

**The Canada Council for the Arts**

**The Developmental Support to  
Aboriginal Theatre Organizations  
STUDY**

**Marie Clements  
December 2005**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Executive Summary	p.1
Pre-Amble	p.2
Forward – Aboriginal Theatre	p.4
Aboriginal Theatre – an Introduction	p.6
Chart 1	p.13
Canadian Theatre – Aboriginal Theatre	p.14
Chart 2	p. 20
DSATO STUDY – Questions and Answers	p.25
Recommendations	p.30
Works Cited	p.32
Appendices	p.34
Table A	
Table B	
Aboriginal Theatre Productions	p.39

## Executive Summary

After interviewing over forty Aboriginal theatre practitioners across the country; after sending email after email looking for answers to questions; after talking to mainstream theatre practitioners and after being in attendance at the newly formed IPPA association, a variety of theatre events, new works festivals and theatre tables, I would like to thank the many Aboriginal artists before me and to the many I have talked with for their incredible contribution and legacy, for their deep vision and strength, and for their generosity in the movement forward.

In Spirit,  
Marie Clements

“Take this ...for instance... It’s yours. Do with it what you will. Make it a topic of discussion group at a scholarly conference. Put it on the web. Forget about it. But just don’t say in years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you would have heard this story.

You’ve heard it now.”

*Thomas King, The Truth About Stories. 2003*

## PRE-AMBLE

The Theatre Section has supported the *Developmental Support for Aboriginal Theatre Organizations* program (DSATO) since 1996. The program supports emerging Aboriginal companies as well as the development of projects by established Aboriginal companies. During discussion and consultation with the Aboriginal theatre community and the DSATO assessment committees and applicants, the Theatre Section identified the need for a review on the production of Aboriginal works. This review will be based both on qualitative and quantitative evaluations within the Aboriginal and the larger Canadian community, in Canada and abroad.

The main purpose of the study is to identify success stories, current challenges, and recommendations for action in the Aboriginal and larger Canadian theatre communities, the Canada Council for the Arts and other funders. Our objective is to identify specific issues and challenges related to the production of Aboriginal works and provide options and recommendations for future initiatives and developments.

DSATO provides developmental support to Aboriginal theatre organizations. Aboriginal peoples include Status, Non-Status, Metis and Inuit people.

Developmental Support refers to contribution towards the cost of producing theatre works and towards the costs associated with the professional development of Aboriginal theatre artists and organizations.

This program has two components: *established* organizations and *emerging* organizations.

**Established:** Companies, groups or collectives that have been in existence for five years or more in sustained activity; are currently not receiving multi-year operating grant support and are deemed to have achieved a level of stability that takes them beyond the “developmental stage.” They are not eligible to apply to this program but will receive a consolidation to their operating grant.

**Emerging:** Companies, groups or collectives that have been in existence for less than five years in sustained activity and demonstrate a commitment to professional artistic practice according to the Canada Council for the Arts' definition:

- specialized training in the field (not necessarily in academic institutions)
- recognition by one's peers (artists working in the same artistic tradition)
- a history of public presentation or publication
- commitment to devoting more time to artistic activity, if financially feasible

## FOREWARD

For the basis of this study I will use the term “Aboriginal theatre” to describe this specific form of Aboriginal artistic expression within the Canadian Theatre context but in doing so I would like to caution the reader that this definition can be misleading. Since the term “Aboriginal theatre” is only thirty years old one might assume that Aboriginal theatre is only thirty years old, which would be a disservice to the understanding of Aboriginal theatre as a practice that has been in existence since time immemorial and that has evolved with the times and the tools of the teller regardless of its present name.

It is tempting to find terms that create boundaries, and therefore clarity, but to deny this history is to deny its insistent voice and survival and to simplify a complex cosmology that connects a way of living with art and community. This unspoken gravity is what is still informing the practice, form, and expression that Aboriginal artists are creating in, and will not be limited by.

Canadian Theatre has been documented as being in existence in this country at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many Canadian theatre theorists, however, would argue that its true identity and therefore existence was not “discovered” until the 1960’s when a growing national voice begin to emerge and take the stage as contemporary Canadian work. These practitioners recognized their identity as Canadians by virtue of environment, culture and politics while still holding on to their genetic and learned tradition and forms of western European theatre.

In turn, Aboriginal theatre practitioners know their identity as the first peoples of this land by virtue of the fact that they were the first people of this environment, culture and political climate. All the same, the ability has remained to incorporate immigrant cultures while still holding on to the genetic and learned traditions and forms of Aboriginal being.

As far apart as Aboriginal theatre and Canadian theatre can appear, both have had the recent history of “discovery” to prompt the question: What makes Canadian theatre Canadian? And what makes Aboriginal theatre Aboriginal? For those that have been questioning one, or the other, or both thoughts of being, one thing is for certain – there are no two answers alike.

If this is still the question, then perhaps it might be safe to say that Aboriginal Canadian theatre is indeed thirty years young.

## ABORIGINAL THEATRE – an INTRODUCTION

MC: What is Native Theatre?

Yvette Nolan: You can never know while you are in it.

MC: Thanks.

*-Interview with Yvette Nolan, 2005.*

Even in these modern times the term “Aboriginal theatre” does not fully describe, or adequately encircle what Aboriginal theatre artists are engaged in; more often than not the term defies itself in action of the practice, form and expression of theatre that is Aboriginal. What the term is consistent with is an Aboriginal theatre’s world vision of incorporating a western approach to theatre while ultimately always creating, or commenting on, its own synthesis that is both traditional and contemporary.

Aboriginal theatre in effect strives to create a whole experience that can be connected through many disciplines be it theatre, movement, mask, dance, song, ritual, myth or multi-media. This in itself makes “Aboriginal theatre” a unique and highly diversified art form in Canada; one that still has its roots firmly in its cultural beginnings and practice, yet is informed by the very survival of Aboriginal peoples and their belief that art is in the living and is in direct relation to the land, and to the witness. In this light nothing is disconnected and this organic wholeness has extended to include the western form of theatre as “our story-telling”.

“This country has never embraced its mythology because its mythology is our mythology. It’s not that we haven’t been willing to share it”.

*Interview with Ian Ross, 2005.*

It is hard to speak of Aboriginal art, and in this case Aboriginal theatre, without speaking of the right to practice. Certainly, its very stubbornness to exist despite the odds is in direct historical reflection of its people and their will to survive.

The evolution of Aboriginal theatre is one that mirrors the survival of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. By this I mean that the art form has also weathered past and present social, political and cultural movements and reinvented these influences into a hybrid of artistic expression that reflects the Aboriginal person, the community they exist in, and the greater world that they have been favourably and unfavourably affected by.

This ever-churning personal, historical and political kaleidoscope is often what colours the Aboriginal perspective outwards and onto the stage, and places Aboriginal artists in Canada in the unique position of knowing more about the dominant culture, than that culture knows about them. This generational assimilation has afforded survival with acute societal costs but has also bred generations of Aboriginal artists who have survived and ultimately transcended a world that has demanded an unwavering presence in their living rooms, their school books, in the minds of justice, in the houses of belief, on their tongues, and in their genes, and yet still failed to quiet their authentic voice.

It is no surprise that the first theatre production to expose the possibility of an Aboriginal voice in the Canadian landscape was *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, by George Ryga, produced in 1968 by the Vancouver Playhouse in Vancouver, BC. This production was, and continues to be, a landmark production in Canadian Theatre and its relationship to the Aboriginal voice within it. It remains to be an outstanding example of the complexity of the relationship between Canadian theatre and Aboriginal theatre in all areas of creation, production and dissemination including identity, cultural appropriation, social justice, theatre activism and inter-racial casting. It continues to raise the question: Is it Aboriginal theatre, or Canadian theatre with Aboriginal themes?

“The first impression of any kind of representation of the Aboriginal experience I saw was of course George Ryga’s, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, and of course it was performed by white actors.”

*Interview with Bob White, 2005.*

Almost forty years after the production of *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* at the Vancouver Playhouse and its subsequent national tour and international productions, the production still stands in the minds of Canadian theatre professionals as the watershed moment when Aboriginal theatre began to exist: not because it was written or directed or produced or sometimes even performed by Aboriginal

performers, but because there were Aboriginal people on stage portraying the Aboriginal experience in Canada.

*“The Rez Sisters marked the beginning of Contemporary Native Theatre because it’s when people stood up and said, ‘Hey, what’s this?’ People are telling their own story and they’re doing it well”.*

*Drew Hayden Taylor. Aboriginal Drama and Theatre, 2004.*

This watershed moment is not considered a watershed moment across the board. Aboriginal theatre professionals believe the moment Aboriginal theatre truly came alive was with the production of *The Rez Sisters* in 1982 and its subsequent national tour and international productions, written by playwright and artistic director Tomson Highway and produced by Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto.

*“Once in a while we have a few break-through and then you hope it doesn’t close up too quickly.”*

*Interview with Marrie Mumford, 2005.*

Ironically, these two very different animals that make up Canadian Aboriginal theatre are the two most likely examples to come to mind when asked for success stories of Aboriginal theatre and indeed they were, and are, “perfect” in memory. Almost too perfect perhaps. We have to acknowledge that they have left a profound legacy that is still being felt today. However, it would seem that if we only recall success by these two illustrious and rebellious acts of theatre in Canada (*The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* and *The Rez Sisters*) and none other, then we also have to acknowledge that these two disparate theatre productions also represent the few – and in some cases the last – time an Aboriginal theme or playwright has been produced on many of the mainstream stages of Canada.

With no logical path between the breathtaking success of the beginning, and the present, where did Aboriginal theatre go when mainstream theatre was not watching?

*“I guess what theatre training is all about...[is] to get to the language of the heart and spirit as that is all that is now open to us, and whatever*

words, sounds, music and movement we have come up with is our language, the language of theatre, which is the language of the trees and birds”.

*Floyd Favel Starr, Aboriginal Drama and Theatre, 2004.*

A wave of Aboriginal training initiatives hit the back roads and inner cities of Canada deepening the expression of the Aboriginal experience, both rural and urban. A development of multi-disciplinary forms began that relied heavily on the intimate integration of various Aboriginal cultural practices but were informed by the western thought of theatre practice.

“Native Theatre School... [is where] many of the now successful theatre directors, producers, musicians, visual artists and actors were created. I feel that the programs’ success was due to the dedication of Jim Buller, not to create actors, directors, and producers but to build a strong healthy Native arts community.”

*Interview with Rosa John, 2005.*

The Native Summer School founded by James Buller became a hotbed of activity where generations of Aboriginal theatre artists would cut their teeth and bring their own brand of theatre to the world. The school inspired a chain of grassroots Aboriginal training initiatives across the country including: the Centre for Indigenous Theatre; Four Winds Theatre; Sen’Klip Native Theatre Company; Spirit Song Theatre and Kehewin Native Performance.

