



**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)



*Map of the Land, Map of the Stars,  
Showing of work-in-progress, KDCC, June 2016  
Credit: Bruce Barrett*

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*This annual report shows the principal activities that have taken place from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016.*

## 2015-2016 SEASON WAS GWAANDAK THEATRE'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF SHARING THEATRE WITH YUKON AUDIENCES.

We are proud to have had a full season with an impressive variety of activities (creation, readings, workshops, development, productions, tours) for a fourth year now, and, an ongoing presence in Yukon communities as well as nationally. This was a very important and productive year for us as we developed many new theatre stories from Indigenous and Yukon voices. We connected with many Yukon communities (Whitehorse, Teslin, Haines Junction, Dawson City, Old Crow) in a variety of ways.

### MANAGING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



*Patti Flather*  
Patti Flather

### GENERAL MANAGER



*Marjolene Gauthier*  
Marjolene Gauthier

### Board Members – Since AGM of September 2015

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

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

## TOURING

### *Paradise at IMPACT15*

We presented 8 shows of *Paradise* at the Conrad Centre for the Arts, in Kitchener, Ontario, during and after the international IMPACT 15 festival, and it was a resounding success overall. We shared this powerful play with 415 people, including about 90 youth and several theatre presenters from across Canada. *Paradise* was showcased at IMPACT alongside outstanding shows from Australia, Morocco and many parts of Canada.



### *Teslin Play Readings*

*The Aboriginal Summer Play Readings ON TOUR* visited Teslin in July 2015 for the first time, presented by Teslin Tlingit Council as part of the biennial Hà Kus Teyea Celebration of Tlingit culture. We presented Tlingit playwright Sharon Shorty's play *Trickster Visits The Old Folks Home*, and excerpts from *Sixty Below* by Leonard Linklater and Patti Flather and *Crees in the Caribbean* by Drew Hayden-Taylor.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- > High attendance for small community - 75 people attended the reading
- > Strong community support including a guaranteed fee, excellent support of event organizers
- > Tlingit actors featured including Duane Gastant' Aucoin, Gary Sidney Johnson, Andrameda Hunter, Sally Lutchman



## CREATION, DEVELOPMENT AND SHOWINGS OF WORK-IN-PROGRESS

### *Map of the Land,*

*Map of the Stars* by The Ensemble is our new Indigenous-led, intercultural piece being created collaboratively. It explores the Yukon's past, present and future, from perspectives not commonly shared in the dominant historic and cultural narratives.

In July 2015, Gwaandak Theatre held the first creation residency for this project, at the Old Fire Hall, in association with the Yukon Arts Centre. This was an amazing residency which culminated in a jam-packed sharing of work-in-progress, attended by 55 people.



Our next creation residency took place from Feb. 18-25, 2016 in Dawson City, in association with Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Klondike Institute of Art & Culture. This residency took place during Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's Myth & Medium gathering. We invited Dawson City residents into the creation process and also attended and shared our work at the gathering. 75 people attended our showing.

The third creation residency took place in Whitehorse at the Yukon Arts Centre Studio, in association with the Yukon Arts Centre, from March 15-22, 2016.

Finally, we presented 4 sold-out showings of work-in-progress during the Magnetic North Theatre Festival at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre in Whitehorse in June 2016, to more than 245 people. Showing our work to local, national and international audiences and delegates in this festival context helped us to develop new audiences, deepen engagement and relationships with First Nations communities, increase our visibility, raise our profile locally, nationally and internationally, and develop relationships with presenters who may book our shows for future touring.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- > Good media coverage
- > Strong support and partnership from Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre; we were their Artists-In-Residence
- > For only the second time in Gwaandak's history, we explored sharing of our work in a non-traditional venue, including outside the Cultural Centre near the river

## READINGS

### Exploring Justice

We presented intelligent and challenging new plays by Yukon playwrights - Wren Hookey (*Bystander*), Kevin Kennedy (*Turpentine*), Leonard Linklater (*Authentic Indian Ceremony*), Lillian Nakamura Maguire (*Hidden Memories*), and Melaina Sheldon (*Chance*) - in association with the Yukon Arts Centre and Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, in accessible public readings for youth and adults.

These compassionate stories brought to life characters grappling with complex situations around crime, justice, discrimination, poverty, war, decolonization, personal responsibility and complicity - in the spirit of promoting dialogue, compassion and justice.



