



A RESEARCH PROJECT
BY PRIMARY COLOURS /
COULEURS PRIMAIRES
with support from

Indigenous Theatre
National Arts Centre
and
Creating, Knowing, Sharing
Canada Council for the Arts

LOOKING AT INDIGENOUS PERFORMING ARTS

ON THE TERRITORY KNOWN AS CANADA

JANUARY 2021

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Finding Wolastoq Voice, playwright: Samaqani Cocahq (Natalie Sappier). photo credit: André Reinders

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

France Trépanier and Chris Creighton-Kelly, co-Directors of Primary Colours/Couleurs primaires (PC/Cp), thank all the ancestors that came before us, who shared their knowledge by passing it on through the generations; who guided us with their spirits and whose presence inspired the work we have done collectively. We thank them for being with us.

We thank the land - the actual territories - on which our team worked. We understand the land to be more than the soil beneath our feet as it includes all creatures, plants, bodies of water and beyond to encompass the sky, the clouds, the sun and the entire cosmology that has informed and continues to inform Indigenous knowledge.

We wish to highlight and honour the pioneering work of distinguished theatre artist Margo Kane. For the last 35 plus years, she has carved out a space for Indigenous performing artists to produce and present their work; to encourage them to speak

about it - where it comes from and for whom is it created; to nurture the development of their work both in Indigenous communities and on mainstream stages and finally to advocate for increased resources that will support the flourishing of the Indigenous arts milieu. We are grateful to Margo for the opportunity she gave us at Scháyilhen, the 2018 Industry Series at Talking Stick Festival. Her offering is the genesis of this document. Our genuine thanks to you, Margo.

We also thank our colleagues who have supported the development of this report, both financially and in other ways.

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Samantha MacDonald, Artistic Producer
Lori Marchand (Syilx), Managing Director

For Creating, Knowing, Sharing at the Canada Council Council for the Arts:

Steven Loft (Mohawk/Jewish), Director of Creating, Knowing, Sharing

Sara Roque acknowledges the many, many teachings that can be symbolized within Medicine Wheel models. Nadia McLaren, (Anishnaabe Bear Clan, Sioux Lookout, ON) has shared her knowledge based on community teachings, which were gifted to her by these Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers:

Ralph Johnson, Sioux Lookout, ON
James Carpenter, Healer
Geraldine Standup, Healer, Kahnawake FN.
Priscilla McLaren, Pic River FN
Sylvia Maracle Executive Director of OFIFC;
Liz Osawamick, Wikwemekong FN
Shirley Williams, Wikwemekong FN,
Garnet Angecone, Lac Seul FN
Juliette Blackhawk, Lac Seul FN

Their teachings are rooted deeply in the Land and as Nadia herself states "...and have become a part of who I am as Anishnaabe Kwe." This model recognizes and acknowledges intergenerational knowledge-sharing practices. We bring with us to each moment, the accumulation of understandings and relationships. It also was used to organize and process the research of this report. It acknowledges the collaborative coming together of hearts and minds, and all-encompassing and holistic respect to our ancestors and future ancestors.

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Yvette Nolan (Algonquin)
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Yves Sioui Durand (Huron-Wendat)
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Un monde qui s'achève - Lola, playwright and director: Yves Sioui Durand

2. INTRODUCTION

- *Team*

The Primary Colours/Couleurs primaires (PC/Cp) research team for this project was:

lead researchers	Sara Roque (mixed-blood Anishinaabekwe) France Trépanier (Kanien'keha:ka/French)
research advisor and community consultations	Denise Bolduc (Ojibwe-Anishinaabe/French)
project advisor and administrator	Chris Creighton-Kelly
administrative and survey coordinator	Richael Laking (Dakota/Irish)

Two persons who regularly work with PC/Cp provided additional support:

administrative/design advisor	Breanna Fabbro
translator (français-to-English)	Isanielle Enright (Kanien'keha:ka/Éireannach/French)

- **Authorship**

It is intended that this document speaks with the collective voice of the 5 persons involved in its creation. It is difficult to sort out exactly from whom each insight was derived. However, the reader will easily notice different writing styles. So in the interest of transparency, we would like to briefly note who was the writer for each section.

*In order to understand the truth it takes all of our perspectives.
No one has a monopoly of the truth as you are just a
point on the circumference.*

Carol Greyeyes

Sara Roque wrote the English Findings based on her review of multiple papers, articles, commentary and 8 interviews. Denise Bolduc conducted those 8 interviews in English and summarized the information which was incorporated into Sara's findings. France Trépanier wrote the French Findings based on a corresponding document review in French and 4 interviews conducted by her in French. This was then translated by Isanielle Enright into English. Both the French and English versions are included. The selection of annotated key documents was made by Sara Roque and France Trépanier, Sara describing them in English and France describing them in French. Richael Laking compiled the results of the Survey Questionnaire. Sara Roque, France Trépanier and Chris Creighton-Kelly, who was the writer, all contributed to The Way Forward / The Way Back.

Primary Colours/Primaire couleurs states that this document comes from Indigenous arts communities and returns to those communities. Although we have assembled the content of this document, we intend that this content is 'owned' by Indigenous artists and their communities. PC/Cp does not hold nor wish to hold any copyright on its content.

- **Background**

The impetus for this research report came directly from Indigenous performing artists - mostly those who work in theatre and their community(s). Across the territory that we now call Canada, conversations, talking circles, panels, workshops, Indigenous curriculum

development meetings for performing arts training and numerous articles, essays and studies have been conducted over the last four decades.

This direction was clearly emphasized at **Scháyilhen** (Salmon Going Up River), the 2018 Industry Series at Talking Stick Festival. Primary Colours/Primaire couleurs was invited by Margo Kane - Artistic Director of Talking Stick festival - to facilitate a workshop entitled *Creating an Indigenous Arts Action Plan: Strategies Moving Forward*. It was reiterated by workshop participants that many studies and other documents already exist. At the end of the workshop, they asked straightforwardly: to give respect to the history of Indigenous performing arts, to gather these studies, and to point *The Way Forward / The Way Back* for concrete actions.

- ***Purpose of Research***

As part of a previous report in 2018, PC/Cp commissioned two papers on Indigenous arts infrastructure, one by Sara Roque (territory known as Canada), one by Mylène Guay (territory known as Québec). The results, though not surprising, were nonetheless startling: Indigenous arts infrastructure is woefully neglected. Both reports are listed in the bibliographies.