“This school began as a small summer project... It came out of a dream, a vision...”

*Interview with Rose Stella, 2005.*

In tandem, the “self-made” Aboriginal artists who embodied this movement also began to articulate their particular voice and vision in their own artistic aesthetic. The persistent talent of this ground-breaking generation is still being felt today in as many different ways as the individuality and vitality of their work. These artists and their works include: Maria Campbell – *Jessica, One More Time*; Shirley Cheechoo – *Your Dream was Mine* and *Shadow People*; Yves Sioui Durand – *The Sun Riser, Hamlet, Kmukamch L’Asierindien, Le Rendez-Vous- Kiskimew, Le Trilogie*

and *Iwouskea et Tawiskaron*; Daniel David Moses – *Coyote Song, Almighty Voice and his Wife, The Dreaming Beauty, Big Buck City and Coyote City*; Marrie Mumford, Monique Monjica – *Pocohontas and The Blue Spots*; Tomson Highway – *The Rez Sisters, Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapaskasing, Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout, The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito, Caribou Song, The Sage, the Dancer and the Fool and Aria*; Rene Highway; Rosa and Melvin John, Margo Kane – *Moonlodge, The River-Home and Confessions of an Indian Cowboy* and Makka Kleist.

Similar to the rise of alternative theatre in Canada that experienced “a mass arrival of young professionals from theatre schools”<sup>1</sup>, Aboriginal theatre began to feel the growing presence of an impressive body of trained Aboriginal theatre professionals beginning to take shape as Native theatre companies. In 1983, Native Earth Performing Arts founded by Tomson Highway, in Toronto, became the first professional Aboriginal theatre company funded by Canada Council. This was followed by De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group in Manitoulin Island in Ontario (Shirley Cheechoo – 1984), Les Ondinnok Theatre in Montreal (Yves Sioui Durand/Catherine Joncas – 1985), Kehewin Native Performance (Rosa and Melvin John – 1991) in Alberta, and Vancouver’s Full Circle: First Nations Performance (Margo Kane – 1991).

Their existence in the third and fourth waves of major trends in Canadian theatre put them in a theatrical environment where there was an increase in women’s work and the work of diversity, and a rise in the establishment of alternative theatre. All of these dynamics were welcome bedfellows for Aboriginal theatre whose ever changing controversial forms could find allies among a growing new voice of theatre.

From this solidifying foundation a recognizable circle became the standard, connecting a way of living in art (Aboriginal culture) to a way of surviving (social issue theatre) to the professional theatre world (western theatre) and around again. Within this, seasoned Aboriginal professionals continued to make the training of younger Aboriginal artists and youth a “success story” not just for the promise of creating the next generation of “Aboriginal stars” for television and film but for the health and well being of their societies.

The 1990’s brought about a major movement in Canadian Theatre that was a direct reflection of the ever present and ever changing face of Canadians. As demographics began to add up on either side of the middle, the growing new

---

<sup>1</sup> Andre Courchesne and Roger Gaudet, *The Evolution of Arts Administration in Canadian Theatre*, 2003

immigrant voice and the old Aboriginal voice launched head-on into a decade that would be categorized by Canada Council as “Opening the world – new artistic voices and new audiences”. The identification of “cultural diversity” as being “one of its priorities for the 1990’s”<sup>2</sup> allowed the opening of a new door to Aboriginal artists, and “in collaboration with the Aboriginal Arts Advisory Committee and with all sections of the Canada Council, the Aboriginal Arts Secretariat has the primary responsibility for developing policies, programs, strategic initiatives and budgets to support Aboriginal Peoples artistic practices in all arts disciplines”<sup>3</sup>.

“For most of us we are orphans by choice so what is left to us is to form an orphanage. I know this sounds silly, but a theatre group with common goals and vision where a family and community is created is in a sense an orphanage. Our art, idiosyncrasies, make it impossible to live elsewhere, we search for our own kind and sooner or later succeed and set up fruitful working relationships.”

*Floyd Favel Starr. Aboriginal Drama and Theatre, 2004.*

From this movement the mounting wave of a second generation of Aboriginal artists was about to build on the “orphanages” that had been established. These artists include; Columpa Bobb – *Dinky*; Ben Cardinal – *Generic Warrior* and *No-Name Indians*; Kenneth Chartelle; Marie Clements – *Age of Iron*, *Urban Tattoo*, *The Unnatural* and *Accidental Women*, *The Girl who Swam Forever*, *Hours of Water*, *Now Look What You Made Me Do* and *Burning Vision*; Joseph Dandurand – *No Totem for my Story* and *Please do not Touch the Indians*; Drew Hayden Taylor – *Toronto at Dreamers Rock*, *The Baby Blues*, *Only Drunks and Children tell The Truth*, *Buz’ Gem Blues* and *Someday*; Penny Gummerson – *Wawatay*; Alanis King – *The Art Show*, *The Tommy Prince Story*, *The Manitoulin Incident* and *If Jesus Met Nanabush*; Sandra Laronde; Micheal Lawrenchuck – *The Trial of Kicking Bear*; Lenoard Linklatter – *Sixty Below*; Jani Lauzon; Michelle St. John; Monique Mojica – *The Triple Truth* and *The Scrubbing Project*; Yvette Nolan – *Annie Mae’s Movement* and *Traps*; William Merasty – *Fireweed*; Ian Ross – *Farewell*, *The Gap*, *Bevrea’d of Light* and *Baloney*; Sharon Shorty – *Trickster Visits the Old Folks Home*; Floyd Favel Star – *Lady of Silences*, *The Sleeping Land*, *Governor of Dew*, *The Requiem*, *Antigone* and *House of Sonya*, and Rose Stella. In turn their body of work has continued to push

<sup>2</sup> Andre Courchesne and Roger Gaudet, *The Evolution of Arts Administration in Canadian Theatre*, 2003

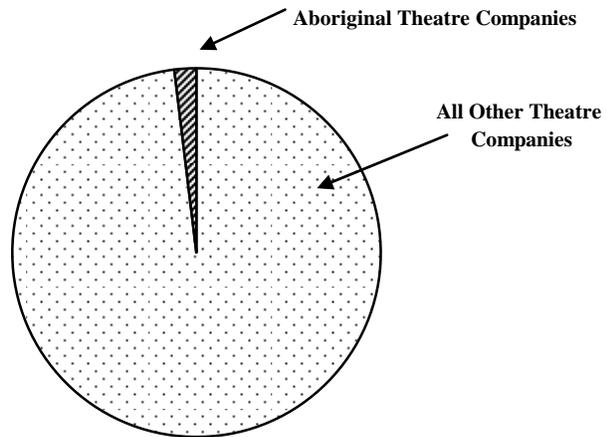
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the boundaries of form, access, language, and Aboriginal stereotypes within theatre.

As tradition would have it, of these individual artists (and taking on their characteristics) Aboriginal companies were formed, including: Takwakin Performance Laboratory (Floyd Favel Starr – 1997); urban ink productions (Marie Clements – 2001); Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble (Michelle St. John, Monique Mojica, Jani Lauzon – 1999); Gwaandak Theatre Adventures (Leonard Linklater – 1999); Red Roots (Micheal Lawrenchuk – 1993); Rainbow Players (Marlena Dolan ); Red Sky Performance ( Sandra Laronde – 2000); Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company (Kenneth Charlette – 1999), and Native Earth with past artistic directors Drew Hayden Taylor, Alanis King and presently Yvette Nolan.

Much of this movement can be attributed to the frenetic energy of the past decades but also the sheer number of Aboriginal artists taking space in order to create in a theatre world that was beginning to hear, however spastically, that an Aboriginal voice in Canadian Theatre was not only here – it had been in existence whether they had been watching it or not, whether they were ready to acknowledge it or not – and it was accumulating into a strong and undeniable entity unto its own.

**Chart 1**  
**Operating Grants to Aboriginal Theatre Companies**  
**as Share of All Theatre Operating Grants, 2004-2005**



- In 2004-2005, Aboriginal theatre companies made up 3.0% of the total number of companies in the operating grants program, but accounted for 1.8% of funding awarded through the program. •

### **Aboriginal Theatre Companies and Overall Theatre Operating Grants Program**

	<b>1996-97</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>	<b>1999-00</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>
Aboriginal Cos. #	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
All Theatre Cos #	132	146	158	158	164	169	169	167	164
% of Total	2.3%	2.1%	2.5%	2.5%	2.4%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Aboriginal Cos. \$	113,000	134,400	171,000	175,000	177,500	223,500	223,500	323,500	331,750
All Theatre Cos. \$	13,691,850	16,841,877	15,230,350	15,263,100	15,728,300	17,692,700	17,633,700	17,646,450	18,008,050
% of Total	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%	1.3%	1.3%	1.8%	1.8%

• Source: Chart 1 - Claire McCaughey, Research Manager, Canada Council for the Arts. 2005

## Canadian Theatre – Aboriginal Theatre

Aboriginal theatre is like Canadian theatre, only different. Our histories of origin are different as is the subsequent ideology of practice, process and production. Most contemporary Aboriginal theatre artists were drawn to Canadian theatre because they innately believed that it was a universal art form that could inspire cohesion, could embrace difference, and produce change. As craved by all orphans, it was a forum for dialogue, for acceptance and for inclusion and this is a universal idea that most contemporary theatre artists of any race, culture or class can identify with.

But this ideology is not the reality for most Aboriginal theatre artists practicing theatre in the Canadian theatre landscape. Aboriginal Theatre, like the development and establishment of the alternative theatre movement in Canadian theatre, is about a voice accumulating to create nothing less than a revolution to be heard and to form its own identity within a greater body. It is only in hindsight and after forty years of Canadian contemporary theatre that one can see how important this coming of age was for the development of a true Canadian identity: An identity to be represented not only to and for ourselves, but for a world to understand who we are by means of our stories and how we choose to tell them. As Canadian contemporary theatre moves into middle age it is important to understand that it came from a good family that has afforded it certain unquestionable privileges that are not universal.

In simplistic terms, Aboriginal theatre did not, and does not have a great grandfather benefactor. There were no established theatres that Aboriginal artists moved into; no theatre standard infrastructures to carry on; no institutional support of resources; no theatre country clubs or networks; no playwright resource centers and few places that were willing to share above lip service.

“I think what’s been successful is that Aboriginal theatre has emerged and created a movement across this country despite deplorable levels of funding from the Canadian government and institutions. We as Native people are extremely successful at working with next to nothing”.

