Weesageechak Begins To Dance 27 Festival Line-up Announced!
November 12-22, 2014 at the Aki Studio Theatre

Toronto, ON (October 21, 2014)—Discover the work of Indigenous artists at Weesageechak Begins to Dance 27, the annual festival of contemporary Indigenous work presented by Native Earth Performing Arts from November 12 – 22 at Aki Studio Theatre. Now in its 27th year, Weesageechak Begins to Dance celebrates the new work of emerging and established Indigenous artists from across Canada and around the world. This year’s festival spans eleven-days and includes live theatre, opera, dance performances and staged readings. Festival-goers can purchase individual performance tickets ($10-$20) or a Festival Pass ($50) at the Aki Studio box office or by calling 416-531-1402. For more information visit nativeearth.ca.

Native Earth is thrilled to partner with Native Women in the Arts to open this year’s festival with a special presentation by senior Indigenous artist, and founding member of Spiderwoman Theater, Gloria Miguel (Kuna/Rappahannock). Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue tells the story of a female Elder as she recounts her daily life and the challenges of being a ‘senior’ in our culture.

I Call Myself Princess, by award-winning screen and stage actress, and founding member of Turtle Gals, Jani Lauzon (Métis), explores the complex world of "Indian" identity through the world of Opera and the journey of Métis Opera student William Moreinis. Lauzon borrows passages from the turn of the century opera Shanewis: The Robin Woman, based on the life of Mezzo Soprano Tsianina Redfeather.

Rounding out the first week of the festival is Paddle Song by Dinah Christie and Tom Hill, the story of E. Pauline Johnson the Mohawk storyteller who gained international fame for her poems and performances celebrating her First Nations heritage. This performance features Turtle Gals member Cheri Maracle (Mohawk), a multi-award nominated artist known for her film and television roles on the critically acclaimed series 'Blackstone', 'Blackfly', 'Moccasin Flats', and the award-winning film 'Tkaronto.'

The second week of Weesageechak Begins to Dance 27 will feature eleven playwrights, six dancers, New Zealand’s Tawata Productions, and four emerging playwrights from Native Earth’s intensive playwrights’ training program – Animikii. The eleven playwrights include Monique Mojica (Kuna/Rappahannock), daughter of Gloria Miguel and second generation of Spiderwoman Theater, with her work Side Show Freaks and Circus Injuns. Tantoo Cardinal (Cree), considered by many as the world’s most widely recognized Indigenous actress (Dances With Wolves, Where the Rivers Flow North, and Legends of the Fall), turns her talents towards writing for this festival, bringing audiences No Fixed Address.

Native Earth is thrilled to host two of Canada’s most recognized Indigenous playwrights Drew Hayden Taylor (Curve Lake) and Daniel David Moses (Delaware), sharing their new works The Boneyard Blues and Crazy Dave Goes to Town (respectively). Drew Hayden Taylor is a past nominee for the Governor General Award for Fiction and has won accolades such as the Chalmers Award and Dora Mavor Moore Award for Playwriting. Daniel David Moses’ multiple honours include nominations for the Governor General’s Literary Award for Drama and being short-listed for the 2005 Siminovitch Award. He is a past winner of a Chalmers Fellowship and the James Buller Memorial Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Theatre.

Native Earth welcomes two former Playwrights-In-Residence to Weesageechak Begins to Dance 27: Ken T. Williams (Cree), award-winning playwright, with his work In Care, and Keith Barker (Métis), the recipient of the Saskatoon and Area award for excellence in playwriting in 2013, who shares his newest work The Last Few Steps to My Death.

For Immediate Release
**Victorian Secret** by multi-disciplinary artist and Dora-nominated Spy Dénommé-Welch (Algonquin) and Catherine Magowan, comes to us from their co-founded An Indie(n) Rights Reserve. Magowan has been heard on CBC Radio 2, both as a musician and composer/arranger.

Emerging playwright Cliff Cardinal (Cree/Lakota), son of prominent Canadian Indigenous actress Tantoo Cardinal (Cree), brings his latest work *romanceship* to the festival. Winner of SummerWorks’ Spotlight Award for Performance, as well as Theatre Passe Muraille’s Emerging Artist Award and Buddies in Bad Times’ Vanguard Award for Risk and Innovation, Cardinal will also be featured in Native Earth Performing Arts’ 2014-2015 main stage season.