#### HIGHLIGHTS

- > 12 readings
- > Reached more than 310 people including 120 youth
- > Work with several partners - Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Arts in the Park, Magnetic North Theatre Festival, Yukon Arts Centre, 2 FH Collins Secondary classes and schools' Social Justice Conference at Yukon College

## PLAY DEVELOPMENT

### Yukon Voices Rising

Gwaandak Theatre offered a 6-session playwriting circle between October 2015 and January 2016, facilitated by our Artistic Director. This featured play development support to seven dedicated Yukon playwrights - three of them Indigenous - to further scripts towards production readiness. Two playwrights were based in rural Yukon communities (Teslin and Ross River). Two of the scripts in development garnered national success: Wren Hookey's *Bystander* was a finalist for the 2015 Playwrights Guild of Canada Emerging Playwright Award; Melaina Sheldon's *Chance* was selected for Sarasvati Productions' International Women's Week Cabaret in Winnipeg in March 2016.



#### HIGHLIGHTS

- > Public reading of works with actors at Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre Artist Studio on Jan 21, 2016 featuring new writing from the playwrights. The venue was at full capacity with about 30 people attending.
- > Selected plays received dramaturgy support from Yvette Nolan and five of them received one or two-day workshops and public readings with actors and a director in the spring (Nolan, Clare Preuss).
- > Four plays were presented at the Magnetic North Theatre Festival as part of our Exploring Justice readings series. Shortlist of plays includes: *Bystander* by Wren Hookey, *Turpentine* by Kevin Kennedy, *Chance* by Melaina Sheldon, *Authentic Indian Ceremony* by Leonard Linklater.

## Vuntut Gwitchin Stories for Theatre

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation's Heritage Department and Gwaandak co-produced Vuntut Gwitchin Stories for Theatre – Using Gwich'in Language – an intensive workshop, involving a broad cross-section of the community in language revitalization and theatre storytelling with theatre artists from Feb. 29-March 4, 2016 at the Community Hall, in Old Crow, Yukon.



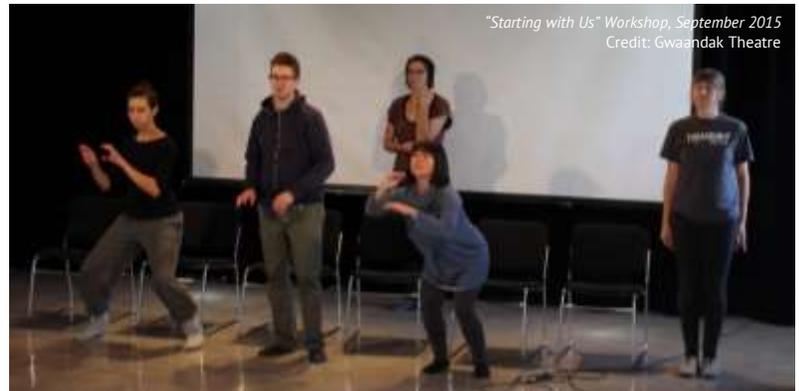
### HIGHLIGHTS

- > Involvement of 19 people including elders, adults, youth, heritage staff and theatre artists throughout the week
- > Public play reading and storytelling evening Feb. 29, with sharing of different storytelling traditions, attended by 15 people
- > Completion of a first-draft theatre script in both Gwich'in and English adapted from a Long Ago Story told by elder Sarah Abel: *Vah Srigwehlik*. This story is about the lone survivor of a community battling hunger, who lives in a den and harvests food through the winter, then helps to feed a new community of starving people; ultimately they build a new community together.
- > We began a first-draft theatre script in English adapted from the story of *T'loo Thaŕ (Grass Pants)* about the first contact between a Gwich'in man and a group of white men who replace his traditional clothing with European linens and share their strange new food with him.

## WORKSHOPS

Gwaandak Theatre delivered nine major training workshops in Whitehorse, and one in Dawson City. 68 participants registered in total, including 42 different participants. These workshops were offered in partnership with the Yukon Arts Centre (and, for the Storyweaving workshop in Dawson City, with Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and KIAC). These workshops offered a range of specific training for theatre artists, including touring, individual and ensemble creation techniques, directing, vocal and movement skills.

- > "Starting With Us" with Vancouver's Theatre Replacement
- > "Touring" with Vancouver's Theatre Replacement
- > "Dance Movement" with Andra Hunter
- > "Creative Vocal" with Scott Maynard
- > "The Space Wants You" with Aimée Dawn Robinson
- > "Storyweaving" with Michelle Olson and Yvette Nolan
- > "Direct a Play in a Day" with Clare Preuss
- > "Play Study For Actors" with Yvette Nolan



## ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Yvette Nolan was our Artist-in-Residence in winter/spring 2016. Nolan worked intensively with the company on: directing our major new creation *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars*, the Vuntut Gwitchin Stories for Theatre project, dramaturgy for our Yukon Voices playwrights, Exploring Justice play development workshops and readings, artist training/mentorship, and her own playwriting. Nolan has been a part of the development of the company over the past decade in a number of ways, and welcoming her as Artist-in-Residence felt like an important culmination of all the work we have done together so far.