*Interview with Marrie Mumford, 2005.*

Aboriginal theatre was born into Canadian theatre naked with only the spirit it came in with and “has built its infrastructures brick by brick, its audience one seat at a time”<sup>4</sup> and a theatrical form that is distinctly its own and evolving. Like most surviving forces Aboriginal artists are accustomed to taking diverse fractions of their beliefs, lives, and art and reconstructing them to a hybrid of possibility. This possibility has extended itself into a movement within Canadian theatre and like all new old cries for identity, it brings with it more questions than answers and a dynamic raw force whose true success can only be measured in the future by what happens in the present. This can come in a political form, a cultural reform, or both.

In contrast Canadian Theatre is now the established norm. and words to identify its past glory days as “revolution” have now been replaced by legacy, transition and succession. Aboriginal Theatre at present is at a critical time in history and what direction it takes, what potential it reaches, is in tangible relation to what investment not only the Aboriginal artists and Aboriginal theatre companies continue to bring to it, but what Canadian theatre as a whole makes room for as part of itself.

Perhaps the universal thread between Canadian theatre and Aboriginal theatre is the very human nature of theatre. That it remains a breathing art form allows it to take on the very human characteristics of its makers. What you don’t know will not necessarily kill you in theatre, but fear of “the unknown” or “the other” has its own way of making itself be silently heard, and loudly judged, where decisions are made in the creation, production, and dissemination of Aboriginal theatre.

Like the history of Aboriginal people in Canada, a vast majority of Aboriginal theatre artists know “the other”. They know western theatre like it was their own because they have been taught it like it was a truism. Many of them know western theatre so well they know what they like, and what they don’t, and they have made it a practice to pick and choose what will fit into their vision of the art world.

Generally, most Western theatre artists don’t know enough Aboriginal theatre to compare one theatre production from another, one artistic creator’s vision, artistic aesthetic, or creative investigation from another. Overwhelmingly, they do understand that they don’t understand the many ways that Aboriginal artists

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Yvette Nolan. 2005.

choose to tell a story, and the form in which they do so, and the why. And maybe this is not such a surprising thing since most Aboriginal artists are in fact, still alive in the process. Aboriginal theatre does not, nor has it ever had a standard referred to as “the well made play”. Its forms are still evolving, succeeding and failing by even their own standards, and its artists are continually adding, refining, and integrating the modern tools they are in dialogue with.

“People don’t like to use the R word but it is systemic racism. People are unwilling to go beyond the stereotypes because I feel we are doing some great work, very successful work and the doors still are not opening....”

*Interview with Marrie Mumford, 2005.*

This is not just a philosophy – it is a form. And the form of Aboriginal theatre perhaps is the simplest and most complex reason there is “no room at the Inn”. What you don’t know in theatre won’t kill you, but it can kill the possibility. Most mainstream artistic directors will not program what they don’t know or understand, because they fear if they don’t know and understand it, their governing boards won’t either, and if their boards don’t know it and understand it there could be many problems, but the biggest one in terms of this argument is that ultimately their audiences won’t know and understand it and there will be no one in the seats, and no tickets sold. Period. No tickets sold. No money. No tickets sold. No corporate sponsors. No theatre. They will be fired. A backlash from an audience used to being fed a full season of “well made plays”. It could get very theatrical.

### **This and that**

(Knock. Knock.)

Mainstream Artistic Director: Who’s there?

Aboriginal Theatre Artist: Columpa Bobb.

(Pause.)

Mainstream Artistic Director: Columpa Bobb

Who?

(Door opens.)

Mainstream Artistic Director: Just kidding, I know you... “You should be in this ...you should be in that...”

Aboriginal Theatre Artist: Then why don’t you hire me (you know he was talking about Shakespeare and Chekhov...)

Mainstream Artistic Director: Oh no, no, no I’m doing this and that.

Aboriginal Artist: I said “Don’t be telling I should be doing this and that when you’re not going to hire me”.

*Interview re-enactment with Columpa Bobb, 2005.*

Although this scene might be overly dramatic, Canadian theatre is going through a resurgence of conservatism and this manifests itself in a kind of protectionism that is not just there for protectionism's sake: It is in response to a theatre climate that is fickle at best and almost delicate about its presence. With this very real challenge, mainstream artistic directors go with what they know and they make their risks calculated ones. This means that if a risk in programming is going to be lent to a new Canadian play, more often than not the offering will go to an old Canadian playwright.

### **We Just Can't Do It**

(Knock. Knock.)

Another Artistic Director: Who's there?

Aboriginal Artist: Turtle Gals

Another Artistic Director: Turtle Gals who? No...of course I know who you are...You guys are great...You guys are fantastic...keep it going...but we can't do it...."

Aboriginal Artists: Can't do what?

Another Artistic Director: We just can't do it.

*Interview re-enactment with Michelle St. John, 2005.*

One could argue that there is just not enough Aboriginal work being created to program into mainstream Canadian theatre. However, with the steady premieres of new work by both established and emerging Aboriginal theatre companies—and work that ranges from theatre for young audiences; to alternative and commercial; to hybrid forms of performance, dance, and theatre—it would seem the only limit to Aboriginal theatre being created and developed is theatre companies that have the will, or capacity to produce them.

There are refreshing exceptions to the above and these exceptions continue to be made with little exception by the same theatre companies and theatre leaders in mainstream Canadian theatre. The Firehall Arts Centre in Vancouver; The Globe Theatre in Saskatoon; Factory Theatre and Theatre Passe Murille in Toronto; The Manitoba Young Peoples Theatre in Winnipeg and Playwrights Workshop Montreal in Montreal are companies that continue to support and champion Aboriginal artists across the board. Their championship of Aboriginal actors,

playwrights and directors has begun to pay off in a substantial way for the profile and practice of many Aboriginal artists who have looked to them repeatedly for a point of access, and for the true point which is to actually get their work on stage. Perhaps the most hopeful development is that the investment has evolved over a number of projects and a mutual trust has been allowed to naturally formulate between creation partners.

Aboriginal theatre training initiatives have also matured and play an important role in the continued ecology of Aboriginal theatre. Continued success of the Center for Indigenous Theatre in Toronto, Full Circle; First Nations Performance's Ensemble Training in Vancouver, the many training programs of the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Centre in Saskatoon and the integration of Les Ondinnok's theatre program at the National Theatre School in Montreal have continued to encircle many of today's leading Aboriginal artists, their companies and their outreach to community, youth and emerging Aboriginal artists.

Other substantial successes can be witnessed in the access that contemporary new work festivals in Canada have offered Aboriginal creators and performers. Their inclusion in such national and international festivals as the Festival des Ameriques in Montreal (Yves Sioui Durand, 1985; Margo Kane, 1987; Micheal Lawrenchuk, 1999; and Marie Clements, 2001 and 2003) and the inclusion of Aboriginal work in the International Festival of Banff (Yves Sioui Durand, 1995), the new Magnetic North Festival (Marie Clements, 2003; Sheldon Elter, 2003; Tomson Highway, 2004), and the Belfry Theatre's new works festival ( Marie Clements, 1999; Margo Kane, 2003; Tomson Highway 2005) have exposed Canadian and international audiences to a high calibre of Aboriginal creators and their work. Moreover, it has validated these works of creation within the landscape of Canadian contemporary theatre. Home grown festivals such as The Weesagachuk Begins to Dance Festival out of Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto (in existence since 1989) has developed over ninety new Aboriginal theatrical works. Full Circle First Nations Performances in Vancouver has been bringing together established and emerging performers for their Talking Stick Festival since 2001. However, there exists no Aboriginal showcase of new work on a national level, and no existing national theatre festival that holds as a priority the networking, marketing, outreach and dissemination of Aboriginal theatrical work in Canada and abroad.

The "new Canadian creation" movement now established in the infrastructure of many Canadian mainstream theatre companies does offer hope to Aboriginal and diverse work, providing a workshop or two, but has had little real impact on

what makes it to the stage. At the very best, even the limited amount of Aboriginal work that has been developed within these institutions and brought to the stage has immediately been relegated to the “backstages”. This in itself is not a horrific place given the history of development of artists in Canadian theatre, but it continues to be the “back of the bus” for many senior Aboriginal artists that have been in practice for over thirty years.

The development of Aboriginal new works outside of Aboriginal theatre companies is a fragile exercise when most mainstream playwright resource centers, mainstream theatres and their attached theatre dramaturges have limited experience with working with Aboriginal creators and their forms, never mind the challenges of the work in creation: cultural protocol, the use of ritual, song, authentic languages, movement, image, use of media, mythology, western theatre and Aboriginal storytelling.

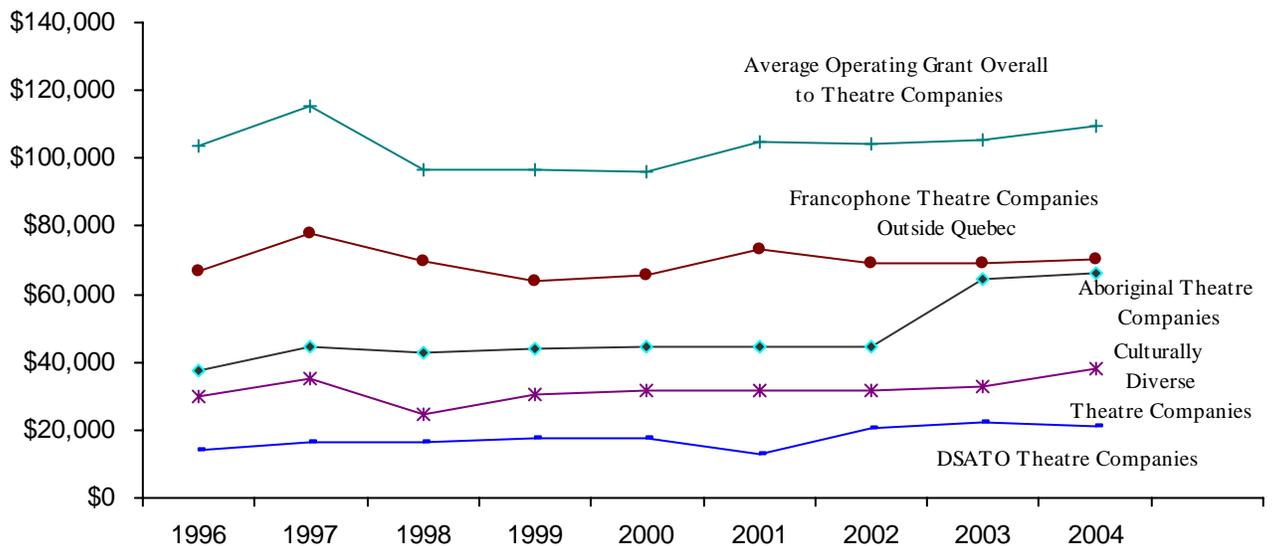
There is also a considerable difference between how Aboriginal creators choose to develop their work and the traditional form that western theatre takes from script, to workshop, to rehearsal, to premiere. Although there are many artistic processes of development that are continuing to diversify in mainstream theatre, most Aboriginal creators and their companies create over a longer development cycle. This is in direct relation to the mandates, philosophies and spirit in which they create, encircling their cultural community, contemporary and traditional styles, and including emerging artists and Aboriginal youth in the artistic process.