After the completion of these two papers, PC/Cp was able to establish a partnership with Indigenous Theatre - National Arts Centre (NAC). They are providing funding and other support from a Memorandum of Understanding with the Creating, Knowing, Sharing (CKS) Section of the Canada Council for the Arts. PC/Cp proposed as our principal purpose:

How to improve and expand the infrastructure for creating, presenting and touring Indigenous performing arts through research, summation of existing documents with a view to writing a current position paper. This research and paper will form the basis of an information/advocacy package that can be utilized in multiple ways.

We emphasize that this document is not directed at any one arts institution or government agency. We are not mandated to make recommendations. Our mandate was 'commissioned' by the Indigenous theatre community - performing artists and arts organizations. In lieu of recommendations then, we highlight 'ideas for concrete action' in *The Way Forward / The Way Back* chapter. In addition, we do not present some type of neutral research that is open to interpretation. As has been clear for decades; as was reiterated at **Scháyilhen**, as was again reinforced by our research and consultations,

Indigenous performing arts are underfunded, under resourced and under appreciated. We state this as a historical fact - and not as a point of contention, but as a point of departure.

It is intended that with this document and its appendices, Indigenous performing artists and their arts organizations will have a useful 'digital package' with which to advocate for concerted, concrete actions. It is also hoped that the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) and the NAC will benefit from this research. Finally, it will give numerous other arts agencies and arts organizations a more comprehensive and current look at Indigenous performing arts.

- ***Values and Principles***

As has already been implied, this document comes from and returns to Indigenous arts communities. Although our team has a history of experience and knowledge in the Indigenous performing arts, we do not see ourselves as 'experts'. Therefore, we have sought the insights and critique of artists and activists from various communities. That collective knowledge informs this document.

In general, and specifically on this project, PC/Cp tries to work with the 5 R's. They were developed in Decolonizing Methodologies by Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Research is Ceremony by Shawn Wilson as Indigenous-based methodologies for research. We find that the 5 R's can be applicable to arts activities: collaborations, arts presentation, arts policy, community cultural engagement; arts projects as well as research, as they were initially developed. The 5 R's are:

Respect, Responsibility, Relevance, Relationality and Reciprocity

PC/Cp does not work in isolation solely on decolonization in the arts. We also recognize that Indigenous arts issues are connected to historical injustices and to contemporary systemic racism. So we are mindful of these considerations in our work - the 4 Inters are:

Interracial/cultural, Intersectional, Intergenerational and Interdisciplinary

- ***Definition of Terms***

The first persons to inhabit the Americas are referred to by different names in different contexts. In the country now known as Canada, it is possible to overhear the following: Aboriginal, First Nations, First Peoples, Indian, Indigenous and Native. Most of these ways of describing have their own advantages and shortcomings. We do not believe there is any one

accurate description. We have no pretension to ‘correct’ the terms used by any Indigenous artist who has shared knowledge with us. Different persons use different words in different contexts communicating in their own voice. PC/Cp has chosen to use the word ‘Indigenous’ to describe persons who mainly live in Canada and who are First Nations, Inuit or Métis. Of course, most of these persons identify themselves as members of their own ancestral peoples - e.g. Nisga’a, Anishinaabe, Mi’kmaq - when they feel it is appropriate.

Secondly, we have chosen to use the term ‘performing arts’ in the plural form to emphasize the multiplicity of Indigenous art practices that happen in real time in front of an audience - either onstage, digitally or in a ‘performance staging area’. In this context, we are emphasizing the non-profit, public sector of the arts system. Although there is some overlap, the commercial side of the cultural industries has its own set of private sector challenges that are quite different from the public arts sphere.

- ***Methodology***

The work began with two basic ideas - a literature review (written) and community consultations (oral). These were elaborated by the whole team over a series of Zoom meetings and the following steps emerged:

- development of terms of reference and conceptual framework
- review of literature in English
- review of literature in French
- research and design of interview questions
- 8 in-depth interviews with experienced theatre professionals in English
- 4 in-depth interviews with experienced theatre professionals in French
- research and design of questionnaire
- consultations with Indigenous knowledge keepers
- consultations with institutional arts administrators
- selection of 20 historic, key documents with annotated descriptions
- creation of bibliography in English
- creation of bibliography in French
- summary of the findings of literature review and interviews (English)
- summary of the findings of literature review and interviews (French)
- translation of these findings (written in French) into English
- presentation of the findings of the Survey Monkey questionnaire
- research/writing of *The Way Forward / The Way Back* - 8 ideas for concrete action
- formatting and design of the report



On Common Ground, Debajehmujig Theatre Group. Photo Credit: Ron Berti

3. FINDINGS (English)

3.1 ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENTS

The following text captures impressions and findings from this phase of an Indigenous Performing Arts (Infra)structure research. This research included a review of existing documents and texts on Indigenous performing arts; summaries of one-on-one interviews; and a short online survey. It is also informed by the many conversations with our research team about the work and my own lived experiences and ways of seeing the world.

This chapter uses a wide lens and is intended to be a compass to guide continuing, more focussed work. In a broad stroke, the goal of this research is to document what needs to happen to make Indigenous theatre thrive in these lands now known as Canada. In the list of *20 Annotated Key Documents*, the curatorial approach was to highlight writings that are polyvocal in nature, and therefore capture a diversity of perspectives and voices, much like the encounters and conversations we might have at an in-person gathering.

These documents provide a historical arc, beginning in the late 1980s, the decade when we start to see Indigenous peoples reclaiming our voices across disciplines in the arts sector, and speaking on our own behalf. The documents also provide a glimpse into the collective efforts by Indigenous artists who have advocated for change and more understanding within the sector and mainstream arts institutions.

The repeated themes and concerns that surfaces from the research, reveals an astonishing resistance to hear or act upon these concerns, by the very institutions that have been charged with nurturing and protecting the artistic and cultural practices of these lands. These institutions have a mandate to respect the expressed desire for creative autonomy and processes that reflect the lived realities of many Indigenous creators. As one participant expressed, this, in the past, often meant that Indigenous artists have had to compromise, but as the tides are changing they will 'not be compromising anymore.'

Of course, whenever we are framing research we are bringing in unconscious biases, and as we forefront certain topics others may unconsciously recede. Based on findings from this project, the next stages could target more feedback from the North and rural regions, as well as specific perspectives of collectives working outside 'operational funding' models, as well as more voices from Indigiqueer artists. It would also be beneficial to look beyond the sector, at successful models of institutional transformation in other areas such as the health or legal sectors.

Like the rest of the world, our original approach to the project was disrupted by the arrival of the global pandemic, and the unprecedented rise of social justice action, spurred by the suffocating hold of white supremacy that continues to affect Indigenous, Black and People of Colour on Turtle Island. This climate eliminated the possibility of any face-to-face interviews and community visits that are the usual and expected relational approach to Indigenous knowledge gathering.