Other emerging artists include Sable Sweetgrass (Blackfoot) with Awowakii, and Naja Dryrendom Graugaard (Inuit) with *Inua* about an inuk Elder who shares her life experiences with her granddaughter in one last effort to avoid disappearing in a world of oblivion, living on only in the memory of her descendants.

**Native Earth Performing Arts** is putting a spotlight on dance and dedicating an entire evening to new dance pieces by Indigenous artists. Kicking off this evening will be founding and current Artistic Director of *Kahawa Dance Theatre*, Santee Smith (Mohawk). Smith is a multiple Dora Award-winning choreography and performance, among others, winner of the Ontario Arts Council’s K.M. Hunter Award for Dance and winner of the Canada Council for the Art’s Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award for most outstanding mid-career artist in the field of dance.

The spotlight on dance also includes *Spine of the Mother* by Starr Muranko (Cree), the current Artistic Associate with *Raven Spirit Dance* in Vancouver, *RESURGENCE* by Christine Friday (First Nations), 2011 Grand Prize winner of Aboriginal Canada We’ve Got Talent! Contest, and *What’s Left of Us* by emerging Indigenous artist Justin ManyFingers (Blackfoot). Lilia Leon (Mestizo) will perform her latest dance piece, *Perdida*, on the evening with Animikiig playwrights.

Playwrights currently enrolled in the Native Earth Performing Arts’ Animikiig Training Program, an emerging playwrighting unit, will have a night dedicated to their work as well. Participants include Cheyenne Scott (Tsawout), Jessica Lea Fleming (Métis), Darla Contois (Cree), and Cathy Elliot (Mi’kmaq). These playwrights will be sharing excerpts of their work, and then continue to develop each piece through the Native Earth 2014-2015 season.

**Weesageechak Begins to Dance 27** celebrates Native Earth’s international partnerships, welcoming to the Aki Studio Theatre Waka/Ciimaan, a theatre company celebrating 10 years in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The 2014 Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award winner Yvette Nolan (Algonquin) and acclaimed Maori writer Hone Kouka will present a reading of *Waka/Ciimaan*, a new play by Canadian and Aotearoa artists. Also running in time with the festival will be a live-stream broadcast of “*Don’t Feed the Indians*” (A Divine Comedy Pageant) by La MaMa in New York.

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**About Native Earth Performing Arts**

Native Earth Performing Arts is Canada’s oldest professional Indigenous theatre company. Currently in our 32nd 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), 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.

Website: nativeearth.ca
Facebook: facebook.com/NativeEarthPerformingArts
Twitter: @nativeearth

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Weesageechak Begins to Dance 27 – Festival Schedule

WEEK 1

Wednesday November 12 @ 7:30pm
Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue by Gloria Miguel with Steve Elm.

Thursday, November 13 @ 7:30pm
I Call Myself Princess by Jani Lauzon

Friday, November 14 @ 7:30pm
“Don’t Feed the Indians” (A Divine Comedy Pageant) by La MaMa (from New York via live broadcast)

Friday November 14 @ 1pm
Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue by Gloria Miguel with Steve Elm.

Saturday, November 15 @ 7:30pm
Paddle Song by Dinah Christie & Tom Hill, featuring Cheri Maracle

Sunday, November 16 @ 2pm
Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue by Gloria Miguel with Steve Elm.

WEEK 2

Tuesday, November 18 @ 7:30pm
Side Show Freaks and Circus Injuns by Monique Mojica
Victorian Secret by Spy Dénommé-Welch & Catherine Magowan
The Last Few Steps to My Death by Keith Barker
Romanceship by Cliff Cardinal
Inua by Naja Dryrendom Graugaard
No Fixed Address by Tantoo Cardinal

Wednesday, November 19 @ 7:30pm
Emerging Artists from Animikiig Playwrights’ Program
Cheyenne Scott
Jessica Lea Fleming
Darla Contois
Cathy Elliot
Followed by Perdida by Lilia Leon

Thursday, November 20 @ 7:30pm
Crazy Dave Goes to Town by Daniel David Moses
Tawata Productions – Māori Whānau, Aotearoa (New Zealand)

Friday, November 21 @ 7:30pm
Spotlight on Dance
Untitled by Santee Smith
Spine of the Mother by Starr Murranko
RESURGENCE by Christine Friday
What’s Left of Us by Justin ManyFingers

Saturday, November 22 @ 7:30pm
The Boneyard Blues by Drew Hayden Taylor
Awowakii by Sable Sweetgrass
In Care by Ken T. Williams