It is also due to the fact that most productions being produced by Aboriginal theatre companies are new works, with new sets of creation challenges and old sets of financial hills to climb. There are only five Aboriginal theatre companies on operating support from Canada Council and out of that five, only two have risen to the average level of funding that one hundred and sixty three mainstream theatre companies enjoy nation wide, while the remaining three— Full Circle First Nations Performance; Les Ondinnok Theatre, and the newly appointed Saskatchewan Native Theatre Centre— fall far below the average support to companies on operating throughout Canada. It is evident that the long term investment to two of the oldest Aboriginal theatre companies in Canada (Debajehmuhjig Theatre and Native Earth Performing Arts), has succeeded in establishing them as leaders and champions in the creation and production of Aboriginal work in Canada. It has also identified however, that in truth, the majority of Aboriginal theatre is being developed on the backs of the

incredibly small Aboriginal theatre companies that have little infrastructure yet are creating new Canadian work every time they create and produce.

While Aboriginal theatres are taking the risk to create new works and produce and premiere this work in the greater theatre ecology they are doing so while also educating their communities, developing and supporting emerging and established artists, building new marketing outreach strategies for new audiences and building in roads for new touring possibilities. They are trouble shooting fundraising programs vs. processes of creation and self training themselves and their skinny staff to be able to negotiate artistic leadership, quality and success of product according to mainstream industry and funding standards. The clear and constant obstacle is how to sustain a viable production record; the integrity of the creation process; the quality of the product, and the infrastructure to support the high number of grant applications for one, or more productions without annual, or multi-year funding. In addition, there exists no long term funding solution for the benefits of sustainability and long term vision.

**Chart 2**  
**Canada Council for the Arts,**  
**Average Grants Awarded Under Theatre Operating Program and DSATO Program,**  
**1996-97 to 2004-2005**



- The average operating grant for Aboriginal theatre companies is about 60% of that of the average overall for theatre companies.
- The average operating grant for Aboriginal theatre companies has historically been well below that of francophone theatre companies outside Quebec although it has increased in recent years to 94% of the level of the francophone companies.\*

While the majority of Aboriginal theatre companies creating and producing work have been supported by the *Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations* fund and while this has significantly enhanced the creation and production of Aboriginal work it is also important to note that the majority of these Aboriginal companies producing the majority of Aboriginal work are weighted at the very bottom of the funding scale.

Although recent initiatives have been introduced to address capacity building for Aboriginal theatre companies it would seem to be too little, too late for a number of Aboriginal theatre companies. Likewise for Aboriginal artists who have come to believe that the cost of continuing to practice under these adverse conditions is too high and ultimately too hopeless. The 'burn out' factor in Aboriginal theatre is a growing epidemic and a huge concern given that the track record of the creation and production of Aboriginal theatrical work has been predominately created and produced by Aboriginal theatre companies. Without Aboriginal theatre companies to produce Aboriginal work and without reason to believe that mainstream theatre companies have the will to pick up the torch, the voice and visions of Aboriginal theatre artists will be slowly suffocated.

At best when a new Aboriginal work is done, it is done. This again is not unlike the un-illustrious future of many a new Canadian work. Across theatre lines independent theatres companies and regional theatre companies are fighting for a second life for their productions as are Aboriginal theatre companies – the way in which they are looking to increase longevity for their premiered work is through second productions and touring.

The main difference between mainstream theatre touring and Aboriginal theatre touring is that large mainstream Canadian theatre companies have decades of touring networks that have been established and funding programs that have been tailor made to address the specifics of their touring needs. Although it may have its own set of evolving challenges it does exist and it is being successfully

---

\* Source: Chart 2/ Claire McCaughey, Research Manager, Canada Council for the Arts, 2005.

realized. In contrast, Aboriginal theatre companies that are producing and touring their work are building relatively new in-roads with other Aboriginal theatre companies that are doing the same with the same lack of resources and infrastructure to support such a relatively new endeavour. Outreach between Aboriginal theatre companies and Canadian mainstream theatre companies has been relatively insignificant and again subject to issues of programming and economic inequality that impedes a true partnership occurring for a common goal.

Veteran Aboriginal theatre companies have found innovative ways to tour within their regions, but again, limited resources and the lack of funding programs that address the very real and unique challenge and significance of touring to remote Aboriginal communities have undermined their success. This has directly impacted the *creativity of their artistic productions* and the full potential of their ability to make outreach to these communities an ongoing part of their operations without chronic duress.

In turn, Aboriginal communities with little or no experience witnessing theatre have no real context to understand the impact and lasting effect it could have on their community. This lack of exposure is often coupled with a lack of resources of an Aboriginal community in partnering to bring in an Aboriginal production in. Of the Canadian mainstream theatre companies that are making it a priority to tour “Aboriginal” work to an Aboriginal audience both urban and rural, The Manitoba Young Peoples Theatre has had an impressive success rate in outreach to youth in Aboriginal communities. The investment for this company has paid off not only in the building of a minority audience that will demographically be the majority audience within ten years, but on a societal level where these initial audience members are presently participating in Aboriginal youth theatre programs to become the artists of tomorrow.

There are many stories of early Canadian theatre being performed in a barn and if the history of Aboriginal people in Canada had had any success at farming this might be an answer to many Aboriginal theatre director’s query of where to find a venue. Unlike Canadian theatre, until this year, there have been no Aboriginal theatre companies in Canada that have had their own theatre. Currently, the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company in Saskatoon is the only Aboriginal theatre company operating its own 110 seat black box theatre—and they are in renovations to expand it to a 250 seat theatre later this year. The De-ba-je-mu-jig Theatre Group on Manitoulin Island is in the process of opening a 125 seat multi-disciplinary theatre in the fall of 2006 as a part of their training and

production facility, and a designated Aboriginal multi-disciplinary 120 seat theatre is housed in Trent University, Peterborough, under the direction of Marrie Mumford.

This highly anticipated grounding inspires hope in Aboriginal theatre professionals to believe that work created by Aboriginal artists will have the luxury of being in an Aboriginal theatre where an Aboriginal audience can make that theatre a home. Although these new spaces offer unprecedented opportunities for their communities, there are still no Aboriginal theatres existing in the major theatre centers of Canada, where “since 2001, almost one half (49%) of the majority of Aboriginal population live”<sup>5</sup>. These centers are also where the majority of Aboriginal theatre artists practice and where the majority of mainstream theatre audiences could be exposed to Aboriginal theatre.

For all independent theatre companies, venues are a huge consideration when producing, or presenting a show. It is for this reason, that those that have barter with those that have not and this resource can sometimes be the deal breaker in a production happening or not, and in the case of Aboriginal work it can also be the only thing that a larger more resource happy theatre company is willing to give. This is not a general happening but a frequent one that has a direct effect on the potential for Aboriginal productions to be more, or to be treated as more, than the poor cousin coming to visit.

Some would say Aboriginal theatre is just not in their world and others will say there is just not enough Aboriginal work being developed. Both are true. Aboriginal artists are not in their world. They are also not in the administrative offices, production offices, or the stages of mainstream theatre with any real visibility. And they are not making themselves seen with any great clarity in other grant funding arenas offered through Canada Council.

As the number of applications escalate and the demand for the *Development Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations* increases there still remains a limited engagement of Aboriginal artists in other grant competitions of like-minded pursuits. This could be in part because of the dexterity of the *Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations* to integrate a broad range of possibilities for Aboriginal companies and artists who are applying, but it could also be that Aboriginal theatre artists feel that there is a greater possibility that their work will be understood in an Aboriginal arts jury.

---

<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A demographic profile. Statistics Canada, 2001.

Not only will the work be looked at in a different light, an Aboriginal jury will know the challenges faced by Aboriginal companies and artists and take that into consideration in the jury process. This is not a feeling across the board but is certainly a huge consideration in applying if your company's mandate includes training, community projects, touring or youth. It is strongly felt that 'success' is measured differently not only culturally, but even in the class of theatre one chooses, and since community theatre is not a regular conduit for 'artistic excellence' or 'profile' it is therefore not deemed as worthy as other more highly visible artistic projects on the table. On the other hand, some Aboriginal artists feel that they are assessed unfairly in the arts jury process regardless of whether it is an Aboriginal specific, or a general theatre program. They feel that if their grant applications are not 'Indian enough', not issue-based enough, if they are working, or want to train in non-Aboriginal artistic practices but artistic pursuits, if they want to work with non-Aboriginal mentors or artists, if their work is more, or less, than what is thought as Aboriginal theatre, at that moment, they will not be successful.

At this moment, Aboriginal theatre is between its past success, and the future potential only the present can activate. At this moment, Aboriginal theatre is an investment for those that practice and for those that support it. But ultimately it is very much alive and demanding of itself to give more, more often, to ask that the hard questions be answered as an action, and that a dialogue be created between the players so that in a long tradition of will, it can and will at this moment, push beyond adversity to encircle its true self.

## Study on the Production of Aboriginal Works QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Following is a set of questions and selected comments of response selected for this topic:

### 1. What are some of the Aboriginal theatre success stories that you, as an independent artist, theatre company and/or producer have been a part of, or witnessed in the last 30 years?