As a team, we acknowledge our resiliencies but also the impact, many of them still unknown, that these times have and will continue to have on our collective mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. We are grateful for the generosity of the individuals who participated in survey responses during these times.

Knowledge

- ***Elders & Cultural Carriers***

Research from this project indicates an overwhelming need and desire for more opportunities for Indigenous Knowledge exchange and cultural sharing, especially in the southern regions. This work must be deep, meaningful and ongoing. Opportunities for sharing with Elders and Culture Carriers will help to rekindle values (i.e values include self-determined definitions of family, success, education, progress, wealth, happiness, language). Knowledge exchange can enable Indigenous artists to work in more generative ways and in ways that reflect Indigenous values, not just mainstream values. This work should include meaningful and ongoing engagement with local Elders. As one participant expressed, it's 'not just dial-an-Elder'.

This work is often seen by the mainstream as an add-on, and funding and professional association structures often inhibit this critical work that is integral to the creative process. One respondent conveyed the importance of the work, stating the significance of 'knowing your own canon before expanding'.

How do we define success? From a colonial success (measurement) lens? Or do we look at when an Indigenous show went to a fly-in community and saved a life (young person), this is intangible and I believe that this is success.

Jani Lauzon

It was noted that cultural work needs to be lived and embodied. It cannot be simply stated in a mission statement. It means different ways of doing things from mainstream structures. Knowledge from an Indigenous perspective does not reside solely in the mind or in the realm of the mental. It is living and breathing and must be nurtured and cared for. It is intergenerational and founded on relationships. In addition to practical outcomes, such as conflict management skills and strengthening of identities, Indigenous knowledge builds and ignites stories and in turn ignites and informs the creative process.

Mainstream models of success can create unhealthy competition and vertical calibrations that reinforce colonial values that are not congruent with Indigenous values of the circle and collective well-being. The historical climate of 'scarcity' for Indigenous artists often means individuals are pitted against each other and have the 'crab in the bucket mentality' and can be laterally violent. This was expressed by respondents as a critical area that needs to be addressed. Reconnecting with cultural values and knowledge through the arts can help empower each other and heal our collective wounds and work in more generative ways.

Some expressed that the current strain of understaffed organizations means that this important cultural work is being usurped and compromised due to the administrative loads of the funding bodies.

Due to the historical displacement of Indigenous people from family, culture and homelands, many Indigenous artists have not grown up with their own cultures. This can be challenging for Indigenous artists in the mainstream who are expected to represent Indigenous peoples or their Nation but may not have had access to this cultural knowledge. Therefore opportunities to connect with one's own Nations, communities and cultural traditions is integral.

It was noted that the word 'community' can be misleading, as there are many aspects of community. It is rigidly defined and only connects to On-Reserve or language speakers for example, it can exclude the experiences of others, i.e. sixties scoopers, adoption, enfranchisement, Black-Indigenous.

Recent ratifications to the current Canadian Theatre Agreement on behalf of Indigenous organizations and leaders, notably changes to Article 10, recognize and validate the need for cultural consultations that are not defined by a standard fee set in stone. This is a significant change that shows a slight paradigm shift within mainstream models. As of December 2020 changes were in the process of being ratified.

It is important to recognize the distinction of Inuit performing arts practices. Inuit life is its own ecosystem. There needs to be more dialogue on how unique Inuit experiences are from First Nations and Metis, partly because so much of Inuit art is rooted in the land. It was noted that there has been a historical reliance of Inuit on southern communities to define and keep the arts alive. The need 'to be more self-reliant,' has been highlighted in the current global pandemic, with its lack of travel. In order for the arts scene to be more self-reliant, there need to be more resources.

Processes

How do we try things out in order to know if we fail? There is a gap for artists who are theatre makers doing organic creations from an Indigenous centre, and a gap allowing them to find this. This work includes land research, travel, etc. We want to work in spaces that are not always in a theatre.

Monique Mojica

Indigenous theatre artists are often working in urban environments that is not on their ancestral homelands and are working with people from different Nations (place-based vs. land-based described in the dissertation work of scholar Lindsay Lachance). Current mainstream and professional association structures (i.e. rehearsal times, touring models) do not allow for the time and resources needed for Indigenous people to navigate different protocols and ways to work together on a project in a good way.

A number of respondents requested the need for more time and space to explore, connect. One person noted that they prefer to work with Non-Indigenous community-based art organizations that have more resources and willingness to support a robust, multi-year research and development process.

Lack of theatre space and the exorbitant rates of hotels in the North meant the artists have to do everything: acting, directing, props, stage management, tech, load in and strike - usually within 24 hours of a show. Many Inuit artists are multidisciplinary - mothers/fathers and art is part of the daily activity. For example, a rock band also practices theatre and fixes cars - this influences how they make art.

Current art and cultural funding bodies, and their evaluation frameworks do not reflect Indigenous values and definitions of success or well-being that are self-determined by the community. The development of the new Indigenous Evaluation Framework course at The Banff Centre for the Arts, Indigenous Leaderships Department, (launching in the Spring of 2021) could be an excellent resource to guide this work.

- ***Dramaturgical Processes***

There are a number of trailblazers that have been working in this area of the field, seeking to decolonize the artistic creative process. (including Tomson Highway, Monique Mojica, Lindsay Lachance, Spy Desnomme-Welsh). This is important work that often does not fit into mainstream notions of story structure and can render the work illegible to audiences and reviewers.

Indigenous theatre and creative processes are often undervalued or can be misunderstood, not only by Non-Indigenous audiences and organizations but sometimes within Indigenous organizations as well. This was expressed by an artist who felt they lost autonomy over the vision of their work despite working with an all Indigenous team and program.

Research from this project shows a need for more opportunities for meaningful dialogue to build understanding with each other, with audience members, and mainstream reviewers and commentators. There was a range of responses on how critical commentary could manifest. Some expressed that reviews are damaging and that non-Indigenous reviewers of Indigenous work should step down. Others articulated the importance of educating reviewers instead.

It was recommended that deep conversations and dialogue with Indigenous artists and Elders from across disciplines could determine a set of wise practices for reviewers engaging with Indigenous works. It was noted this conversation has been ongoing for three decades. It is also important, however, to put this in context of the current landscape of online dissemination and the power of social media, and how these forms are shifting and shaping critical commentary.

Structures

The pandemic has made us understand that Nunavut has relied on southern communities to keep our arts scene alive. We have realized that we need to be more self-reliant. We need to create Inuit work for Inuit, by Inuit.

