



gwaandak
theatre

2017-18 Season
Annual Report

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,
Credit: Bruce Barrett*

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This annual report shows the principal activities that have taken place from July 1st 2017 to June 30th 2018.

>>> FOUNDATIONS, TRANSITIONS, GROWTH

In the last year Gwaandak Theatre laid groundwork for its expanded role regionally and nationally. We secured increased core operating funding and moved into a larger office. We said goodbye to our visionary outgoing general manager and welcomed another outstanding individual to the position. We honoured our commitments to produce and tour three quality productions in the Yukon and nationally. We continued our play development collaboration with a Yukon First Nation and supported development of Yukon theatre creators. We developed a personnel policy and streamlined financial practices. We increased our commitment to Indigenous inclusion and representation.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

A black and white image of Patti Flather's signature, written in a cursive style.

Patti Flather

GENERAL MANAGER

A black and white image of Jenna Winter's signature, written in a cursive style.

Jenna Winter

Board Members – Since AGM of September 2017

President – Joella Hogan

Vice-President – Cheryl McLean

Treasurer – Gayle Corry

Secretary – David Neufeld

Directors – Charlene Abraham, Jacqueline Bazett,
Leonard Linklater

NATIONAL TOURING



Photo: Bruce Barrett

Our staff Jenna and Patti also participated in the Talking Stick Industry Series. The play and a feature article written by co-director/creator Michelle Olson was published in Canadian Theatre Review.

Map of the Land, Map of the Stars & Paradise

With support from Canada Council for the Arts and Yukon Touring Artist Fund, we toured two of Gwaandak's recent productions in Canada. Our collectively devised work *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* toured to festivals in Kitchener, ON (MT Space's Impact17) for 2 shows in the fall and to Vancouver, BC (Talking Stick Festival) for additional rehearsals and 4 shows in February, including school matinees. Our

Paradise, by Patti Flather, is a Gwaandak-MT Space co-production. We rehearsed in Kitchener, then toured to Edmonton, AB for 2 shows in January 2018, presented by Azimuth Theatre at Alberta Arts Barns as part of the Chinook Series. In May, *Paradise* had 3 shows at Sudbury Theatre Centre for PlaySmelter, presented by Pat the Dog Theatre Creation. Patti also did play readings in both cities, with support of the Playwrights' Guild of Canada/Canada Council's PlayConnect program.

REHEARSALS, PRODUCTION AND YUKON TOUR

The Unplugging

Our Whitehorse premiere and Yukon tour of *The Unplugging* by Yvette Nolan, directed by Renelitta Arluk, was a resounding success, with 5 sold-out shows in Whitehorse at The Old Fire Hall, and well-attended shows on tour in Dawson City (2 shows), Old Crow, Mayo and Haines Junction. *The Unplugging* connected with almost 750 Yukon youth and adults in 5 communities. The production starred the Yukon's own Mary Sloan, with guest actors Heather Majaury and Aaron M. Wells. This production was in made possible with the support of Yukon Arts Centre and the first ever @ YAC Residency.



Photo: Erik Pinkerton

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

- > Well attended 5-stop Yukon tour, with enthusiastic response in all communities

- > Team members of many different cultural backgrounds, including Algonquin, Inuvialuit-Cree-Dene, Nuu-Chah-Nulth and Tsimpsian, and Tlingit; Francophone ancestry; and settler Yukoners.
- > The production had strong representation from women as well as men.

READINGS

Indigenous Summer Play Readings

Haa Kusteeyi Celebration, Teslin, July 2017

We featured well-attended encore readings of *Bear in Stream* and *Reeling*, both by Frank Henry Kaash Katasse, in a tent at the Celebration. These featured Indigenous and diverse Yukoners as directors and performers.



Spring Thaw Play Readings

The Old Fire Hall, Whitehorse, April, 2018

Gwaandak Theatre partnered with Playwrights Guild of Canada, inviting the entire Yukon community to experience four short play readings by guest and local playwrights.

