts. During all the sessions, the Gwich'in language was promoted and incorporated.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > 59 people attended the storytelling evenings
- > 55 people total attended the 3 phases of workshops and play development



December 2016
Credit: Gwaandak Theatre

Sixty Below

We began preliminary work on adapting/translating some or all of the Yukon play *Sixty Below*, by Patti Flather and Leonard Linklater, from English into Gwich'in. We engaged fluent speaker and translator Ruth Carroll and held a private play reading in June for the translator. This project continues into 2017-2018.

WORKSHOPS

Gwaandak Theatre delivered six major training workshops in Whitehorse. 61 participants registered in total. These workshops were offered partially in partnership with the Yukon Arts Centre and offered a range of specific training for theatre artists.

- > Technical Direction by David Degrow
- > Centered Creativity by Clare Preuss
- > Artists Collaborating with Communities by Julie Salverson
- > Performance by Michael Greyeyes
- > The Space Wants You - Dance Improvisation by Aimée Dawn Robinson
- > Creative Vocal by K. Scott Maynard



"Creative Vocal" Workshop, April 2017
Credit: Bruce Barrett

SPECIAL INITIATIVES: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

- > Indigenous Theatre Workshop for a MAD 9/10 high school drama class January 2017 led by Andrameda Hunter, Leonard Linklater and Patti Flather, including excerpts from *Map of the Land*, *Map of the Stars* and plays by Andrameda Hunter and Leonard Linklater; 25 students attended
- > Young worker safety skits in collaboration with Yukon Workers' Compensation Health & Safety Board and a high school class in April 2017, with Patti Flather and Sharon Shorty
- > Storyweaving Workshop for Kwanlin Dün First Nation heritage workers and citizens, with Melaina Sheldon and Patti Flather

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

- > We completed implementation of our digital strategy.
- > Our Artistic Director traveled to the One Yellow Rabbit High Performance Rodeo in Calgary and PuSh Festival/PuSh Assembly Industry Series in Vancouver to see shows and market our touring work to presenters.
- > Our AD and GM attended the Talking Stick Festival and Kw'eykw`áystway Industry Series, put on by Full Circle First Nations Performance in Vancouver. We pitched our new play *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* for the 2018 festival and invited Margo Kane, their AD to see this work in May 2017.
- > We observed that our profile has increased and we are receiving numerous requests to collaborate on or develop projects; we are not able to answer and partner on all of them.
- > We updated our teachers/educators packages and developed two audiovisual promo trailers to promote our touring shows (*Paradise*, nationally/internationally, and *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* in the Yukon).
- > Our quarterly newsletter reached about 230 people per issue.
- > We diversified our advertising costs (less newspaper ads, moving towards radio and online ads).

ADMINISTRATION

- > We employed the General Manager a minimum of 23 hours/week, and our Artistic Director 22 hours/week, an increase of 1h/week.
- > We contracted an Artistic Associate, Melaina Sheldon, for about 80h to assist with artistic planning of future seasons and curate the Indigenous Summer Play Readings.
- > We reached only 44% of our strategic goals for 2016-2017 based on our five-year strategic planning. The General Manager is too busy with logistical tasks to assure the follow-up of the strategic plan.
- > We adopted a new policy on Artists' fees. After publication of Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition calculation of "Living Wage in Whitehorse, Yukon: 2016", we decided not to pay our contractors, with the exception of our summer student intern, less than what the estimated minimum hourly wage of \$19.12 for a family of four to survive in Whitehorse. We always have placed high priority on paying fees above minimum industry rates and ensuring safe, healthy working conditions for artists and production teams. This new policy was put in place because fees for Yukon theatre artists remain low compared with workers in other sectors of our economy. The hourly rate, when calculated, is often less than \$20 or \$15/hour, even for established and mid-career artists. The cost of living is higher in the North, most artists are self-employed without pension and benefit plans, and their contracts are often temporary or seasonal. It is extremely important, in order to recruit and retain professional theatre artists in the North, to pay fees that they can live on.

FUNDRAISING

Online Holiday Fundraiser

We tried something new in terms of online fundraising, due to capacity issues related to resources required to produce a separate storytelling event. We raised \$1,136 with this new initiative.

Donors & Foundations

We raised \$6,150 from individual donors, \$1,500 from corporate donations and \$4,000 from a foundation. We were able to secure a lot of in-kind donations with a total value amount of \$23,000 (venues, advertisements, other).



PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We had two main season partnerships in 2016-17: 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 2017-2018.

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

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| > Indigenous Performing Art Alliance | > Carcross-Tagish First Nation |
| > Klondike Institute of Arts & Culture | > Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre |
| > MT Space | > Kwanlin Dün First Nation |
| > Nakai Theatre | > Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in |
| > Victoria Faulkner Women Centre | > Teslin Tlingit Council |
| > Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association | > Vuntut Gwitchin Government |

PUBLIC FUNDERS

FEDERAL FUNDERS

- > Canada Council for the Arts - Theatre Section
 - o Multi-year Grants to Professional Organizations (2015-2017)
 - o DSATO (Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations)
 - o Translation
- > Canada Council for the Arts – Aboriginal Arts Office
 - o Elder Youth Legacy Program (project)
- > Canada Council for the Arts – Audience and Market Development
 - o Travel Grant (for Theatre Artistic Directors to promote works)
- > New Chapter (Project)



YUKON FUNDERS

- > City of Whitehorse (project)
- > Cultural Industries Training Fund (workshops)
- > Culture Quest (project)
- > Lotteries Yukon (project)
- > Women's Directorate (project)
- > Yukon Arts Operating Fund (operating)
- > Yukon Education (project)



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

**to everybody involved
in the 2016-2017 season!**

Gwaandak Theatre
Empowering Indigenous and Northern Voices Since 2000.

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