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory

- ***Self-Determination & Governance***

As noted above, government funding and professional association models, in the past, have not reflected or supported Indigenous values and creative processes. One respondent quoted scholar Patrick Wolfe and reminded us that 'colonialism is NOT an event, it is a structure'.

The research revealed a strong desire for more knowledge sharing on the topic of Indigenous governance structures and traditional notions of law that can inform Indigenous organizational structures and ways of working, as well as the way 'we treat each other'. The arts are central to Indigenous legal traditions so there is a link between these sectors.

Although we are seeing an increase of Indigenous positions in mainstream arts organizations, often the mainstream process subconsciously fills these positions with Indigenous bodies that reflect a certain and acceptable way of looking, thinking, speaking and engaging.

Alternatively, many Indigenous peoples are suffering from burn-out or what is known as 'hitting the brick wall' as they are continuously encountering obstructions that are rooted in a deep conflict of worldviews. There is a growing body of work that examines institutional 'phenomenology' and how this intersects with diversity and equity work.

Some of the picture not captured in the framing of this research project is the work of Indigenous performing arts and other Indigenous collectives who choose to work autonomously outside the confines of dominant board of directors governance models (examples of producing collectives include O'Kaadenigan Wiingashk Collective and the Onishka Collective) and therefore do not qualify for operational funding (which provides the statistical information to inform a state of the field). Looking at the successes of collectives that are working with different forms of governance could be an area of attention in the next stage of research.

- ***Space***

There is currently no dedicated Inuit performing arts space in the North. There is no Indigenous performing arts space in Winnipeg, a city with one of the largest per capita populations of Indigenous peoples in these lands.

Overall there was an expression for the need for more access to community spaces (indoor or outdoor), where people can explore and create, there are currently very few Indigenous spaces that allow for this.

Despite growing sensitivity, many mainstream houses can still be unwelcoming, inhospitable and even harmful to Indigenous peoples and the artistic processes. There is still pushback when artists, for example, ask to smudge despite the efforts to educate venues on this practice (i.e. the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance (IPAA) Smudging Document). Working in community is a way to be work more directly with the people many artists want to be speaking with. Yet often, with current structures, artists to need to work within these houses to make a living. Cultural safety training is an important part of making spaces safer for Indigenous peoples. This is not just within leadership but it must permeate throughout the organization - front of house, facilities staff, volunteers, human resources, CEOs. It is also an ongoing process.

Residencies are important spaces for artistic incubation. There is a desire for more residencies that understand Indigenous practices, processes and lived realities. This included land-based and community-based residencies, that recognize the power of the land to decolonize our minds, bodies and spirits. Many Inuit artists are already engaged in land based practices but there is a need for increased resources for staff or people to support this work.

- ***Indigenous Arts Administrators & Producers***

There is a resounding expression for the need for Indigenous arts administrators and producers. This is not just about training and mentorship. It is about disseminating the value of this work in the Indigenous communities and leadership.

A vision and curriculum for Indigenous arts administrators was developed collectively by a group of Indigenous artists and arts administrators at the Banff Centre with funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (see *Annotated Key Documents*), yet these findings and recommendations were never followed up or implemented. This work could be updated and provide a foundation for the implementation of Indigenous arts administration programs.

There is a critical mass of Indigenous artists and arts administrators in mainstream arts institutions that could potentially provide opportunities for mentorship with Indigenous arts administrators and producers.

- ***Training***

There has been a slow but dramatic decline in Indigenous theatre training programs in the country. Thirty years ago there were over twenty programs operating across this land known as Canada. Today there exist only three companies that are state-funded.

The initial boom and proliferation is reflective of many factors of the time, both within the arts and outside the arts, including the rise of Indigenous voices and an emergence from what has been referred to as the fourth wave of colonization (residential schools and child apprehensions, bans).

This decline in grassroots training programs, could reflect the lack of support for community based structures that were not deemed 'professional' and therefore did not qualify for state funding. Historically, healing and community have not been recognized as part of the elitism of arts structures. Training for Indigenous peoples should honour values of the circle and equality. This work needs to be trauma-informed an approach that recognizes the ongoing impact of colonial violence on Indigenous peoples.

Funding structures and requirements centralized many of these program operations into more urban areas. Many students who wish to pursue theatre training must leave their communities, bringing them into what can often be inhospitable urban centres. This reality is often not considered in mainstream funding support models. Current Indigenous theatre training was described by a couple of participants as 'failing' to succeed due to lack of resources. After many years of advocating for change, the Indigenous Training Caucus, composed of Indigenous theatre trainers in the country, has partnered with the Department of Canadian Heritage's training program to examine and re-define metrics and evaluation framework for the Department of Canadian Heritage's arts training program.

By contrast, Artcirq Inuit Performance has been extremely successful training youth and producing and touring internationally. Although there is still some decolonizing that needs to happen - it is White-led - the initiative is composed of mainly all Inuit performers.

Many band councils do not prioritize arts training, as dictated by overarching structures. Due to structural inequalities and systemic poverty, Indigenous boards of directors and networks do not have access to the fundraising skills and pools of private monies that non-Indigenous companies have access to. It was noted the long history of influential, powerful and wealthy board members at the National Theatre School in Montreal as an example.

- ***Touring & Presentation***

There is continued, expressed desire for tangible action around the establishment of an Indigenous touring network. This is challenging since there are so few venues across these lands as there is. Although many independent performing artists have organized very successful community touring (The Red Ride Tour, produced by independent artists Kristi Lane Sinclair is a good example of this), many works by Indigenous peoples do not get the opportunities to be presented, due to a lack of awareness of this works. Other venues will only program one Indigenous work per season.

Many funding programs for touring do not reflect Indigenous protocols for working in remote communities, such as the adequate time to build respectful relationships with audiences and the land.

Relationships

We are each finding our ways and paths rooted in the cultural knowledge we have. How do we bring our cultural connectivity into how we operate? Into what we program, what we bring to the art, and the way we work together?

Margo Kane

Notions of relationship and connection are integral to Indigenous thoughts and values. These are both tangible such as the land or material objects, and intangible such as our relationship to the ancestors human and non-human, from before and after us.

There was a noted lack of community connections or relationship building that is detectable at the Toronto Native Earth Performing Art shows in the past. One participant expressed that these community connections to other sectors and organizations, such as Na-Me-Res for example, should be critical and integral to Indigenous theatre, in that it nurtures community relationships and connectivity.