*"We are still on the upside of success, we are not there yet."*

*"If you said to me thirty years ago there would be such a thing as a Native artist ... I just have to speak frankly... I wouldn't have known what you were talking about...the concept when I took over this theatre 23 years ago didn't exist...Now that's a miracle..."*

*"Tomson wanting his parts to be played by non-Aboriginal actors".*

*"We've tried to make work happen for ourselves."*

*"There are so many successes going right now but they are not going to be truly measured for another fifty years..."*

### 2. What have you learned about producing Aboriginal works in Canada?

*"There is an incredible thirst and interest in Aboriginal work and that we have a very unique perspective and voice in Canada."*

*"Why are we always relegated to the backstages and back houses?"*

*"That it's always an uphill fight because it goes against the grain of what Canada's officially about. Even when our works are not particularly political (NEPA produced comedies, operas, movement-based experimental works), their First Nations content makes them political since by being First Nation or Metis or Inuit, we haven't fulfilled Canada's still and*

*colonial dream and desire of the Vanishing Redman. We're still here and it makes things confusing and crowded to those who prefer two solitudes. They don't want to hear it.*

*"You start with artists that don't understand business... there are a lot of things that I am learning on my feet."*

*"There is still far too few of us and far too much pressure on those of us around..."*

*"I think the hardest lesson for white theatre artists, and producers for that matter, has been to try and understand that stories are told in different ways and that theatrical forms are not necessarily going to fit the western model."*

*"There is a mind set, a way of dealing with the world, so they need quantitative results looking at it this way...how famous are you? How many productions are you getting? That's as far as success goes..."*

*"I would say we are responsible to a community..."*

**3. What are the challenges that are specific to the creation, production and dissemination of Aboriginal works in Canada? And how does this differ than from non-Aboriginal companies that produce Aboriginal works?**

*"The challenge we have is how do we pay for our mandate and our vision for sharing theatre?"*

*"Dissemination is critical... a lot northern communities have never seen theatre...they know television, they know movies, but not the experience of seeing live theatre – it is a door way into a creative life...There are possibilities for them, their own growth, their own potential..."*

*"Somebody decides to produce a Native writer and that seems like almost revolutionary on their part... like they are doing us a favour."*

*"White actors get to put their art first.... we don't have that luxury...even when we are pushing the boundaries, we're making a statement and mindful of the*

*impact, and know that not everybody is going to appreciate it, but we are artistically finding our voice from across the country, from different forms of disciplines..."*

*"Very little funding support. Very little presenter networks in Aboriginal community. We also need venues to produce in. We need theatres."*

*"I find it really offensive but there is a pervasive expectation of poverty theatre, poverty mentality, that: Why can't you do Aboriginal theatre for nothing? Highly problematic..."*

*"Non-Aboriginal companies are not dealing with systemic racism"*

*"In general, there is insufficient knowledge of Aboriginal work and access to existing works, and artists, on the part of presenters, artistic directors, managers and impresarios, etc. Aboriginal work is 'perceived' as a financial risk and that only a select market would attend. The presenters all need to be exposed to champions/ambassadors, or people who can help to stimulate, expose and educate them."*

*"It's not one size fits all...and we need to recognize that....That we are doing something different and we need to be supported in that difference."*

*"We are fighting at every level (what does it take to run an Aboriginal theatre company)...educating...educating ...people. "*

#### **4. Why do you think there is a low percentage of Aboriginal works being produced by mainstream companies?**

*"Our biggest mistakes have been to say "oh no, the story has to be told this way" with the excuse that the audience will not understand. I think it is a kind of colonialism. Certainly fifteen years ago, twenty years ago there was an embrace of Aboriginal artists and we want to tell these stories within these institutions with a somewhat patronizing attitude within how those stories are told. I think that attitude still exists."*

*"I hate to bring out the R word. I think it is 'the other' and we are just not considered. They don't think they are racist. They don't see colour. They only see what directly affects them."*

*"I think part of the challenge is education. They don't understand why Aboriginal theatre should even be an issue."*

*"They think there is all this Indian money out there and they are not willing to use their own budgets".*

*"The problem is first of all structural racism in the Canadian theatre system, and an inequity in the funding mechanisms at the Canada Council. At the moment Aboriginals do receive some targeted funding, but this is not enough as we don't have access to our own spaces and therefore to produce a show we have to create a whole theatre infrastructure anew each time, and very often we end up in the backspaces of Canadian theatres or in compromised situations. This is not fair as non Aboriginals practically had theatres given to them in the 60's and 70's, we should be given that same opportunity."*

*"They want the bannock spot...And I want to do something that is going to change the world...not necessarily the best bedfellows."*

##### **5. What do you know of the history and examples of Aboriginal training initiatives and its effect on the production of Aboriginal Theatre?**

*"I've seen First Nations artists struggle to make shows out of training initiatives and now I'm seeing them making their own television shows. Training is useful and specifically focused training necessary, since First Nations values need to be expressed and bulwarked against mainstream ones if our spirits are to live."*

*" I guess the real issue is where to produce and perform such works. Many of the Native community we tour to have little or no theatre within their community before we went there. In most communities we are performing in schools, gyms, and community centres."*

- 6. What would you recommend, besides financial resources, for increased production and dissemination of Aboriginal work in Canada and abroad? What circumstances would encourage your company to invest in Aboriginal works? What do you think would be specifically the most effective initiatives to support:**
- a) Artist-in Residency and Playwright-in Residency initiatives**
  - b) Co-productions in Canada and abroad**
  - c) Canadian and international touring networks**
  - d) Travel grants for artistic directors, administrators, and presenters to see Aboriginal works**
  - e) Publications**
  - f) Specific showcases/discussions groups, forums and Aboriginal works at major festivals**
  - g) Access to artists of all cultures in the Aboriginal Collaborative Exchange Program (Aboriginal Secretariat)**
  - h) Translations to and from Aboriginal languages**
  - i) A prize for the production of Aboriginal work**
  - j) Any other initiative**

*“ All the above are good. And maybe the Canada Council could consider including for a short-term (say, ten or fifteen years, a generation) an emphasis on First Nations works to redress historical imbalances in their definition of what makes a program of work Canadian? Theatres would get bonus points on any particular application for producing First Nations work as part of their programming. That would encourage them. (I’m assuming a First Nations of Canada Council is still out of the question?)”*

*“Quota’s - That’s controversial. I know they hate to hear that but I think that is the only way...If they are mandated...”*

*“One way to correct things would be to add ‘cultural diversity’ in the weighing of applications in the funding criteria of the Canada Council, maybe make cultural diversity make up 15 percent of the overall scoring. Of course the white people will resist this as they want to keep their theatres white, and so maybe make an added pocket of funds that white theatres can access if their productions qualify as ‘culturally diverse’. They can access as much as 30 percent of their total production through a culturally diverse fund if they cast or hire culturally diverse people.”*

*“For sure there does not need to be sensitivity workshops for white people on Aboriginals, as was suggested at their meetings, if they need sensitivity workshops then they should not be artists. There needs to be real action.”*

## RECOMMENDATIONS for ACTION

**ACTION** That a long term vision be asked of the “priority” that Aboriginal theatre companies and Aboriginal theatre artists now enjoy. That this long term vision identify the unique potential and challenges of the production, creation and dissemination of Aboriginal theatrical work with future short and long term goals in mind towards stability and growth. That this long term vision go hand in hand with a long term investment to alleviate the health of a majority of Aboriginal theatre companies that now tentatively exist.

**ACTION** That a new initiative be created in the same spirit as the New Canadian Creation movement which significantly awarded (through percentage points) Canadian theatre companies who created and produced new Canadian work. That this movement and spirit be extended towards Aboriginal and multi-cultural artists and *their* new work and that each mainstream company that did so be awarded according to the good will of this initiative and be recognized for their past and present *active* contribution.

**ACTION** That larger mainstream companies that have no such good will, mandated or otherwise, and that do not need the perceived small percentage that Canada Council support offers to their overall operational budgets “give over” their percentages to Aboriginal and multi-cultural theatre companies where this small percentage could significantly be used to support fragile infrastructures and build capacity, and in doing so, give voice and clarity to Aboriginal and multi-cultural theatre companies and artists mandated to serve the largest growing demographic within Canada.

**ACTION** That a new initiative be created to bridge mainstream theatres and Aboriginal theatres. This initiative realised by implementing a program whereby an Aboriginal theatre company could be in-residence at a mainstream theatre company and that this Canada Council co-supported residency would contribute to the hard costs of office space, rehearsal rooms, and a theatre venue for production. In addition, where mainstream, and Aboriginal artistic, administrative and production personnel could exchange perspectives, skills, and practice while allowing an Aboriginal theatre organization real accessibility to the resources needed to create theatre.

**ACTION** That a new showcase for Aboriginal work be prioritized allowing for the presentation of contemporary Aboriginal work to be seen by Canadian and

international producers and presenters. That this showcase act as a touchstone for Aboriginal theatre producers, presenters, and creators to come together and strategise the production, presentation, creation, and dissemination of Aboriginal work throughout Canada and abroad. That this same showcase act as a touchstone for mainstream theatre producers interested in producing Aboriginal work and interested in the integration of Aboriginal theatre within the Canadian theatre landscape.

**ACTION** That an initiative be developed to envision and build an Aboriginal Theatre Centre in an urban centre in Canada where Aboriginal theatre artists could come together to create, produce, and showcase their work and where interested theatre practitioners could go to learn more about the history of Aboriginal theatre, its many practitioners, their processes, and methodology.

**ACTION** That Canadian mainstream theatres approaching Canada Council for funding be subject to the same requirements that Canada Council has applied to their own work force under the "Employment Equity Act which requires employers to monitor the representation of women, Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities"<sup>6</sup>. That the successful strategy for implementing this at Canada Council and other cultural Canadian institutions act as a guide line for Canadian mainstream companies employing theatre artists in their work force.

---

<sup>6</sup> Department of Justice Canada, *Employment Equity Act*, Ottawa, 1995.

## WORKS CITED

- Andre Courchesne and Roger Gaudet (2003) *The Evolution of Arts Administration in Canadian Theatre*, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa.
- Appleford, R. (2004). *Aboriginal Drama and Theatre*. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press.
- Boudreault, F. (2002). *Commissioning new works: Study on commissioned writing and Francophone texts produced in Canada from 1996 to 2001*, for the Centre des auteurs dramatiques, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa.
- CBC Radio-Canada, (2004) *CBC Arts & Culture Research Study*.
- Canada Council for the Arts (2004) *Arts and Cultural Projects in Rural and Remote Canada: A Review*. Ottawa
- Canada Council for the Arts. (1995). *Cultural Diversity – the cornerstone of Canadian society and a strategic priority for the Canada Council*. Ottawa.
- Canada Council for the Arts, Equity Office. (July 8, 2004). *History of the Canada Council for the Arts Advisory Committee for Racial Equity in the Arts (REAC)*, Ottawa, Canada.
- Canada Council for the Arts Support to Aboriginal Arts 1996-97 to 2002-2003. (2004). Presented to the *Kakaekewin Aboriginal Arts Advisory Committee*, Ottawa,
- Cardinal, C. (2002). *Dissemination of Theatre for Young Audiences, Diagnostic report on the dissemination of theatre for young audiences in Canada, Third Aboriginal Advisory Committee on the Arts (Kakaekwewin)*. Report to The Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, June 2003.
- Canada Council for the Arts. (2003). *Overview of Key Demographic Trends – Possible Impact on Canadian Arts Attendance (2001 Census)*, Ottawa.
- Department of Justice Canada, *Employment Equity Act*, Ottawa, 1995.
- First People Advisory Committee. (1993). *The First Peoples advisory committee report to the Canada Council*. Canada Council, Ottawa.

La Flamme, Michelle, *IPAA Action Report*, Full Circle First Nations Theatre Company, 2005. Vancouver

Letwiniuk, T. (2004) *Aboriginal Arts Development Awards – A Program Assessment* prepared for First Peoples' Heritage, Language & Culture Council, Vancouver.