Featured playwrights include Reneltta Arluk, Wren Brian, Kevin Loring, Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, and Doug Rutherford.

Paradise

As part of the national tour, Patti did play readings in Edmonton at Arts Barns and the University of Alberta, and at Sudbury Theatre Centre, with support of the Playwrights' Guild of Canada/Canada Council's PlayConnect program.

PLAY DEVELOPMENT

Hidden Memories

September 2017

Yukon playwright Lillian Nakamura Maguire's *Hidden Memories*, a new play in development, was selected for a public reading at Granville Island in Vancouver, directed by Donna Yamamoto. This was part of Advance Theatre: New Works by Diverse Women Readings, Vancouver Fringe Festival, and in partnership with Ruby Slippers Theatre and Playwrights Guild of Canada. Patti worked with Lillian as a dramaturg and they both travelled to Vancouver for rehearsals and the reading.

Hidden Memories chronicles the daughter of Japanese immigrants, as she sifts through her parents' memorabilia, piecing together their early BC life and forced relocation. She tries to find peace with her parents' choices during times of racial discrimination, her own identity, and what she passes on to her daughter.

1-on-1 Dramaturgy With David Geary

March 2018

Gwaandak offered professional dramaturgy to Yukon playwrights/theatre creators. Dramaturg and playwright David Geary of Vancouver had individual script feedback sessions with several Yukon playwrights during his visit in March.

Vuntut Gwitchin Stories for Theatre

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation's Heritage Department and Gwaandak held our fifth phase of Vuntut Gwitchin Stories for Theatre – Using Gwich'in Language from Oct. 10-13, 2017. This included a storytelling evening, script development, youth and school outreach and a community presentation involving a broad cross-section of the community in language revitalization and theatre storytelling in Old Crow, Yukon.



HIGHLIGHTS

- > Long Ago Stories session with Grade 7, 8, 9 class from Chief Zeh Gittlit School. Reading of the late Sarah Abel's version of *The Fast Runner and the Grizzly Bear Woman*
- > Storytelling Evening at the Community Hall

Sixty Below

We continued work on adapting/translating some or all of the Yukon play *Sixty Below*, by Patti Flather and Leonard Linklater, from English into Gwich'in, with fluent speaker and translator Ruth Carroll. This project continues into 2018-2019.

WORKSHOPS

Gwaandak hosted Canada, It's Complicated, Comedy & Improv workshop in November 2017.

Gwaandak also delivered two spring training workshops in Whitehorse. These workshops were offered in partnership with the Yukon Arts Centre and offered a range of specific training for theatre artists.

- > Playful Playwriting with David Geary
- > Lighting & Video Design with Bruno Matte

Two additional workshops in performance and stage management were scheduled but were cancelled due to unforeseen conflicts with facilitators – the stage management workshop is rescheduled to November 2018.



Bruno Matte Workshop, Photo: Nic Filteau

Yukon Playwrights Conference

Gwaandak Theatre partnered with the Playwrights Guild of Canada, the lead organizer, on the Yukon Playwrights Conference on April 14 at the Old Firehall in Whitehorse. This networking and professional development opportunity offered a panel of guest and local playwrights discussing the power that a playwright has to transform the world through theatre creation. It also included the “From Page to Stage” Marketing Workshop.

OTHER

Bystander Auditions & Team-building

Gwaandak Theatre brought director Clare Preuss to Whitehorse in the spring for auditions, for our Fall 2018 premiere of *Bystander* by Yukon born-and-raised playwright Wren Brian. We also worked with the playwright and director, building the creative and production team.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

- > Playwright/Dramaturg David Geary led a 2-hour workshop for 13 English 12 students at F.H. Collins Secondary



- > During *The Unplugging* tour, two performers, Mary Sloan and Heather Majaury, along with Gwaandak GM Jenna Winter, visited grades 1-6 at Chief Zehh Gittlit School in Old Crow; Patti Flather and Leonard Linklater met with the First Nations 12 class at St. Elias School in Haines Junction

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

- > Our AD and GM attended the Talking Stick Festival and Scháyilhen Industry Series, put on by Full Circle First Nations Performance in Vancouver. Additionally, we promoted *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* while at the festival (which was pitched at Talking Stick in 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.
- > Our AD attended the N3 northern presenters summit in Whitehorse in the spring, and pitched our premiere of *Bystander*
- > Our quarterly newsletter reached about 265 people per issue.
- > We diversified our advertising costs (less newspaper ads, moving towards radio and online ads).

