



2016/17 SEASON



For Immediate Release: September 21, 2016 • Please include in your listings/announcements

NATIVE EARTH PERFORMING ARTS announces line-up for **Weesageechak Begins to Dance 29** **Annual Festival of Indigenous Works**

TORONTO, ON – Native Earth Performing Arts has announced the line-up for their 29th annual festival of Indigenous work, **Weesageechak Begins to Dance**. From intimate relationships to dystopian futures, comedy, dance, poetry and everything in between, Weesageechak 29 will showcase new Indigenous works in Native Earth's **Aki Studio** from **November 9th to 19th, 2016**.

This year's festival will feature five full-length staged readings of works-in-development, beginning with award-winning playwright **Drew Hayden Taylor** (Curve Lake First Nation). Opening the festival, Taylor's new comedy, **The Boneyard Blues**, is about love, hidden passions, mysterious graves and chocolate. The first week also features another comedy, this time by newcomer **Frances Koncan** (Anishnaabe). Hailing from Winnipeg, Koncan's **zahgidiwin/love** is about truth, reconciliation, and contemporary love amidst a backdrop of the past, present, and the retro-future. Rounding out week one, Order of Manitoba recipient and renowned actor, **Billy Merasty** (Cree) will share a deeply personal and tragic drama, **Godly's Divinia**, which he developed as Native Earth's 2015-16 OAC Playwright-in-Residence.

In week two, Native Earth will host Australia's **Moogahlin Performing Arts** with a full reading of **Cuz** by **William McPherson** (Kamilaroi). This autobiographical story explores the lives of two Indigenous Australian cousins (or cuzs) and members of the stolen generations. Bringing week two to a close will be a fully staged reading of **Ménage à Trois** by award-winning, Alberta-born playwright **Brad Fraser** (Métis). The author of *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* offers audiences a new non-linear theatre piece about an unlikely trio and the aftermath of abortion.

In addition to full readings, throughout the festival are evenings that showcase works in early stages of development. The first evening includes **Group**, a drama by Dora Award-nominee and member of CBC's Royal Canadian Air Farce, **Craig Lauzon** (Anishnaabe); **Wounded Heart Stampede**, an interactive piece by Founding Artistic Director of ACME Theatre Co., **Dean Gabourie** (Métis); **In-cor-ri-gi-ble: The Legend of Thunder Voice** by 2016 Banff Playwrights Colony participant **Josh Languedoc** (Saugeen First Nation); and **If This Is The End** by **Shandra Spears Bombay** (Anishnaabe), developed in part at SummerWorks 2016.

Another evening of excerpts includes 2016 Vancouver Fringe New Play Prize winner **Deneh'Cho Thompson** (Déné) and his dystopian exploration of colonization, **The Girl Who was Raised by Wolverine**; Animikiig Traning Program graduate **Cheyenne Scott** (Coast Salish of the Saanich Nation) and her multi-media family drama, **SPAWN**; and finally, **Fancydance: The Musical**, an exploration of Indigenous identity in the context of a love triangle by Saskatchewan-based playwrights **Tenille Campbell** (Dene/Métis) and **Andréa Ledding** (Métis).

Continuing our celebration of Indigenous dance, four contemporary dance works will take centre stage at the festival. Returning to Weesageechak are choreographer/dancers **Olivia C. Davies** (Métis/Anishnaabe) and **Christine Friday** (Temagami First Nation), each with a piece celebrating women. Davies' ***Crow's Nest and Other Places She's Gone*** highlights the need for women to go beyond their comfort zones, and Friday's ***Maggie & Me: The Healing Dance Journey*** explores the role of women as healers. Joining them is **Aria Evans** (Mi'kmaq), with her intimate exploration of trust, ***RElaps***. Finally, composer **Jeremy Dutcher** (Wolastoqiyik/Maliseet) has teamed up with dancer/choreographer Andrew Tomlinson to tell a story of enlightenment in their dance piece ***Tettpokak // They Dance in Step***.

This year Native Earth will introduce audiences to a new generation of creators from the **Animikiig Training Program**, including dancer/choreographer **Aria Evans**, opera librettist **Ian Cusson** (Métis/French Canadian), and playwrights **Yolanda Bonnell** (Ojibwe), **Cathy Elliott** (Irish/Mi'kmaq/Acadian), **Sarah Gartshore** (Ojibwe), **Suzanne Keptwo** (Algonkin/Kitchesipirini), **Celeste Sansregret** (Métis) and **Gein Wong** (First Nations/Asian).

Finally, following a special screening of a film selected by **imagineNATIVE**, Native Earth will partner with **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** to introduce the first ever **2-Spirit Cabaret**. Hosted by **Gwen Benaway** (Odawa/Potawatomi/Cherokee/European/Métis), and featuring **DJ Ariel** (Blackfoot/Cree/Anishnaabe), the cabaret will include a line-up of 2-Spirit, Trans and Queer-identified Indigenous artists from across Canada and around the world. More details on this and our **Professional Development Series** to come.

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 29 LINE-UP – Week One

Wednesday November 9th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

The Boneyard Blues by Drew Hayden Taylor

Thursday November 10th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

Wounded Heart Stampede by Dean Gabourie

In-cor-ri-gi-ble: The Legend of Thunder Voice by Josh Languedoc

Group by Craig Lauzon

If This Is The End by Shandra Spears Bombay

Friday November 11th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

imagineNATIVE Film Screening

2-Spirit Cabaret hosted by Gwen Benaway, featuring DJ Ariel

in partnership with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

Saturday November 12th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

zahgidiwin/love by Frances Koncan

Sunday November 13th, 2016 @ 2:00pm

Godly's Divinia by Billy Merasty (FREE)

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 29 LINE-UP – Week Two

Tuesday November 15th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

Animikiig Training Program

Aria Evans, Cathy Elliott, Celeste Sansregret, Gein Wong,
Ian Cusson, Sarah Gartshore, Suzanne Keptwo, Yolanda Bonnell

Wednesday November 16th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

Cuz by William McPherson

Thursday November 17th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

Contemporary Indigenous Dance

Crow's Nest and Other Places She's Gone by Olivia C. Davies

RElaps by Aria Evans

Maggie & Me: The Healing Dance Journey by Christine Friday

Tettpokak // They Dance in Step by Jeremy Dutcher and Andrew Tomlinson

Friday November 18th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

Fancydance: The Musical by Tenille Campbell and Andréa Ledding

SPAWN by Cheyenne Scott

The Girl Who was Raised by Wolverine by Deneh'Cho Thompson

Saturday November 19th, 2016 @ 7:30pm

Ménage à Trois by Brad Fraser

Evening Tickets: \$15

Sunday Reading: Free Admission

Festival Pass: \$60

Aki Studio | Daniels Spectrum

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Native Earth Performing Arts is Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company. Currently in our 34th year, we are dedicated to creating, developing and producing professional artistic expressions of the Indigenous experience in Canada. Through stage productions (theatre, dance and multi-disciplinary art), new script development, apprenticeships and internships, Native Earth seeks to fulfill a community of artistic visions. It is a vision that is inclusive and reflective of the artistic directions of members of the Indigenous community who actively participate in the arts.

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