Morrissequ, M. (1999). *To see proudly – Advancing indigenous arts beyond the millennium*. First Peoples Arts Conference, organized by Canada Council for the Arts: Final Report.

National Aboriginal Art Funders Gathering. (June 16, 2004). *Final Report*, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Rubin, D. (1996). *Canadian Theatre History*. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press.

Second Aboriginal Advisory Committee. (June 2001). Report to the Canada Council for the Arts, Brantford, Ontario.

Second Aboriginal Advisory Committee. (November 2001). *Aboriginal Arts Funding, Chronology of the Aboriginal Secretariat, Advisory Committee's Recommendations*, Ottawa.

Seesequasis, P. (2001). *Aboriginal theatre organizations survey and report*. Canada Council for the Arts.

Statistics Canada. (2001). *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A demographic profile*. Census: analysis series. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

Statistics Canada, *Diversity in Canada's Arts Labour Force – An Analysis of 2001 Census Data*.

Wright R., Lindsay, J. (December 9, 2004). *National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project*, McGill University, Montreal.

**Table A**  
**Canada Council for the Arts,**  
**Aboriginal and Culturally Diverse Operating Grant Theatre Companies - Combined Totals**  
**of Their Operating Grants and Capacity Building Grants**

**Aboriginal Theatre Companies, 2005-2006**

	<b>Operating Grant</b>	<b>Capacity Building Grant</b>	<b>DSATO</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Debajehmujig Theatre Group</b>	\$92,250	\$30,000	\$0	\$122,250
<b>Full Circle: First Nations Performance</b>	\$29,000	\$0	\$20,000	\$49,000
<b>Native Earth Performing Arts</b>	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$100,000
<b>Productions Ondinnok inc.</b>	\$59,000	\$0	\$0	\$59,000
<b>Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company</b>	\$25,000	\$0	\$20,000	\$45,000

**Culturally Diverse Operating Grant Theatre Companies, 2004-2005\***

	<b>Operating Grant</b>	<b>Capacity-Building Grant</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>B Current</b>	\$34,000	\$30,000	\$64,000
<b>Cahoots Theatre Project</b>	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$70,000
<b>Modern Times Stage Company</b>	\$42,500	\$30,000	\$72,500
<b>Newworld Theatre Society</b>	\$38,000	\$30,000	\$68,000
<b>Obsidian Theatre Company</b>	\$37,000	\$30,000	\$67,000
<b>Teesri Duniya Theatre</b>	\$36,500	\$30,000	\$66,500

(\*earlier year is shown for culturally diverse companies as capacity-building grants have not yet been awarded for 2005-2006)

**Table B**  
**Canada Council for the Arts, Funding to Aboriginal Theatre Companies**  
**By Program, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 (to date)**

<b>Company</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Province or Territory</b>	<b>2004- 2005</b>	<b>2005- 2006 to date</b>
<b>Aboriginal Peoples Collaborative Exchange: International</b>				
Aboriginal Youth Theatre Project	VANCOUVER	BC	\$2,000	\$0
Gaa dibaatjimat Ngaashi: Stories from My Mother Inc.	TORONTO	ON	\$2,500	\$0
Urban Ink Productions	VANCOUVER	BC	\$1,500	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Aboriginal Peoples Collaborative Exchange: National</b>				
Qaggiq Theatre Company	IQALUIT	NU	\$3,000	\$0
Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company Inc.	SASKATOON	SK	\$12,000	\$0
The Takwakin Performance Laboratory	PAYNTON	SK	\$0	\$2,000
Wesakaychak Theatre Company	FORT CHIPEWYAN	AB	\$2,500	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$17,500</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>
<b>Capacity Building Initiative: Support for Aboriginal Artistic Practices</b>				
Batoche Theatre Company Inc.	SASKATOON	SK	\$0	\$30,000
Debajehmujig Theatre Group	WIKWEMIKONG	ON	\$0	\$30,000
Qaggiq Theatre Company	IQALUIT	NU	\$0	\$30,000
Society of Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry	WHITEHORSE	YT	\$0	\$30,000
Turtle Gals	TORONTO	ON	\$0	\$30,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>
<b>Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations</b>				
Aataentsic: masques et théâtre	MONTREAL	QC	\$31,000	\$0
Batoche Theatre Company Inc.	SASKATOON	SK	\$20,000	\$20,000
Centre for Indigenous Theatre	TORONTO	ON	\$0	\$20,000
Full Circle: First Nations Performance	VANCOUVER	BC	\$20,000	\$20,000

Gwaandak Theatre Adventures	WHITEHORSE	YT	\$12,000	\$0
Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance	VANCOUVER	BC	\$0	\$20,000
Innu Kanakatuapatas Etshishkutumashunanunt	TORBAY	NL	\$0	\$23,000
Native Women in the Arts	TORONTO	ON	\$20,000	\$0
Qaggiq Theatre Company	IQALUIT	NU	\$0	\$25,000
Rainbow Productions Society	PENTICTON	BC	\$19,000	\$0
Red Roots Community Theatre	WINNIPEG	MB	\$20,000	\$0
Red Sky Performance Theatre	TORONTO	ON	\$16,000	\$20,000
Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company Inc.	SASKATOON	SK	\$40,000	\$20,000
Society of Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry	WHITEHORSE	YT	\$16,000	\$20,000
The Takwakin Performance Laboratory	PAYNTON	SK	\$20,000	\$20,000
Turtle Gals	TORONTO	ON	\$20,000	\$20,000
Urban Ink Productions	VANCOUVER	BC	\$20,000	\$20,000
Weiwaikum Cultural Society	CAMPBELL RIVER	BC	\$18,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$292,000</b>	<b>\$248,000</b>

#### Operating Grants to Professional Theatre Organizations

Debajehmujig Theatre Group	WIKWEMIKONG	ON	\$92,250	\$92,250
Full Circle: First Nations Performance	VANCOUVER	BC	\$27,500	\$29,000
Kehewin Native Performance	EMBARRAS PORTAGE	AB	\$53,000	\$0
Native Earth Performing Arts	TORONTO	ON	\$100,000	\$100,000
Productions Ondinnok inc.	MONTRÉAL	QC	\$59,000	\$59,000
Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company Inc.	SASKATOON	SK	\$0	\$25,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$331,750</b>	<b>\$305,250</b>

#### Outreach Program: New Audience and Market Development within Canada

Debajehmujig Theatre Group	WIKWEMIKONG	ON	\$3,000	\$0
Full Circle: First Nations Performance	VANCOUVER	BC	\$0	\$1,000

<b>Total</b>			<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
--------------	--	--	----------------	----------------

**Theatre Production Project Grants: Emerging Artists' Creation/Development**

Four Directions Productions	TORONTO	ON	\$0	\$15,000
Red Sky Performance Theatre	TORONTO	ON	\$0	\$15,000
The Ballad of Floyd	VANCOUVER	BC	\$5,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>

**Theatre Production Project Grants: Established Artists' Creation/Development**

Gwaandak Theatre Adventures	WHITEHORSE	YT	\$11,000	\$0
Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company Inc.	SASKATOON	SK	\$16,000	\$12,000
The Takwakin Performance Laboratory	PAYNTON	SK	\$12,000	\$0
Turtle Gals	TORONTO	ON	\$4,900	\$6,000
Urban Ink Productions	VANCOUVER	BC	\$10,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$53,900</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>

**Theatre Touring and Special Initiatives Program**

Full Circle: First Nations Performance	VANCOUVER	BC	\$0	\$14,000
Kehewin Native Performance	KEHEWIN	AB	\$33,000	\$0
Native Earth Performing Arts	TORONTO	ON	\$0	\$6,000
Turtle Gals	TORONTO	ON	\$0	\$16,500
			<b>\$33,000</b>	<b>\$36,500</b>

**Theatre Presenting Program**

Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company	SASKATOON	SK	\$0	\$2,500
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>

**Theatre International Program**

Native Earth Performing Arts	TORONTO	ON	\$5,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Inter-Arts Program: Dissemination Grants**

Urban Shaman Gallery Inc.	WINNIPEG	MB	\$5,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Inter-Arts Program: Creation/Production Grants**

Qaggiq Theatre Company	IQALUIT	NU	\$25,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Inter-Arts Program: Multi-disciplinary Festivals Project Grants**

Blackfoot Canadian Cultural Society	LETHBRIDGE	AB	\$0	\$12,000
Full Circle: First Nations Performance	VANCOUVER	BC	\$15,000	\$18,000
Open Sky Creative Society	FORT SIMPSON	NT	\$0	\$14,000
Nations in a Circle Society	HALIFAX	NS	\$0	\$12,000
Terres en vues: société pour la diffusion de la culture autochtone	MONTRÉAL	QC	\$0	\$16,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$72,000</b>

<b>TOTAL FUNDING TO ABORIGINAL THEATRE COMPANIES (ALL PROGRAMS)</b>	<b>\$792,150</b>	<b>\$865,250</b>
---	------------------	------------------

•

---

• Source: Table A/Table B- Claire McCaughy, Research Manager, Canada Council for the Arts, 2005

## ABORIGINAL THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

### 2005

**The Scrubbing Project**-Turtle Gals / Native Earth Performing Arts-Tour to Ontario, Nova Scotia, Alberta  
**RRAP**-Mark Dieter-Saskatchewan Native Theatre Co.-Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
**Co-coosh**-Doug Nepinak-Manitoba Theatre Projects-Winnipeg, Manitoba  
**Nicimis**-Dawn Dumont-Toronto International Fringe Festival  
**The Batoche Musical**-collective-The Batoche Theatre Company-Batoche Sk.  
**Ernestine's Lavalise**-Maureen Belanger-The Batoche Theatre Co.-Saskatoon and Northern provincial tour  
**The Velvet Devil**-Andrea Menard-Moose Jaw Cultural Centre -Moose Jaw, Sk.  
**Buz'Gem Blues**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Saskatchewan Native Theatre-Saskatoon  
**The River Home**-Full Circle-Firehall Arts Centre-Vancouver  
**The Triple Truth**-Turtle Gals-Native Canadian Centre-Toronto  
**Your Dream Was Mine**-Shirley Cheechoo-Native Earth-Toronto  
**Tales of An Urban Indian**-Darrel Dennis-Native Earth-Toronto and tour  
**Grey Owl**-Armand Ruffo-Rainbow Productions-Kelowna, BC.  
**Underworlds**-Red Sky-Toronto  
**Rez Ties**-Kehewin Native Performance-Curve Lake First Nation, Ont.  
**Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout**-Tomson Highway-Belfry Theatre-Victoria BC./Western Canada Theatre Co.-Kamloops  
**The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito**-Tomson Highway-Concrete Theatre-National Arts Centre-Ottawa  
**Time Stands Still**-Terry Ivins-Crazy Horse Theatre-Alberta Scene, National Arts Centre-4<sup>th</sup> Stage-Ottawa  
**The Indian Affairs**-A Collective Creation- Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Manitoulin Island  
**J'entends crier le ventre de la Terre-20 ans d'ondinnok**, de Yves Sioui Durand et Dave Jeniss, dirigé par Dave Jenniss, ONDIN NOK, Montréal