ADMINISTRATION

- > Former General Manager Marjolene Gauthier left the organization in fall 2017. A new General Manager, Jenna Winter, began in January 2018 after relocating from Ontario.
- > We employed the General Manager at 25 hours/week until November 2017, and our Artistic Director 25 hours/week, an increase of 1h/week. General Manager hours were increased to 30 hours per week from January to June 30. Artistic Director hours also exceeded 25 hours per week from January to June, due to touring productions and the new production of *The Unplugging*.
- > We put out a job call for a new Artistic Producer in June 2018, to hire this third position in summer 2018, with the support of increased Canada Council operating funding, which began in the 2017-2018 year and has additional increase in the 2018-2019 year.
- > The General Manager implemented a shift of the accounting from Simply Accounting 2011 to Quickbooks 2018 to coincide with the new fiscal year.
- > We received support from the Canada-Yukon Job Fund for GM Jenna Winter to earn a certificate in bookkeeping and increase her capacity in this area of her work.
- > Gwaandak moved offices in fall 2017, to a bigger space in Horwoods Mall.
- > Wave Payroll (direct deposit, based online) began implementation in June 2018 and is now in use.
- > A Personnel Policy was approved by the Board of Directors in spring 2018. This policy outlines standard operating procedures for staff (ie. Vacation, sick days, lieu time) and outlines requirements for (and violations of) a Safe Working Environment.
- > We continue to follow our 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. 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

Individual Fundraising

We held a successful online fundraising campaign in November-December 2017. We also raised funds through special requests in newsletters, and through direct requests. Individual fundraising totalled \$6665.

Sponsorships & In-Kind Donations

We received \$1500 cash and \$18,315 in in-kind donations from sponsors including Yukon Arts Centre (@YAC Residency and other support); Air North, Yukon's Airline; What's Up Yukon; Yukon News; and Driving Force.

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We had two main season partnerships in 2017-18: one with the Yukon Arts Centre and one with Kitchener-based company MT Space. With YAC, we received venue space in exchange for visibility, plus value activities and titled events, as part of the new @YAC Residency program. YAC also presented *The Unplugging*, and provided touring support for the production to travel to 4 Yukon communities. MT Space was a partner in bringing *Map of the Land* to IMPACT17, and in the touring of *Paradise* to Edmonton and Sudbury.

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

- > Klondike Institute of Arts & Culture
- > Nakai Theatre
- > Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association
- > Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre
- > Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- > Teslin Tlingit Council
- > Vuntut Gwitchin Government
- > Na-cho Nyak Dun First Nation
- > Playwrights Guild of Canada

PUBLIC FUNDERS

FEDERAL FUNDERS

- > Canada Council for the Arts – Artistic Catalysts
 - o Multi-year Grants to Professional Organizations (2017-2019)
- > Canada Council for the Arts – Creating, Knowing, Sharing
 - o Elder Youth Legacy Program (project) (from previous granting system)
 - o Translation (project) (from previous granting system)
- > Canada Council for the Arts – Arts Across Canada
 - o Touring Grant for *Paradise*
 - o Touring Grant for *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars*
 - o Travel Grant (for Theatre Artistic Directors to promote works)

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)
- > Canada-Yukon Job Fund

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

**to everybody involved
in the 2017-2018 season!**

Gwaandak Theatre
Empowering Indigenous and Northern Voices Since 2000.

867 393-2676
info@gwaandaktheatre.ca
#6-1114 Front Street, Whitehorse, YY, Y1A 1A3