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NATIVE EARTH PERFORMING ARTS
announces the line-up of
Weesageechak Begins to Dance 31
ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT FESTIVAL OF INDIGENOUS WORKS
November 14-24, 2018 at Aki Studio

TORONTO, ON – Native Earth Performing Arts presents the 31st annual **Weesageechak Begins to Dance Festival**. This development festival celebrates theatre, dance, opera and multidisciplinary creations from across Turtle Island from **November 14 to 24, 2018** at **Aki Studio**.

The festival opens with a book launch and a performance of a ground-breaking multidisciplinary theatrical production. **“Indian Act: Residential School Plays”** edited by **Donna-Michelle St. Bernard** is an anthology of seven plays by contemporary Indigenous playwrights which includes Tara Beagan, Drew Hayden Taylor and Yvette Nolan, a tribute to survivors and their families who endured the impacts of the Indian residential school system. Presented in partnership with **Playwrights Canada Press**, the evening features readings from the anthology and a discussion with **St. Bernard**.

Hailing from Calgary, Alberta, **The Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society** presents ***Making Treaty 7***, a unique intertwined work of dance, theatre, music and poetry built on guidance and stories from Treaty 7 Elders. Exploring the true spirit and intent of what the treaty means to Indigenous peoples, while investigating the contemporary consequences and implications of Treaty 7, this breathtaking collaboration of six performers is directed by **Michelle Thrush** and **Blake Brooker**, composition and musical direction by **Kris Demeanor** and **Anders Hunter**, and design by **Andy Moro** and **Sandi Somers**.

The first week of the festival features ***Gashkigwaaso***, an exploration of the ways the Anishinaabe people of Grassy Narrows are stitching their fractured landscapes back together, by Dora award-winning performer **Waawaate Fobister** (Anishinaabe); ***They Are Still Talking***, a dance-shadow puppet collaborative 4-part homage to our connection with our ancestors, by **Maura García Dance** (non-enrolled Cherokee/Mattamuskeet) from Kansas, U.S.A; and ***In The Abyss***, a search for the scientific fact as well as the beautiful metaphor that we are all made of stardust, by **Aria Evans** (Mi'kmaq/Black/settler heritage) of Go To Company.

Dora-nominated composers and creators of ***Giiwedin***, **Spy Dénomme-Welch** (Algonquin) and **Catherine Magowan** of **Unsettled Scores** (formerly known as An Indie[n] Rights Reserve) return with an excerpt of their second full-length opera ***Canoe***, which received development support in Native Earth's Mskomini Giizis Residency this July. Blending Indigenous oral tradition with neo-baroque and jazz/blues motifs, this unique operatic performance shares a tale of transformation that revolves around the lives of eccentric sisters. The festival also welcomes ***Shanawdithit***, a new opera with libretto by former artistic director **Yvette Nolan** (Algonquin) and music by **Dean Burry**, which is based on the story of the last recorded surviving member of the Beothuk Nation in Newfoundland. Presented in partnership with **Tapestry Opera** and **Opera on the Avalon**, the excerpt features **Marion Newman** (Kwagiulth/Stó:lō First

Nations/English/Irish/Scottish), **Aria Evans**, **Clarence Frazer** and **Rebecca Cuddy**, with directorial support of Tapestry Opera's General Director **Michael Hidetoshi Mori**. Rounding up the evening is a panel discussion "**Beyond Butterfly: Abandoning the exotic for a representative opera of today**" featuring Indigenous and culturally diverse opera artists.

Introducing the next generation of creators from Native Earth's two-year development program **Animikiig Creators Unit**, week two kicks off with works-in-development by playwrights **Jenn Forgie** (Métis), **Frances Koncan** (Anishinaabe), **Smith Purdy** (Mi'kmaq), and **Quelemia Sparrow** (Musqueam Nation), saxophonist **Olivia Shortt** (Anishinaabe/Irish), **Natalie Sappier** (Wolastoqiyik) and **Ty Sloane** (Ojibwe/East Asian/Irish/Iberian).

The festival continues with presentations of multidisciplinary works-in-development, including **Boozhoo Manoomin**, a musical suite that explores manoomin (wild rice), the sacred food of the Anishnabeg, by pianist and composer **Beverley McKiver** (Lac Seul First Nation); **űtszan**, a story about mending family through language reclamation, by **Yvonne Wallace** (Ucwalmicw); and **Romeo Igwa Juliet**, an Indigenous adaptation of Shakespeare's classic, by award-winning director and filmmaker **Pamela Matthews** (Cree). **Theresa Cutknife** (Nehiyaw/Puerto Rican), **Pesch Nepoose** (Cree), and **Jesse Wabegijig** (Ojibway) of **Out of Sync Collective** and **Centre for Indigenous Theatre** return from this year's Paprika Festival with a reading of **S.O.S. Saving Our Sovereignty** which tells the story of the devastating effects of suicide pacts amongst Indigenous youth.