CAPACOA and Ontario Presents are currently engaged in a three year model to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous presenters to increase the visibility of

Indigenous work. The pilot initiative report provides interesting insight into this action based approach. Yet it still put Indigenous theatre artists in control of where, when and how they present. This is an example of funders who see one model as viable that builds connections but is not directly in support of self-determination.

Although there are changes and an increased sensitivity of historical and systemic harm that has been placed on Indigenous bodies, communities and artistic forms of expressions, there is still much work that needs to be done. Respondents expressed that despite the historical realities, Indigenous artists and theatre arts are quite remarkable and that there is a growing critical mass. It is important to have the time to clearly understand the motives and integrity of mainstream organizations that are partnering with Indigenous artists, to ensure that Indigenous peoples have control and agency over artistic and cultural practices. This includes a paradigm shift within funders, that removes the historical paternalistic structures that positioned 'Native art' as inferior, and re-calibrates the funders to be in service to Indigenous peoples. Self-determination in the sector, includes autonomy throughout all stages of the creative process from dreaming to presentation. This include determining the structures and processes within Indigenous designated units, that are intended to be stewards of the arts. This includes determining the evaluation frameworks or human resource practices when hiring Indigenous peoples in such positions.

Many of the respondents in this project expressed that many organizations are looking to tick a box, or have felt tokenized by attempts at Indigenous inclusion. Reconciliation is a journey not a destination. Until artists have regained full autonomy over their arts and culture, there is work to do.

3.2 RESULTS OF ON-LINE SURVEY

This survey is part of a comprehensive look at Indigenous performing arts on Turtle Island and the changes that need to be made by the many layers of government arts funding both on and off reserves. As a Dakota/Irish Indigenous visual artist who has lived in Tkaronto for over a decade I found that the feedback from this survey rings true for all art forms. This survey is an important part of a much larger compendium of knowledge from matriarchs and new generation artists.

Through community outreach I was able to connect with a large range of creators and storytellers involved in the creation of Indigenous theatre. A high percentage were Indigenous theatre professionals ages 25-45 and based in an urban setting. The quick 5-

minute multiple choice survey asked important questions about audiences, infrastructure and presenting & touring. I have listed the corresponding answers with the most responses first, followed by second most and so on.

Most respondents reported they make theatre for urban Indigenous audiences although numbers show they create work for diverse groups including non-Indigenous audiences (mainstream mostly European-based arts organizations), Indigenous audiences on reserve, audiences of colour and audiences in alternative presentation spaces.

When asked about Indigenous infrastructure it was expressed that more Indigenous cultural training, mentoring and/or professional development is greatly needed. As well as on-going operational funding for Indigenous performing arts organizations, more Indigenous arts administrators, and Indigenous critical commentary & discourse – both popular and academic, more arts grants and consistent Indigenous protocols within the process of theatre creation – e.g. smudging or talking circles within the rehearsal room.

When presenting and touring respondents indicated they do so on urban Indigenous stages, on 'alternative' stages (e.g. Fringe festivals, community centres) and on mainstream theatre stages although a comparatively low number present on reserve. The types of networks respondents would like to see where an Indigenous performing arts companies network with an overwhelmingly high number of responses. Next were a rural presenters network (both Indigenous & non-Indigenous) and finally more already established mainstream presenter organizations.

This is the first time I have worked with a diverse almost all Indigenous team. I have learned so much during this research process and have never felt so heard and honoured. It is my personal opinion that Indigenous peoples need a space that is owned and run by Indigenous artists and administrators, where we can all create and tell our stories on our ancestral territories. None of the above can happen unless we have absolute control over our voice and creation process. The performance arts also need to be accessible for people living in northern isolated communities, not just urban hot spots.



Umanishish, Soleil Launière. Photo Credit: Jules Bédard

4. FINDINGS (French)

Please note that the French text is presented first. The English text follows on page 33

4.1 ANALYSE DES ENTREVUES ET DES DOCUMENTS

Dans le cadre du projet de recherche *Looking at Indigenous Performing Arts*, nous avons porté une attention particulière aux spécificités des arts de la scène autochtones pratiqués dans les deux langues coloniales que sont le français et l'anglais. Le présent texte se penche sur les réalités des artistes œuvrant dans l'espace francophone sur le territoire maintenant appelé Canada.

Les commentaires et conclusions contenus dans ce document représentent un sommaire des analyses formulées tout au long du projet de recherche. Cette synthèse trouve ses principales sources dans les entrevues individuelles menées auprès d'acteurs, de dramaturges et de directeurs artistiques, majoritairement autochtones, œuvrant principalement au Québec et en français. La synthèse inclut également la documentation écrite sur le théâtre autochtone, et plus largement sur les arts vivants

autochtones, disponible en français. Finalement, elle tient compte des résultats du sondage mené en ligne au cours de l'automne 2020.

Visions du monde et arts autochtones

Un aspect fondamental qui émerge de nos recherches touche la nature même de la pratique théâtrale et des arts vivants autochtones en lien avec les visions du monde autochtones. À plusieurs reprises, les liens avec le cosmos, le territoire et les animaux sont évoqués. Plusieurs pensent le théâtre comme lieu de chamanisme, de justice, de guérison et de cérémonie. Certains font référence aux clowns sacrés et à leurs rôles au sein des communautés. D'autres décrivent le théâtre comme un lieu de rencontre avec la transcendance. Un lieu pour ré-établir l'équilibre.

On n'a pas d'autre but, en tant que peuples autochtones, que de marcher vers nos origines. Le grand théâtre c'est d'explorer comment une culture se perpétue sur des milliers d'années. Quand on parle de théâtre autochtone, on parle de pratiques millénaires à travers les trois Amériques.

Yves Sioui Durand

• Qu'est-ce que le théâtre autochtone? Pour qui le pratique-t-on?

Il existe une conception différente du théâtre autochtone et de la présence de l'acteur sur scène. Parfois il s'agit d'un théâtre d'images plus qu'un théâtre de mots. Un théâtre qui valorise le sacré, le cérémoniel, le silence. Les artistes autochtones n'abordent pas les choses de la même façon. Ils n'utilisent pas l'espace de la même manière. Ils créent des lieux cérémoniels et rituels, tant dans les salles de répétition que sur les scènes.

Les spécificités du théâtre autochtone se manifestent aussi dans le rapport aux objets. Pour plusieurs créateurs, les artefacts de scène ne sont pas simplement des décors ou des accessoires. Ce sont des objets sacrés. "Dans une conception animiste du monde, ce sont des objets qui ont une âme. Parfois on les laisse rêver pour qu'on puisse, quand on revient dans l'espace, être habité par ce qui s'en dégage", nous confie un metteur en scène.