### 2004

**She Stands Still** - Tasha Faye Evans - Firehall Arts Centre – Vancouver  
**The Place Between**-Cheyikwe –Firehall Arts Centre-Vancouver  
**Hours of Water**- Marie Clements/ The Word on the Street Festival- urban ink/CBC Radio  
**Hours of Water/Women in Fish** –Marie Clements- urban ink-Galliano Island , BC.  
**All Mixed Up (Ike rubaboo)**-collective-The Batoche Theatre Co.-Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Sk.  
**Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout**-Tomson Highway-Magnetic North Festival-Edmonton  
**The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito**-Tomson Highway-Concrete Theatre-Edmonton  
**The Sleeping Land**-Floyd Favel-Takwakin /Globe Theatre-Regina

**Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing**-Tomson Highway-Red Roots Theatre-Winnipeg  
**In a World Created by a Drunken God**-Drew Hayden Taylor-Persephone Theatre-Saskatoon  
**Persistence of Memory**-Spiderwoman Theater-Indigenous Performance Initiatives-Peterborough, Ontario  
**The Unnatural and Accidental Women**-Marie Clements-Native Earth-Toronto  
**all-Aboriginal New Play Reading Series**-Laura Cranmer, Victoria BC  
**The Artshow**-Alanis King-Native Earth-Toronto  
**Suicide Notes**-Kenneth Williams-Factory Theatre-Summerworks Festival  
**Tales of an Urban Indian**-Darrel Dennis-Native Earth-presented by SNTC-Saskatoon/Toronto/Kamloops  
**The Trickster's Tale**-Debajehmuhjig Theatre-IDEA Directions: Theatre for Young Audiences Festival-Ottawa, Czech Republic, Toronto, Quebec  
**The Gift**- Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Manitoulin Island  
**The Promise**- Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Manitoulin Island  
**Your Dream Was Mine**-Shirley Cheechoo- Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Manitoulin Island  
**Billy**-Chris Craddock-Azimuth Theatre / Debajehmuhjig-Provincial tour of Ontario/Michigan US  
**Ever!That Nanabush!**-Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont-tour.  
**400 Kilometres**-Drew Hayden-Taylor-Saskatchewan Native Theatre-Saskatoon  
**Indian Time**- Saskatchewan Native Theatre-Saskatoon  
**Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout**-Tomson Highway-Western Canada Theatre Co.-Kamloops, BC.  
**Hamlet-Le Malecite**-Yves Siou-Durand-Ondinnok-Montreal

## 2003

**Time Stands Still**-Terry Ivins-Native Earth/Theatre Passe Muraille  
**All That Flows**-Marlena Dolan-Rainbow Productions-Nanaimo, BC.  
**The Batoche Musical**-The Batoche Theatre Company-Batoche, SK/Saskatoon, Edmonton  
**Trickster's Trilogy**-Kehewin Native Performance-Hobbema, Alberta  
**Medicine Voices**-Kehewin Native Performance-Hiawatha First Nation, Ont.  
**Burning Vision**-Marie Clements-Magnetic North-Ottawa  
**Burning Vision**-Marie Clements-Festival de Theatre des Ameriques-Montreal  
**The Gift**- Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Planet IndigenoUS, Toronto  
**Traps**-Yvette Nolan-Live Bait Theatre-Sackville, New Brunswick/ Nova Scotia tour  
**Tales of An Urban Indian**-Darrel Dennis-Native Earth-Toronto  
**Wawatay**-Penny Gummerson-Saskatchewan Native Theatre Co.-Saskatoon  
**The Velvet Devil**-Andrea Menard-Saskatchewan Native Theatre Co.-Saskatoon  
**The Velvet Devil**-Andrea Menard-Northern Arts & Cultural Centre-Yellowknife  
**A Trickster Tale**-Debajehmuhjig-Manitoulin Island  
**Ever!That Nanabush!**-Stories retold by Daphne Odjig-Debajehmuhjig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Audge's Place**-collective creation-Debajehmujig Theatre-Toronto

## 2002

**Le Rub a boo**-collective-The Batoche Theatre Co.-Batoche, Sk

**Confessions of an Indian Cowboy**-Margo Kane-Full Circle-Vancouver

**Medicine**-LaVerne Adams-Theatre in the Raw-British Columbia tour

**Metis Mutt**-Sheldon Elter-NextFest, Edmonton, Alberta

**Kaatsi (Je Suis)**-Sylvie-Ann Siou-Trudel-Aataentsic Masques & Theatre-Montreal

**Governor of the Dew**-Floyd Favel-Takwakin / Globe Theatre / National Arts Centre-Ottawa

**The Velvet Devil**-Andrea Menard-The Globe Theatre / National Arts Centre-Ottawa

**Bereav'd of Light**-Ian Ross-Stratford Festival, Ontario

**The Scrubbing Project**-Turtle Gals-Toronto

**Caribou Song**-Tomson Highway-Red Sky-Toronto

**Kmukamch L'Asierindien**-Ondinnok-Montreal

**Kmukamch L'Asierindien-Yves Sioui Durand -Ondinnok-Montreal**

**L'ours-Tortue**-Yves Sioui Durand- Ondinnok-Talking Stick- Vancouver

American Can-Montréal

**The Dreaming Beauty**-Daniel David Moses-Debajehmujig Theatre-Winnipeg-MTYP-Saskatchewan tour

**Ever!That Nanabush!**-Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**The Dreaming Beauty**-Daniel David Moses-Debajehmujig Theatre- Manitoulin Island, Ont

## 2001

**BBQ**-Doug Nepinak-As the Bannock Burns Theatre-Prairie Theatre Exchange-Winnipeg, MB

**Crisis in Oka, Manitoba**-Doug Nepinak-Red Roots Theatre-Winnipeg

**Confessions of an Indian Cowboy**-Margo Kane-Full Circle-Vancouver

**The Batoche Musical**-collective-The Batoche Theatre Company-Batoche Sk

**I Remember**-Kehewin Native Performance / Resource Network / Kehewin Community Education Centre Native Culture Fine Arts Program-Kehewin, Alberta.

**Annie Mae's Movement**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Okwan du'wen Atakiak (ou allons-nous?)**\_Sylvie-Ann Siou-Trudel-Aataentsic Masques & Theatre – Montreal

**Le Cabaret de la Grande-Tortue** – collectif-Ondinnok /FTA/ Kahnawake, Mohawk Territory, Quebec

**The Buz'Gem Blues**-Drew Hayden Taylor-Lighthouse Festival Theatre-Port Dover, Ontario

**The Gap**-Ian Ross-Prairie Theatre Exchange-Winnipeg

**New World Brave**-collective creation-Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**The Dreaming Beauty**-Daniel David Moses-Debajehmujig Theatre- Manitoulin Island, Ont

**The Unnatural and Accidental Women**-Marie Clements/Firehall Arts Centre  
**Urban Tattoo**- Marie Clements/urban ink/ The Festival des Ameriques-Montreal  
**The Transformation of Elvis Goodrunner**-Rainbow Productions-Penticton, B.C.

## 2000

**Crisis in Oka, Manitoba**-Doug Nepinak-As the Bannock Burns Theatre-Winnipeg  
 Fringe Festival  
**Crossings (The Bell of Batoche)**-Greg Daniels/Robert Winslow-4<sup>th</sup> Line Theatre-  
 Millbrook, Ont.  
**Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth**-Drew Hayden-Taylor-Crazy Horse Theatre-  
 Calgary  
**Kiniowan's Prophecy**-Kehewin Native Performance-  
 The Velvet Devil-Andrea Menard-Globe Theatre-Regina  
**New-Miyo-uk**-Kennetch Charlette-Saskatchewan Native Theatre Co.-Saskatoon  
**The Batoche Musical**-collective-The Batoche Theatre Company-Batoche Sk  
**Confessions of an Indian Cowboy**-Margo Kane-Main Dance-Vancouver, En'owkin  
 Centre, Penticton BC  
**La Trilogie:qu'est-ce qu'etre amerindien en l'an 2000?**-Ondinnok-Montreal  
**Le Rendez-Vous-Kiskimew**-Ondinnok/ CNA-Montreal/Ottawa/Quebec  
**The Trickster of Third Avenue East**-Darrel Dennis-Native Earth-Toronto  
**New World Brave**-A Group Creation of Inuk, Woodlands Ojibway, Odawa,  
 Pottawatomi, Woodlands Cree, Innu and Metis artists- Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin  
 Island, Ont.  
**The Dreaming Beauty**-Daniel David Moses-Debajehmujig Theatre- Manitoulin Island,  
 Ont

## 1999

**Andicha aquan Oraquan (Le Corbeau a vole la lumiere)**- Sylvie-Ann Siou-Trudel-  
 Aataentsic Masques & Theatre-Montreal  
**Iwouskea et Tawiskaron**-Ondinnok/FTA-Montreal  
**Le Roi d'hochelaga ( Ière messe )**-Yves Sioui Durand-ONDIN NOK en co-prod avec  
 Momentum (Les douze messes pour la fin des temps )  
**Governor of the Dew**-Floyd Favel-Globe Theatre-Regina  
**The Jerry Jessie Jones Show**-A Collective Creation-The Best Medicine Troupe and  
 Family Life Theatre- Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Toronto At Dreamer's Rock.Com**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Debajehmujig Theatre-  
 Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Toronto At Dreamer's Rock**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin  
 Island, Ont  
**Urban Tattoo**- Marie Clements/Belfry Theatre Festival One-Victoria  
**Urban Tattoo**- Marie Clements/Native Voices- Aboriginal Arts Festival- Toronto

**1998**

**Biidaasigekwe, Sunlight Woman**-Angeline Williams-Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont., New Brunswick/ Nova Scotia tour

**Please Do Not Touch the Indians**-Joseph A. Dandurand- Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**The Jerry Jessie Jones Show**-A Collective Creation-The Best Medicine Troupe and Family Life Theatre- Debajehmujig Theatre-Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Baloney!**-Ian Ross-Manitoba Theatre for Young People-Winnipeg

**Red River**-Native Earth/ Crow's Theatre-Toronto

**The Tommy Prince Story**-Alanis King-Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto

**Broken Snowshoe Moon**-Amie Lynn Ominika- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**The Peace Tree**-Collective Creation w/ Family Life Theatre-Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Sky**-An Ab-original Cross-Cultural Dance Drama –A Collective Creation by members of the T'simshian, Inuit and Ojibway Nation- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Annie Mae's Movement**-presented by Red Roots Theatre / Hardly Art-Gas Station Theatre-Winnipeg, Manitoba

**1997**

**Sixty Below**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Four Horses**-Greg Daniels-25th Street Theatre-Saskatoon

**fareWell**-Ian Ross-Winnipeg

**The Baby Blues**-Native Earth/ Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto

**Lost Warrior**-Darrel Manitowabi- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Broken Snowshoe Moon**-Amie Lynn Ominika- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**The Peace Tree**-Collective Creation w/ Family Life Theatre-- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**The Girl Who Swam Forever**-Marie Clements/Savage Media

**The House of Sonya**-Red Tattoo First Nations Theatre Ensemble / Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society-Regina, Saskatchewan.