## SPECIAL INITIATIVES: MADE IN YUKON SHOWCASE

Gwaandak Theatre played a lead producer role, alongside Nakai Theatre and WIT/Whitehorse Independent Theatre, in showcasing the best of the Yukon theatre scene during Magnetic North Theatre Festival. This included the *Made In Yukon Showcase* and Street Theatre performances and three unique Yukon-made productions and value-added activities (workshops, talkbacks, open rehearsals and different outreach activities).

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

- > We launched a new website homepage that highlights the most current project
- > We finished the implementation of our second marketing plan and created a new corporate look and branding, and promotion tools such as a pop-banner for touring, fairs, gatherings, etc., a season brochure and an e-newsletter
- > We started to implement our new digital strategy
- > We celebrated our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Old Fire Hall in Whitehorse and created special readings in two Yukon communities, Teslin and Haines Junction, with snacks and refreshments.
- > We developed special merchandise (tea tins as audience gifts) for our showing of work-in-progress *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* during Magnetic North Theatre Festival



## ADMINISTRATION

- > We employed the General Manager a minimum of 22 hours/week, and our Artistic Director 20 hours/week, an increase of 2h/week. This allowed our Artistic Director to develop and implement our artistic vision particularly through new play development.
- > We reached about 75% of our strategic goals for 2015-2016 based on our five-year strategic planning.
- > We reached our artistic goal of touring play readings to other Indigenous communities and they were a big hit.
- > We started our third year of Yukon Voices, a playwriting circle; we fostered new plays and successfully recruited Indigenous as well as other participants.
- > We are increasingly known for our high-quality workshops offering specialized artistic training and mentorships to all artists throughout the season.
- > We continue to have strong artistic partnerships on our programming – e.g. developing a new Indigenous Language Theatre Storytelling project with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in the Yukon's most northern community, Old Crow.

## FUNDRAISING

### *Tales from the Trails*

Tales from the trails was our 3<sup>rd</sup> major fundraising event. We organized a high-profile public storytelling event in partnership with the Yukon Transportation Museum as both a fundraiser and an opportunity to showcase talented Indigenous storytellers in our community, including Ruth Carroll, Pat Joe and Sharon Shorty, along with other well-known storytellers such as Ellen Davignon and Michael Gates. This event was important not just to diversify our earned revenue, but also for bridging the perceived divide between traditional storytelling



*Tales from the trails, 2015*  
Credit: Gwaandak Theatre

and contemporary theatre and increasing appreciation of performing arts with Indigenous audiences. For the first time, we had an Assistant Producer Volunteer and a Marketing Coordinator Volunteer; they both contributed over 25 hours towards the event. Board members volunteered in various ways including planning, running the bar, emceeding the event, bringing their friends, telling a story and purchasing silent auction items. We had excellent media coverage and a great interest from First Nations storytellers. 62 people attended this event despite the bad winter weather that night. We made about \$1,000.

### *Donors & Foundations*

We raised \$4,000 from individual donors, \$1,000 from corporate donations and \$3,000 from a foundation. We were able to secure more in-kind donations than ever with a total value amount of \$30,000 (venues, advertisements, flights).



## PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We had two main season partnerships in 2015-16: 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 2016-2017.

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

- > Theatre Replacement
- > Nakai Theatre
- > Ramshackle Theatre
- > Whitehorse Independent Theatre
- > Open Pit Theatre
- > MT Space
- > Yukon First Nations Tourism and Culture Association
- > Klondike Institute of Arts & Culture
- > Da Kų Cultural Centre
- > Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre
- > Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- > Teslin Tlingit First Nation
- > Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

## PUBLIC FUNDERS

### FEDERAL FUNDERS

Canada Council for the Arts - Theatre Section

- Multi-year Grants to Professional Organizations (2015-2017)
- DSATO (Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations)

Canada Council for the Arts – Aboriginal Arts Office

- Aboriginal Peoples' Collaborative Exchange (project)
- Elder Youth Legacy Program (project)

Canada Council for the Arts – Audience and Market Development

- Travel Grant (for Theatre Artistic Directors to promote works)

Department of Canadian Heritage (project)

### YUKON FUNDERS

- City of Whitehorse (project)
- Cultural Industries Training Fund (workshops)
- Culture Quest (project)
- Yukon Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund (project)
- Lotteries Yukon (project)
- Women's Directorate (project)
- Yukon Arts Operating Fund (operating)



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

**to everybody involved  
in the 2015-2016 season!**

**Gwaandak Theatre  
Empowering Indigenous and Northern Voices Since 2000.**

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