Pour certains, le théâtre autochtone mise sur une approche qui expose et valorise le processus et le parcours de l'artiste. Cette approche permet de développer des codes dans une trajectoire en devenir. On ne cherche pas à créer l'œuvre définitive. On tend plutôt à faire émerger l'œuvre dans son propre contexte et dans une démarche de décolonisation.

Au cours des dernières décennies, l'art autochtone contemporain a joui d'une présence et d'une reconnaissance accrue au sein des grandes manifestations artistiques nationales et internationales. Ce sont de gros acquis tant en arts visuels, au cinéma, qu'au théâtre. Les artistes autochtones possèdent la capacité et le talent de rayonner dans ces niches-là.

Cependant, de l'avis de plusieurs, le grand déficit ce sont les communautés, les peuples autochtones qui le vivent. Jusqu'à maintenant, une majorité de productions théâtrales autochtones est présentée en milieu urbain pour un public non autochtone. "Est-ce qu'on va simplement continuer à obtenir des reconnaissances dans un monde qui n'est pas le nôtre ou est-ce qu'on va aussi amener l'art, ses réflexions et ses visions au sein de notre peuple? Ça m'apparaît impossible que le peuple autochtone soit privé de son art contemporain" nous confie un des artistes interviewés.

- ***Décolonisation des paradigmes et attitudes empruntés au théâtre occidental***

"Comment en est-on venu à faire un théâtre pour plaire?" se demande un acteur. Plusieurs artistes considèrent qu'il est urgent d'estomper les frontières coloniales qui habitent les esprits. Il faut nourrir la réflexion sur la pratique théâtrale autochtone. Quel théâtre est-ce qu'on fait? À partir de quels codes? "Il faut redécouvrir et développer nos propres codes", poursuit-il.

Il importe également de questionner les notions de succès et de réussite. Pour plusieurs artistes chevronnés, on ne fait de l'art pour avoir du succès. C'est plutôt un travail de transmission qui s'inscrit dans la continuité: une affaire au long court. Ils considèrent que les arts sont contaminés par le développement des industries culturelles: une industrie de consommation dans laquelle les jeunes artistes sont aspirés. Au Québec, pour de nombreux jeunes artistes autochtones, le vedettariat trop rapide devient un piège, un tourbillon médiatique. De l'avis de plusieurs, il y a un long travail de décolonisation à faire pour se débarrasser des paradigmes empruntés au théâtre occidental. Pour eux, la fonction du théâtre autochtone n'en est pas une de divertissement.

La question des principes et des valeurs qui animent et encadrent la création théâtrale ont été évoqués à plusieurs reprises. Présentement le système des arts au Québec et au Canada est basé sur la compétition. Ce principe favorise la concurrence, la rivalité et parfois même l'affrontement. Cette attitude, qui prévaut dans le monde de l'art occidental, est particulièrement nuisible pour les artistes et compagnies autochtones qui sont toujours confrontés aux contrecoups d'un génocide culturel.

La reconnaissance des artistes autochtones passe encore trop souvent soit par la compétition, la productivité, les prix et les distinctions. Les choses plus fondamentales sont plus difficiles à mesurer, par exemple, les relations avec les aînés et les communautés. Les bailleurs de fonds, les distributeurs et les diffuseurs ne prennent pas en compte l'expertise autochtone.

Infrastructures tangibles et intangibles

On doit avoir une place dans la cité. Si t'as pas d'adresse dans la cité, t'es un itinérant. Je n'adhère pas au concept de nomadisme. On ne peut plus arriver dans un lieu, planter un campement et offrir une performance. On a besoin d'une maison. Un lieu pour recevoir les autres, pour leur présenter notre travail. Un lieu pour se réunir. Et ce lieu, c'est un foyer, un feu.

Catherine Joncas

- ***Lieux physiques***

Tous s'accordent à dire que le théâtre autochtone a besoin d'infrastructures matérielle, de lieux physiques. C'est un besoin fondamental. C'est prioritaire et c'est urgent.

Au Québec, le manque de locaux de répétition, de lieux de création et de présentation constitue une problématique majeure pour les compagnies de théâtre autochtone. On assiste, à Montréal en particulier, à une gentrification des espaces préalablement occupés par les artistes au profit des condos et des espaces commerciaux. "C'est comme si on avait reculé de 20 ans" affirme une artiste. "Un lieu permanent, c'est le

nerf de la guerre. Sinon ça demeure épisodique, ou encore tu es dans la structure de quelqu'un d'autre. On ne veut pas juste être accueillis ailleurs. On veut pouvoir accueillir dans nos propres termes" poursuit-elle.

On constate également une pénurie de lieux de résidence, de lieux de transmission et de mentorat. On a besoin de lieux pour changer la dynamique des échanges et de l'épanouissement des arts autochtones. Plusieurs souhaitent la mise en place d'un réseau de lieux de résidences de création. Ces espaces devraient exister aussi dans les communautés autochtones. Des lieux dédiés à toutes les formes de création. Il faut nourrir les synergies, les interrelations entre les artistes vivant en milieu urbain et les communautés. Pas seulement pour aller donner des ateliers. Créer des lieux de répétition, des lieux de dialogues. Partager des imaginaires. Offrir aux artistes urbains la possibilité de créer en région.

Il existe toutefois des lacunes importantes dans les communautés au niveau des infrastructures physiques dédiées aux arts et à la culture. "Les conseils de bande commencent seulement à se rendre compte que l'art est important pour la recherche identitaire et la revitalisation de la langue dans les communautés", confie un dramaturge. Il n'en reste pas moins qu'au sein des systèmes de gouvernance autochtone, les gens pensent encore trop souvent que les arts et la culture sont superflus.

- ***Ressources humaines***

Le secteur autochtone de la danse, de la musique et du théâtre à un besoin urgent d'administrateurs d'art autochtones. Cette pénurie d'administrateurs qualifiés a des conséquences néfastes pour la santé et la vitalité des compagnies et des collectifs de création autochtones. C'est également un grand défi que de trouver des artistes, des scénographes, des dramaturges et des techniciens autochtones.

Cependant, le problème demeure entier. Il n'existe aucune formation en arts de la scène ou en administration des arts au sein des institutions d'enseignement ou autres organismes culturels autochtones. Les jeunes ne savent pas que ces métiers existent.

On s'entend pour dire qu'il faut faire preuve d'inventivité et imaginer de nouvelles manières d'échanger les connaissances au travers de stages, d'ateliers de formation dans les communautés et de mentorat au sein des compagnies artistiques tant autochtones qu'allochtones. Il faut donner accès à une diversité de création et

montrer ce qui peut se faire. "On a un urgent besoin de formateurs autochtones francophones", affirme une artiste.