Pushing the boundaries of storytelling, the festival also showcases **The Properties of Spirit**, a weaving of autobiographical experiences with Métis identity through spoken word poetry, by award-winning filmmaker and published poet **Jessica Lea Fleming** (Métis/Scottish); **My Holographic Nightmares**, a partially fictional, partially imagined, partially nonsensical walkthrough of an artist's inner head, by classical and contemporary saxophonist and noise-maker **Olivia Shortt** (Anishinaabe/Irish); **You used to call me Marie**, an exploration of how young women inherit trauma from the matriarchs in the family through five Indigenous love stories of two souls, by Vancouver-based artist **Tai Grauman** (Métis/Cree/Haudenosaunee); and **Be A Babe**, a powerful solo piece which returns from last year's 2-Spirit Cabaret, by nationally acclaimed performer and comedian **Cherish Violet Blood** (Blackfoot).

Native Earth welcomes **Ondinnok**, the first francophone Indigenous theatre company based in Montreal, for a presentation of **El buen vestir, Tlakentli** choreographed by **Leticia Vera** (Nahuatl) and **Carlos Rivera** (Mixteque). This multidisciplinary dance-theatre piece follows the intimate journey of two Indigenous immigrants who embark on naming the wounds of oppression and removing the Western colonial uniform, reflecting on the exchanges and meetings between Indigenous peoples in South and North America.

Continuing the celebration of Indigenous dance, the festival features **Land of My Waters**, a harmony of movement and spoken word uncovering the identity of a mixed race woman, by **Nyda Kwasowsky** (Guyanese); **Eloise**, an honouring of the inner terrain of the body and its ties to the land, by **Jeanette Kotowich** (Cree/Métis); **Maggie & Me**, a healing dance which revitalizes the Anishinaabe culture, by the winner of the 2018 KM Hunter Award for Dance **Christine Friday** (Temagami First Nation); and **Consequence**, a multidisciplinary dance-theatre piece that enlightens the traditional Niitsitapii stories of Napi, by Artistic Director of Circadia Indigena **JP Longboat** (Mohawk).

Native Earth is honoured to partner with **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** again to present the third edition of the **2-Spirit Cabaret**, a celebration of strength, beauty and talent of queer and 2-Spirit Indigenous people. Curated and hosted by award-winning 2-Spirit theatre artist **Michaela Washburn**

(Cree/English/Irish/French), the cabaret presents an exciting evening of performances, music and spoken word.

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Annual Development Festival of Indigenous Works
NOVEMBER 14-24, 2018 at AKI STUDIO

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 31 LINE-UP – WEEK ONE

Wednesday November 14, 2018 @ 7:30pm

Book Launch – “Indian Act: Residential School Plays” Edited by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard
Presented in partnership with Playwrights Canada Press
Making Treaty 7 by The Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society

Thursday November 15, 2018 @ 7:30pm

Gaashkigwaso by Waawaate Fobister
They Are Still Talking by Maura Garcia Dance
In The Abyss by Aria Evans

Friday November 16, 2018 @ 8:00pm | Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

2-Spirit Cabaret

Hosted & Curated by Michaela Washburn
Presented in partnership with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

Saturday November 17, 2018 @ 7:30pm

Canoe by Unsettled Scores: Spy Dénomme-Welch & Catherine Magowan
Shanawdithit by Yvette Nolan (Libretto) and Dean Burry (Music)
Presented in partnership with Tapestry Opera and Opera on the Avalon

Panel Discussion – “Beyond Butterfly: Abandoning the exotic for a representative opera of today”

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 31 LINE-UP – WEEK TWO

Tuesday November 20, 2018 @ 7:30pm

ANIMIKIIG CREATORS UNIT

Jenn Forgie, Frances Koncan, Smith Purdy, Natalie Sappier
Olivia Shortt, Ty Sloane, Quelema Sparrow

Wednesday November 21, 2018 @ 7:30pm

The Properties of Spirit by Jessica Lea Fleming
My Holographic Nightmares by Olivia Shortt
Boozhoo Manoomin by Beverley McKiver
Save Our Sovereignty (S.O.S) by Out of Sync Collective:
Theresa Cutknife, Pesch Nepoose, Jesse Wabegijig

Thursday November 22, 2018 @ 7:30pm

Land of My Waters by Nyda Kwasowsky

Be A Babe by Cherish Blood

Romeo Igwa Juliet by Pamela Matthews

Friday November 23, 2018 @ 7:30pm

You used to call me Marie by Tai Grauman

űtszan by Yvonne Wallace

El buen vestir, Tlakentli by Ondinnok

Saturday November 24, 2018 @ 7:30pm

Eloise by Jeannette Kotowich

Maggie & Me by Christine Friday

Consequence by JP Longboat

Evening Tickets: \$15

Festival Pass: \$60

Aki Studio

Daniels Spectrum | 585 Dundas St East

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

For more details: <http://nativeearth.ca/weesageechak31>

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Native Earth Performing Arts is Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company. Currently in its 36th year, Native Earth is dedicated to creating, developing and producing professional artistic expressions of the Indigenous experience in Canada. Through stage productions (theatre, dance and multi-disciplinary art), 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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