

March 16, 2023 - Please include in your news items and editorial plans

**Native Earth Performing Arts
presents the World Premiere of
NIIZH**

**Written by Joelle Peters
Directed by Desirée Leverenz**

"I hope I never forget this place. Even more, I hope that it never forgets me."

Niizh, written by **Joelle Peters**, is a coming-of-age comedy inspired by YA romance novels read as a teen that will have its world premiere as part of the current Native Earth Performing Arts season, April 12-30, 2023 at Aki Studio.

Set on a reserve in Southwestern Ontario, the play follows the youngest of the 'Little' family, Lenna Little, who prepares to leave home for the first time. In the midst of this she meets Sam Thomas, who has returned to the reserve after many years away. Is there a meet-cute? Is there a fish fry? Is there a sax solo? You'll have to wait and see!

"Joelle can write the rez. Conveying the history, the hardship, but more than anything the humour and the beauty of our complicated communities. And to see those spaces on stage is a powerful thing." - Falen Johnson

Niizh, directed by **Desirée Leverenz**, will star **Theresa Cutknife** as Lenna Little, **Kole Durnford** as Sam Thomas, **Jason McDonald** as Billy Little, **Aren Okemaysim** as Jay Little, and **PJ Prudat** as KC Thomas.

Joelle Peters (she/her) is an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) actor/playwright from Walpole Island First Nation in Southwestern Ontario. She is the Interim Artistic Director of Native Earth Performing Arts, and a graduate of Seneca College's Acting for Camera and Voice program. Selected theatre credits: *Embodying Power and Place* (New Harlem/Native Earth/Nightwood), *Mistatim* (Red Sky Performance), *The Election* (Nightwood/Theatre Direct/Commonboots/Theatre Passe Muraille), *Women of the Fur Trade* (Toronto Fringe). Selected film/TV credits: *Shoresy* (Crave/Hulu), *In Her City* (Raven West Films). In 2020, Joelle was selected as the Siminovitch Prize Protégée by her mentor and dear friend Tara Beagan. Joelle's plays include *Frozen River* (co-written with Carrie Costello and Michaela Washburn, 2021 Sharon Enkin Plays for Young People Award), *Niizh* (developed in Native Earth's Animikiig Creator's Unit and commissioned by the Blyth Festival), and *Do you remember?* (an audio play commissioned by Burnt Thicket

Theatre, supported by the Pemmican Collective & Punctuate! Theatre Playwrights' Unit).

desirée leverenz is a theatre director, creator, mover and shaker, who will never wash treaty 6 soil from beneath her feet. she exists here to bring questions, and reveal stories and conversations, for artists and audiences alike, so that we can all dream of a better future together. desirée is attracted to epic stories: epic in content, in aesthetic, and in spirit. she's received institutional education from the university of alberta (BA), and york university (MFA), and has directed in large institutions and quiet back alleys. desirée has a particular affinity for working on art that is devised in nature and loves to play with traditional text in a way to transform ideas and institutions that are no longer serving us.

Niizh

April 12- 30, 2023

OPENING NIGHT: FRIDAY, April 14

Talkback following the opening performance

Thursday – Saturday @ 7:30 PM

Sunday at 2PM

Aki Studio, Daniels Spectrum

585 Dundas Street East, Toronto

Pay-What-You-Can Tickets: \$10, \$20, \$30

Available online at nativeearth.ca, or by phone at 416.531.1402

For more details: nativeearth.ca/shows/niizh/

#neNiizh

Written by Joelle Peters

Directed by Desirée Leverenz

Starring

Theresa Cutknife, Kole Durnford, Jason McDonald, Aren Okemaysim, PJ Prudat

Lighting and Projections Designer: Hailey Verbonac

Set Designer: Nancy Perrin

Sound Designer: Jenna Geen

Costume Designer: Nishina Loft

Head of Props: Sarah Yuen

Stage Manager: Jessica Campbell-Maracle

Assistant Stage Manager: Dylan Tate-Howarth

Wardrobe Assistant: Halle Turner

Choreography Consultant: Aria Evans

Production Manager / Technical Director: Julia Howman
Producer: Lucy Coren

Native Earth Performing Arts is Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company. Currently in its 37th 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. nativeearth.ca

Media Contact: Damien Nelson, damien@wantandable.ca