Pour certains, la direction et la gestion d'une compagnie sont de trop lourdes tâches. Les artistes émergents ne veulent pas nécessairement aller vers les compagnies. Ils imaginent des structures plus souples. Ils fonctionnent sur la base de projets ponctuels. Ils explorent l'art de la performance.

Cependant, il importe de consolider les compagnies existantes pour assurer la fondation de l'écosystème théâtral dans l'espace francophone. La démarche théâtrale est exigeante en termes de temps et d'efforts. "À l'image de la biodiversité de la forêt, il est essentiel d'accompagner les grands arbres, et ne pas uniquement favoriser les nouvelles pousses" nous dit une dramaturge.

- **Partenariats**

Les artistes autochtones sont souvent invités dans les structures allochtones, pas seulement pour la qualité de leur travail artistique, mais beaucoup pour l'éducation qu'ils peuvent apporter à l'organisme, ce qui représente une double tâche. Les compagnies de théâtre allochtones n'ont pas de personnel formé pour accueillir les artistes autochtones. Les artistes se font aspirer dans des dynamiques de 'saveur du mois' au lieu de s'investir dans le développement des infrastructures autochtones.

Soleil Launière

On constate au Québec une vague d'intérêt pour les arts autochtones. Il y a une nouvelle curiosité de la part des diffuseurs et des compagnies de théâtre allochtones qui font preuve de plus d'ouverture. Ces changements se produisent avec l'arrivée d'une nouvelle génération de directeurs artistiques dans les théâtres québécois. Au cours des dernières années, plusieurs partenariats ont été développés, par exemple une résidence d'artiste à la Salle Fred Baril, la compagnie Onishka en résidence au

Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui et la compagnie Ondinnok en coproduction avec le Théâtre Prospero et Espace Libre.

Dans le cas du programme d'artiste autochtone en résidence à l'École nationale de théâtre, il a fallu restructurer toute leur façon d'approcher les artistes autochtones. "Il y a, dans ces institutions, un manque profond de connaissance des cultures autochtones. Et ça devient lourd à porter pour les artistes autochtones", affirme une jeune artiste. "On devrait développer des collaborations avec les allié.e.s afin qu'ils puissent s'éduquer et pallier aux manques de connaissances dans les organismes allochtones. On devrait créer ces emplois au sein des compagnies pour les personnes autochtones", poursuit-elle.

- **Réseaux**

Il n'existe aucun réseau de tournée dans les communautés autochtones au Québec. En fait, il n'y a pas assez d'infrastructures pour la création et la présentation des arts et de la culture dans les réserves. Malgré tout, au cours des années, certaines compagnies ont développé des projets de médiation artistique, de formation, de création et de présentation de spectacles. On pense entre autres au projet de théâtre de guérison Sakipitcikan mené par la compagnie Ondinnok avec la communauté atikamekw de Manawan.

On note récemment une présence accrue des compagnies et artistes des arts vivants autochtones dans les vitrines de spectacles et événements promotionnels comme Rideau ou CINARS. Pour plusieurs, il importe de prendre contact avec les diffuseurs, de créer des connexions et de nourrir ces relations.

Communautés autochtones

Tout au long des entrevues, les artistes ont abondamment parlé de l'importance d'avoir de l'art dans les communautés, de l'art issu des communautés, pour les communautés. "Il faut créer des liens entre les compagnies pour organiser des événements, développer des réseaux et présenter le théâtre, les arts vivants dans les communautés - pas nécessairement faire venir les gens des communautés en ville." affirme une artiste. On évoque un retour aux arts vivants, en nature, sur le territoire: des expériences artistiques extérieures, hors des infrastructures bâties.

- **Réalités urbaines et rurales**

On doit déjouer la dichotomie entre le rural et l'urbain. Pourtant, plusieurs parlent d'une coupure entre les artistes urbains et les communautés. D'une part, certains artistes autochtones vivant en milieu urbain se sentent déconnectés des communautés. D'autre part, il importe de mieux faire comprendre la valeur de l'art par le biais de visites d'artistes, d'ateliers de théâtre ou de musique et la création de liens à long terme.

On donne comme exemple l'artiste innu Florent Vollant qui a créé un studio d'enregistrement professionnel à Uashat-Malioténam ouvert aux artistes de la relève dans sa communauté. Plusieurs y ont fait leurs premiers enregistrements musicaux.

Discours théoriques et critiques

Dans le cadre de la présente étude, nous avons répertorié et consulté une partie de la documentation écrite en français sur le théâtre, la danse et la musique autochtones. Les textes écrits en français - articles, essais, mémoires, thèses et livres - sont encore majoritairement publiés par des auteurs allochtones.

De manière générale, et contrairement aux arts visuels, les arts vivants autochtones souffrent d'un sous développement du discours théorique et critique. Selon plusieurs artistes, cette situation est le reflet d'un manque d'intérêt et d'une absence de références culturelles pertinentes.

Dans l'espace francophone, ce sont encore trop souvent les universitaires, les chercheurs, historiens et théoriciens allochtones qui écrivent sur l'histoire de l'art et la production artistique contemporaine autochtones. Les départements d'histoire et d'études autochtones portent encore fréquemment un regard eurocentriste, néo-colonialiste et anthropologique sur la production artistique autochtone. Il est d'ailleurs intéressant de noter le nombre croissant d'immigrants français (de France) parmi ces universitaires. Ces auteurs possèdent des paramètres d'analyse qui ne leur permettent pas de comprendre la nature profonde des œuvres, à savoir les références historiques et mythiques, les jeux d'inversion, les codes culturels etc. Cette absence de clés de lecture perpétue le regard ethnographique et empêche la vraie rencontre des œuvres.

Le Québec accuse un retard important par rapport au Canada anglais dans la publication d'ouvrages théoriques et critiques sur l'art autochtone par des auteurs

autochtones. Cela est en partie une conséquence de la quasi absence de programmes universitaires francophones en culture visuelle autochtone, en études commissariales autochtones, en création littéraire autochtone et en arts vivants autochtones. Bien peu d'artistes et chercheurs autochtones enseignent dans les universités québécoises.

Cette situation perpétue les extractions de connaissances artistiques autochtones par des non-autochtones, au profit académique, professionnel et culturel de ces personnes et de ces institutions.

