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NATIVE EARTH PERFORMING ARTS announces the line-up for Weesageechak Begins to Dance 30 Annual Festival of Indigenous Works

TORONTO, ON – Recognized as a leader in creation of Indigenous performing arts, **Native Earth Performing Arts celebrates its 35th anniversary** as the professional Indigenous theatre company on Turtle Island. This November, Native Earth will welcome back familiar faces and introduces emerging creators from across Turtle Island and beyond for its **30th annual Weesageechak Begins to Dance**. Showcasing new works and works-in-development in theatre, dance, music and multi-disciplinary performance work, Weesageechak 30 will run from **November 15th to 25th, 2017** at **Aki Studio**.

This year's festival opens with a workshop preview of **Vancouver Moving Theatre's *Weaving Reconciliation***, presented in partnership with **Jumblies Theatre**, which will return to Aki Studio for its premiere in June 2018. Weaving theatre with Indigenous cultural practices and lived experience, this multi-disciplinary production is created by an award-winning team of director **Renae Morriveau** (Cree Saulteaux), **Rosemary Georgeson** (Coast Salish/Dene Sahtu) and **Savannah Walling**.

The first week is filled with works by familiar creators, including ***Bury*** by **Alanis King** (Odawa) which is an ode to the reclamation of the Anishinaabe language and celebration of the resilience of those who have lived through the residential school system. ***The Whale Killer*** by the award-winning Saskatchewan playwright and director **Kenneth Williams** (Cree) which explores unanswered questions about a murder of an RCMP officer in Northern Manitoba Cree community. ***Starlight Journey*** by **Josh Languedoc** (Saugeen First Nation) depicts an incredible journey of a family seeking answers to their young son's mysterious death.

Emerging playwright and the 2017 Winnipeg Arts Council RBC On the Rise award winner **Frances Koncan** (Anishinaabe) returns with a new work, ***Riot Resist Revolt Repeat*** which is inspired by recent events concerning pipelines and their environmental impact. Rounding out the first week, multi-disciplinary artists and Dora-nominated **Spy Dénommé-Welch** (Algonquin) and **Catherine Magowan** of **An Indie(n) Rights Reserve** return with ***HATE MAIL and Irreconcilable Trolls***, a piece that explores people who hide behind fake usernames, spoofed emails and anonymous comment boards which is presented as a sonata with contrabassoon and piano.

Native Earth hosts Australia's **Moogahlin Performing Arts** for a second year with a reading of ***The Weekend*** by **Henrietta Baird** (Kuku Yalanji/Yidinji). The play follows a young Sydney mother traversing the world of public housing, drug dealing with the threat of losing her children, taking the audience on an emotional ride of laughter and hope, love and loss.

This festival also features works-in-development by emerging artists, including ***White Noise***, a comedy on racial commentary by **Taran Kootenhayoo** (Denesuline/Nakoda Sioux); ***Bad Indian***, a humorous storytelling on Indigenous/Canadian identity politics by **Brefny Caribou** (Cree/Irish); and ***The Last Dance***, a piece dedicated to Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women by **Yvonne Wallace** (Ucwalmicw).

Weesageechak 30 kicks off its second week with a two-evening special featuring the **Animikiig Training Program**. Works include, *link*, a warrior dance piece by dancer/choreographer **Aria Evans** (Mi'kmaq/African/settler heritage), *Ruby Comfort*, an opera-in-development by opera librettist **Ian Cusson** (Métis/French Canadian), and *Survivance*, a powerful story of three generations of women by **Sarah Gartshore** (Ojibwe). The second evening showcases *Ursa Majoris*, a love story with music and puppets by **Celeste Sansregret** (Métis), and *Lonecloud*, a musical dedicated to the first Mi'kmaq Ethnographer by the late **Cathy Elliott** (Mi'kmaq/Irish/Acadian).

Continuing the celebration of Indigenous dance, **Olivia Shortt** (Anishinaabe/Irish) collaborates with dancer/choreographer Kathleen Legassick for *Echoes* which shares a personal reflection on discovering one's genealogy. Coming from Flin Flon, Manitoba, **Kristy Janvier** (Dene/Irish/Ukrainian) will take us on a journey through environmental decay in *Forest Floor*.

Two Native Earth veterans mark the closing of Weesageechak 30. Native Earth welcomes back former Artistic Director (2011-2013) **Tara Beagan** (Ntlaka'pamux/Irish), the Dora-nominated playwright, and Dora and Betty-nominated actor to present the sister piece to Native Earth's 2013 presentation, *In Spirit*. Beagan's *Deer Woman* tells the story of a sister left behind – a warrior woman work of righteous vengeance. Following Native Earth's 2015 presentation of *God and The Indian*, the Jessie-nominated actor and multi-hyphenate theatre artist **Lisa C. Ravensbergen** (Ojibwe/Swampy Cree/English/Irish) returns to Aki Studio with *The Seventh Fire*. Filmic in nature and mythic in proportion, her piece shares the story of a woman's return to the Ojibwe community which she believes has rejected her.

Native Earth in partnership with **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** proudly presents *2-Spirit Cabaret*. Curated and hosted by **Michaela Washburn** (Cree/English/Irish/French), the cabaret includes a talented line-up of 2-Spirit, Trans and Queer-identified Indigenous artists from across Canada, including **Gwen Benaway, Cherish Blood, Ryan Cunningham, Waawaate Fobister, Greyson Gritt, Lacey Hill, Michelle Latimer, Smith Purdy, Brian Solomon** and other special guests. In addition, the **Professional Development Series** returns with a full roster of workshops, panels and training opportunities.

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 30 LINE-UP – Week One

Wednesday November 15th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Weaving Reconciliation by Renae Morriveau
with Rosemary Georgeson and Savannah Walling
in partnership with Vancouver Moving Theatre

Thursday November 16th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Bury by Alanis King
White Noise by Taran Kootenhayoo
The Weekend by Henrietta Baird, in partnership with Moogahlin Performing Arts

Friday November 17th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Riot Resist Revolt Repeat by Frances Koncan
The Whale Killer by Kenneth Williams

Saturday November 18th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

The Last Dance by Brenda Yvonne Wallace

Starlight Journey by Josh Languedoc
HATE MAIL and Irreconcilable Trolls by Spy Dénommé-Welch and Catherine Magowan

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 30 LINE-UP – Week Two

Tuesday November 21st, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Animikiig Presentation
Ruby Comfort by Ian Cusson
Survivance by Sarah Gartshore

Wednesday November 22th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Animikiig Presentation
link by Aria Evans
Ursa Majoris by Celeste Sansregret

Thursday November 23th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Bad Indian by Brefny Caribou
Echoes by Olivia Shortt
Forest Floor by Kristy Janvier

Friday November 24th, 2017 @ 8:00pm

2-Spirit Cabaret curated and hosted by Michaela Washburn
in partnership with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

Saturday November 25th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

Deer Woman by Tara Beagan
The Seventh Fire by Lisa C. Ravensbergen

Evening Tickets: \$15

Festival Pass: \$60

Aki Studio | Daniels Spectrum

585 Dundas Street East

Box Office: 416-531-1402 or boxoffice@nativeearth.ca

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Native Earth Performing Arts is Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company. Currently in its 35th year, Native Earth is dedicated to creating, developing and producing professional artistic expressions of the Indigenous experience in Canada. Through stage productions, script development, apprenticeships and internships, Native Earth seeks to fulfill a community of artistic visions that is inclusive and reflective of the members of the Indigenous community who actively participate in the arts.



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