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NATIVE EARTH PERFORMING ARTS
announces line-up for
Weesageechak Begins to Dance 28
an Annual Festival of Indigenous Works
Aki Studio, November 11 - 21, 2015

TORONTO, ON – Native Earth Performing Arts announces the line-up for its 28th annual festival of Indigenous work, **Weesageechak Begins to Dance**. The festival, which showcases new works and works in development by Indigenous performing artists, spans two weeks from **November 11th to 21st, 2015**.

With work from artists across Turtle Island, we kick off this year's festival with a staged reading of Vancouver's **Raes Calvert (Métis)** and **Sean Harris Oliver's Red Patch**. Set in Canada and France, **Red Patch** is a gripping historical drama following the life of a young Métis soldier during WWI.

Festival audiences will be treated to an exclusive double bill of Gemini Award-winning, and legendary Indigenous artists, **Jani Lauzon (Métis)** and **Michelle Thrush (Cree)**. British Columbia-born and Toronto-based three-time Dora Mavor Moore-nominee, **Jani Lauzon (Métis)** brings audiences **Prophecy Fog**, a personal account of place, identity and prophecies inspired by Lauzon's journey to Giant Rock in the Mojave Desert. The evening continues with **Find Your Own Inner Elder**, in which Canadian Screen Award-nominee and Alberta artist **Michelle Thrush** shares memories, teachings and humour.

Returning from Weesageechak 27 is award-winning Cree playwright and filmmaker from George Gordon First Nation, Saskatchewan, **Kenneth T. Williams**. Williams joins us with an expanded version of his overwhelming success, **In Care**, the emotional drama about a mother's fight to get her children out of foster care and her struggles with the system she is up against.

Audiences may recognize past festival company members featured as playwrights in this year's festival: **Waawaate Fobister (Anishnaabe)**, **Herbie Barnes (Ojibway)**, and **Garret C. Smith (Blackfoot)**. Dora Award-winning **Fobister** brings **Red Lady, Red Chief, reD reD reD Lady**, a comical take on band election politics; Manitoulin Island-born **Barnes** tells a coming-of-age story centered around an unlikely hero in his play **Bent Boy**; and **Smith's Deadbeats** focuses on three Blackfoot warriors who have volunteered to travel south in search of the ever-decreasing buffalo two years after the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877.

Selected emerging writers graduating from Native Earth's **Animikiig Playwrights Program** will showcase the continued development of their pieces **Aluasa'sit** by **Cathy Elliott (Irish/Mi'kmaq/Acadian)** and **White Man's Indian** by **Darla Contois (Cree)**. Native Earth is also proud to introduce Weesageechak audiences to emerging Obijbwe playwright, Thunder Bay-born Humber graduate, **Yolanda Bonnell**, and her heartbreaking piece, **bug**, which explores abandonment and addiction.

As always, Weesageechak is not only a festival for theatre, but also for dance, and this year Native Earth is stepping it up a notch with dance making up nearly half of this year's festival programming.

Native Earth welcomes Montreal-based dancer and choreographer **Lara Kramer** (Ojibwa/Cree), presenting the Toronto premiere of her piece **Tame** on two nights in the festival. **Tame** is a chaotic, voyeuristic examination of boundaries, fears and desires.

We've also invited Vancouver's **Raven Spirit Dance** back to the festival with **Earth Song**, a double-bill featuring two ambitious dance works from choreographers **Starr Muranko** (Moose Cree First Nation) and the award-winning **Michelle Olson** (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation). Muranko's **Spine of the Mother**, is an innovative collaboration between Indigenous artists in Canada and Peru, and Olson's **Northern Journey**, is a duet following a trail back into memory.

Other works from Vancouver-based dancers include **Steppin'** by **Jeanette Kotowich** (Cree-Métis), **Equating Echoes** by **Nyla Carpentier** (Tahltan/Kaska) and **David Newberry**, and **Compass** by **Olivia C. Davies** (Anishnawbe-Métis). Native Earth is also proud to introduce Weesageechak audiences to North Carolina-born, Cherokee/Mattamuskeet dancer **Maura Garcia** and her piece **Ahwisgvsgo'i**.

Festival audiences who remember the last year's dynamic duet by Dora Mavor Moore and Gemini Award-nominated dancer **Brian Solomon** (Métis/Anishnaabe/Irish) and Blackfoot dancer **Justin Many Fingers** will be excited to see the work the two are bringing to Weesageechak 28. Dancing separately, Ontario-born Solomon offers an inspiring view of the Cree world view in 1974 in his piece **the NDN way**, and Many Fingers explores the Baker Massacre of his home province of Alberta with his exciting new piece **OKATOKS**.

Finally, for its 28th year, Native Earth is introducing a new addition to **Weesageechak Begins to Dance** festival: the **Weesageechak Professional Development Series**, featuring workshops, panels, and other special initiatives aimed at training and informing the Indigenous and theatre communities of Toronto. More details on this exciting initiative to come.

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 28 LINE-UP – Week One

Wednesday November 11 @ 7:30 pm

Red Patch by Raes Calvert & Sean Harris Oliver

Thursday November 12 & Saturday November 14 @ 7:30 pm

Tame by Lara Kramer

Friday November 13 @ 7:30 pm

bug by Yolanda Bonnell

Red Lady, Red Chief, reD rED RED Lady by Waawaate Fobister

Bent Boy by Herbie Barnes

Sunday November 15 @ 12:00 pm

The Exchange Experience: Validating 500 Years of First Nation History
a Workshop with Suzanne Keptwo

WEESAGEECHAK BEGINS TO DANCE 28 LINE-UP – Week Two

Tuesday November 17 @ 7:30 pm

Aluasa'sit by Cathy Elliott
White Man's Indian by Darla Contois

Wednesday November 18 @ 7:30 pm

Steppin' by Jeannette Kotowich
the NDN way by Brian Solomon
Equating Echoes by Nyla Carpentier & David Newberry
Compass by Olivia C. Davies
Ahwisgvsgo'i by Maura Garcia

Thursday November 19 @ 7:30 pm

Prophecy Fog by Jani Lauzon
Find Your Own Inner Elder by Michelle Thrush

Friday November 20 @ 7:30 pm

Earth Song by Raven Spirit
OKATOKS by Justin Many Fingers

Saturday November 21 @ 7:30 pm

Deadbeats by Garret C. Smith
In Care by Kenneth T. Williams

Evening Tickets: \$15

Workshop: Pay What You Can

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 33rd 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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