**Mantokasowin**, -collectif, théâtre de guérison, dirigé par Yves Sioui Durand Ondinnok et Mikisiw- Manawan

**1996**

**Brebeuf's Ghost**-Daniel David Moses-Department of English and the School of Dramatic Art-University of Windsor, Ontario

**Trickster Visits the Old Folks Home** –Sharon Shorty- Nakai Theatre-Whitehorse, Yukon

**Waitapu**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Ravens**-Native Earth-Toronto

**The Best Medicine Show**-collective creation-Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Lost Warrior**-Darrel Manitowabi- Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Broken Snowshoe Moon**-Amie Lynn Ominika- Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Now Look What You Made Me Do**- Marie Clements/Maenad Theatre-Calgary

**Sakipitcikan**-collectif, théâtre de guérison dirigé par Yves Sioui Durand, Manawan (en tournée à Québec, Montréal, Sept-îles, La Tuque et Amos )

## 1995

**Dinky**-Columpa Bobb-Native Earth-Toronto

**No Totem For My Story**-Joseph Danderand-Native Earth-Toronto

**Percy's Edge**-Greg Daniels-25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre, Saskatoon

**The Sun Raiser**-Ondinnok-Festival international de Banff, Opitowap,-collectif dirigé par Yves Sioui Durand –Ondinnok et Mikisiw, Manawan

**Opitowap, Sakipitcikan et Mantokasowin**-Ondinnok-Quebec City

**The Manitoulin Incident**-Alanis King-Odjig- Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**The Girl Who Swam Forever**- Marie Clements/Savage Media/UBC Theatre

**Dirty Dog River**- Marie Clements/Evan Adams-BC Puppets Against Aids 50 Community Tour

## 1994

**Age of Iron**-Marie Clements-Firehall Arts Centre, Vancouver

**Someday**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Diva Ojibway**-Native Earth – Toronto

**The Manitoulin Incident**-Alanis King-Odjig- Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**The Tommy Prince Story**-Alanis King-Odjig- The Manitoulin Incident-Alanis King-Odjig- Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Le désir de la Reine XOC**, de Catherine Joncas, dirigé par Yves Sioui Durand Ondinnok- Montréal

## 1993

**One More Time**-Maria Campbell-25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre-Saskatoon

**Wild Moon**-collective creation-Bruce Sinclair, Don Freed, Carrie LaFramboise-25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre, Saskatoon

**The Trial of Kicking Bear**-Michael Lawrenchuk-National Theatre School-Montreal and national tour

**Braindead**-Innuinuit Theatre Company/Nalujuk Players-Nain, Labrador

**Generic Warriors and No-Name Indians**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Lady of Silences**-Floyd Favel-Native Earth-Toronto

**New Voices Woman**-Larry E. Lewis- Debajehmuhjig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**If Jesus Met Nanabush**-Alanis King-Odjig- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**Ukuamaq** de Catherine Joncas, dirigé par Yves Sioui Durand-Ondinnok-Montréal ( création)

## 1992

**Almighty Voice and His Wife**-Daniel David Moses-Native Earth-Toronto

**Dreamkeeper**-Bruce Sinclair-25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre-Saskatoon

**Blind Girl Last Night**-Greg Daniels--25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre-Saskatoon

**Someday**-Drew Hayden-Taylor-Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont

**20<sup>th</sup> Century Indian Boy**-Mark Seabrook- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Toronto at Dreamer's Rock**-Drew Hayden Taylor-Debajehmujig Theatre – Manitoulin Island, Ontario

**Lupi-The Great White Wolf**-Esther Jacko-Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Fireweed**-William Merasty-Native Earth-Toronto

**Night of the Trickster**-Beatrice Mosionier-Native Earth-Toronto

## 1991

**Almighty Voice and His Wife**-Daniel David Moses-Great Canadian Theatre Co.-Ottawa

**Big Buck City**-Daniel David Moses-Cahoots Theatre Project-Tarragon Extra Space

**Son of Ayash**-Jim Morris-Native Earth-Toronto

**Path With No Moccasins**-Shirley Cheechoo

**Lupi-The Great White Wolf**-Esther Jacko-Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**La Conquête de Mexico de Yves Sioui Durand dirigé par Jean-Pierre Ronard, coprod Ondinnok et NTE, Montréal**

## 1990

**Blade**-Yvette Nolan-Winnipeg

**Moonlodge**-Margo Kane-Women In View Festival, Vancouver-Native Earth-Toronto

**The Beavers**-Ronald Weihs-Native Earth-Toronto

**Diary of a Crazy Boy**-John McLeod-Native Earth-Toronto

**Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots**-Monique Mojica-Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto

**The Thunderbird Children**-Esther Jacko- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Word Magic**-Lenore Keeshig-Tobias- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Pictures on the Wall**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**The Bootlegger Blues**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Quest For Fire**-Lenore Keeshig-Tobias- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**First Love**-Diane Debassige- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

### 1989

**Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing**-Tomson Highway-Native Earth-Prairie Theatre Exchange-Winnipeg, Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto  
**The Sage, The Dancer and the Fool**-Tomson Highway-Native Earth-Toronto  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Toronto At Dreamer's Rock**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Education is Our Right**-Drew Hayden-Taylor- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

### 1988

**Coyote City**-Daniel David Moses-Native Earth-Toronto  
**New Song...New Dance**-Rene Highway-Native Earth-Toronto  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Native Earth-Factory Theatre-Edinburgh International Festival-Scotland, UK  
**Nanabush of the 80's**-Kenneth Charlette, Shirley Cheechoo, Alanis King- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Jessica: A Transformation**-Linda Griffiths/Maria Campbell-Northern Light Theatre-Edmonton, Alberta  
**No'Xya' (Our Footprints)**-David Diamond, Hal B. Blackwater, Lois G. Shannon and Marie Wilson-From the Ground Up Festival-Toronto, Ontario / Headlines Theatre / Gitskan-Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council-Vancouver-national tour-  
**Atiskenandahate**- Voyage au pays des morts de Yves Siou Durand, Ondinnok création Montréal

### 1987

**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Globe Theatre-Regina, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Warehouse Stage / Native Earth-Winnipeg, Manitoba  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Native Earth Performing Arts-Toronto / Great Canadian Theatre Company-Ottawa  
**Swindler's Rhapsody**-Makka Kleist, Monique Mojica-Groundswell Festival-Nightwood Theatre-Toronto, Ontario  
**Aria**-Tomson Highway-Native Earth-Greenland-Vancouver  
**Ntesinan ( Our Land )**-RCA Theatre Company-"Standing the Gaff"-Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance-Sydney, Nova Scotia  
**Raven At My Door**-Beth Mulloy-Nakai Players-Whitehorse, Yukon  
**Sur Les Traces de Champlain**-Pierre Drolet-Les Groupe Derives Urbaines-Hull, Quebec

**Reflections in the Medicine Wheel**-Margo Kane-Les Festival De Theatre Des Ameriques-Montreal, Quebec  
**The Lily of the Mohawks**-Patricia Rodriguez-The Saidye Bronfman Centre-Montreal, Quebec  
**Saskatoon Native Theatre**-Standin' The Gaff-An International Festival of Popular Theatre. Presented by the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance  
**Almighty Voice**-Len Peterson-Carousel Players-St.Catherines, Ontario-tour  
**No'Xya' (Our Footprints)**-David Diamond, Hal B. Blackwater, Lois G. Shannon and Marie Wilson-Headlines Theatre / Gitskan-Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council-Vancouver-national tour  
**Ben Calf Robe "Visions"**-A collective creation-Catalyst Theatre-Edmonton-tour  
**Le porteur des peines du monde** – Ondinnok-tournée Québec, St-John, Terre-Neuve, Innu Nikamu Sept-îles

## 1986

**La Conquete de Mexico**-Ondinnok/NTE-Montreal  
**Ononharoui'wha- Le renversement de cervelle** de Yves Sioui Durand , L'été Indien à Québec  
**Ayash**-Jim Morris- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Nothing Personal**-Shirley Cheechoo, Alanis King- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Native Cultural Centre-Toronto  
**The Book of Jessica**-Maria Campbell/Linda Griffiths-Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto  
**Jessica: A Transformation**-Linda Griffiths/Maria Campbell- Theatre Passe Muraille / Great Canadian Theatre Company-Ottawa  
**Jessica: A Transformation**-Linda Griffiths/Maria Campbell- Theatre Passe Muraille on tour  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Act I.V. Theatre Company / Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto, Ontario  
**The Rez Sisters**-Tomson Highway-Factory Theatre / Theatre Passe Muraille-Toronto, Ontario  
**The Raven Trilogy**-Gail Robinson-The Inner Stage-Toronto, Ontario  
**Aria**-Tomson Highway- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**Ben Calf Robe "Visions"**-A collective creation-Catalyst Theatre-Edmonton-tour

## 1985

**Le Porteur Des Peines Du Monde**-Festival du Theatre des Ameriques-Montreal  
**Trickster's Cabaret**-Gary Farmer-Native Earth/Theatre Passe Muraille  
**Many-Toe Lyn Eileen**-Tomson Highway- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.  
**A Ridiculous Spectacle in One Act**-Tomson Highway- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**1984**

**Give Them A Carrot For Long As The Sun Is Green**-Tomson Highway, Makka Kleist, Doris Linklater, Billy Merasty and Monique Mojica-Native Earth/The Theatre Centre

**Clown Trickster's Workshop**-Native Earth-Toronto

**Respect the Voice of the Child**-Shirley Cheechoo, Billy Merasty-Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**Shadow People**-Shirley Cheechoo- Debajehmujig Theatre, Manitoulin Island, Ont.

**1983**

**Double Take / A Second Look**-Billy Merasty, Gloria Miguel, Monique Mojica and Maariu Olsen-Native Earth-Toronto

**Who Am I?**-Native Earth-Toronto

**1982**

**The Book of Jessica**-Maria Campbell/Linda Griffiths-25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre-Saskatoon

**Native Images In Transition**-Native Earth-Toronto\*

---

\* Source: Live Production List, Bruce Sinclair, Theatre Officer, Theatre Section, Canada Council for the Arts, 2005.