L'avenir des arts de la scène autochtones

Je souhaite poursuivre ma réflexion sur la manière de faire du théâtre et d'intégrer l'aspect cérémoniel comme pratique apaisante. Faire reconnaître l'importance des langues ancestrales, la beauté des mots et ce qu'ils contiennent. Parler du lien intime entre le territoire, l'écriture et l'identité.

Dave Jenniss

Le théâtre autochtone doit s'inscrire dans la continuité: un pont entre le passé et l'avenir. Le théâtre peut guérir, consoler, soutenir, créer de la beauté, nous relier au sacré, au plus grands que nous.

Les artistes interviewés sont tous préoccupés par la présente pandémie et les impacts qu'elle aura à moyen et long terme sur les arts vivants autochtones. Tous espèrent le retour à une présence continue et accrue de la création théâtrale autochtone en tant réel, moment privilégié de la présence entre créateurs et publics.

On parle de restructurer le secteur, de multiplier les événements ponctuels, de retrouver des méthodes plus proches de nos racines et du territoire. Il faudra recommencer, retrouver le souffle et l'énergie. Pallier aux annulations et aux décalages des saisons théâtrales. Rejoindre à nouveau les publics et rebâtir les alliances.

L'avenir appelle aussi au renouvellement des médecines. Les artistes sont comme les chamans. Ils peuvent déjouer les frontières, les préjugés. Les artistes sont des porteurs de sens et de parole.

En parlant d'avenir, plusieurs mentionnent l'urgence des enjeux écologiques. Le dramaturge conclut, "Dans cette période extrêmement grave, on a besoin d'un théâtre des animaux. Il faut faire appel aux esprits et aux animaux pour ramener l'humanité dans la bonne direction. Il faut rétablir le contact. Il nous faut un théâtre d'urgence. Et puis, il ne faut pas avoir peur d'avoir peur. Dans le monde animiste tout est vivant. Sur scène tout est vivant."

4.2 ANALYSIS FROM INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENTS (Translation to English)

As part of the research project *Looking at Indigenous Performing Arts*, we paid particular attention to the specificities of the Indigenous performing arts practiced in the two colonial languages of English and French. The present document focuses on the realities of artists working in the Francophone space on the land that is now called Canada.

Comments and conclusions contained in this document represent a summary of the analyses formulated throughout the research project. The main sources for this assessment are individual interviews conducted with Indigenous actors, playwrights and artistic directors working mainly in Quebec and in French. The synthesis also includes written documentation on Indigenous theatre, and more broadly on Indigenous performing arts, available in French. Finally, it takes into account the results of the online survey conducted in the fall of 2020.

Indigenous Worldviews and Art Forms

A fundamental aspect that emerges from our research concerns the very nature of Indigenous theatre and performing arts practices in relation to Indigenous worldviews. On several occasions, connections to the cosmos, the land and animals are mentioned. Many see the theatre as a place of shamanism, justice, healing, and ceremony. Some refer to sacred clowning and its role within communities. Others describe the theatre as a place of contact with transcendence, a place to re-establish balance.

We have no other goal as Indigenous Peoples than to walk back to our roots. The great theatre means exploring the ways a culture is perpetuated over thousands of years. When we talk about Indigenous theatre, we are talking about thousand-year-old practices throughout all three Americas.

Yves Sioui Durand

- ***What is Indigenous Theatre? Who is it Intended For?***

There is a different conception of Indigenous theatre and of the actor on stage. In some cases, it is a theatre of images rather than a theatre of words; a theatre that values the sacred, the ceremonial, and silence. Indigenous artists do not approach things in the same way, they do not use space in the same way. They create ceremonial and ritual places, both in rehearsal rooms and on stage.

The distinctive nature of Indigenous theatre also manifests itself in the relationship to objects: For many creators, onstage objects are not simply sets or props, but sacred objects as well. "In an animist conception of the world, these objects carry a spirit. Sometimes we let them dream so that, when we return to that space, we can be inhabited by what emerges from them," says one director.

For some, Indigenous theatre relies on an approach that exposes and values the process and the journey of the artist. This approach makes it possible to develop codes along an evolving path. This is not about creating a definitive piece, but rather the work tends to emerge from within its own context and through a decolonization process.

Over the last few decades, contemporary Indigenous arts have enjoyed an increased presence and recognition within large national and international artistic events. These are major achievements in visual arts, film and theatre. Indigenous artists have the capacity and talent to reach out into these niches.

However, in the opinion of many, Indigenous Peoples living in communities are at a disadvantage. To date, most Indigenous theatre productions are presented in urban areas for non-native audiences. “Are we simply going to continue to seek recognition in a world that is not ours or are we also going to bring art, its reflections and visions, to our people? It seems impossible to me that Indigenous people live deprived of their contemporary art,” says one of the interviewed artists.

- ***Decolonization of Paradigms and Attitudes Borrowed from Western Theatre***

“How did we end up with a theatre trying to please?” asks an actor. Several artists consider that it is urgent to erase the colonial barriers that inhabit people’s minds. There is a need for deeper reflections on Indigenous theatre practices. What kind of theatre are we creating? Based on which set of codes? “We need to rediscover and develop our own codes,” he says.

It is also important to question the notions of success and achievement. For many seasoned artists, success is not the goal for making art. Rather, it is a work of transmission and continuity: a long-lasting endeavour. They consider that the arts are contaminated by the development of cultural industries: a consumer industry into which young artists are pulled. In Quebec, for many young Indigenous artists, quick access to celebrity status becomes a trap, a media whirlwind. In the opinion of many, a long-term work of decolonization is going to be needed to get rid of the paradigms borrowed from Western theatre. For them, the purpose of Indigenous theatre is not entertainment.

The principles and values animating and framing theatrical creation were mentioned several times. Currently, the arts system in Quebec and Canada is based on competition. This principle favours competition, rivalry and sometimes even confrontation. This attitude, which prevails in the Western art world, is particularly harmful for Indigenous artists and companies who are still facing the repercussions of cultural genocide.

Recognition of Indigenous artists is still too often achieved through competition, productivity, awards, and distinctions. More fundamental things are harder to measure: for example, relationships with Elders and communities. Funders, distributors, and presenters do not take Indigenous expertise into account.

Tangible and Intangible Infrastructure

We must have a place in the city. If you do not have an address in the city, you are homeless. I do not subscribe to the concept of nomadism. We can no longer come to a space, set up camp and give a performance. We need a house. We need a place to welcome others, to present our work to them, a place to meet. And that kind of place is a home, a fire.

Catherine Joncas

- **Physical Places**

All agree that Indigenous theatre needs physical infrastructure, physical places. This is a fundamental requirement. It is a priority, and it is urgent.

In Quebec, the lack of rehearsal and creation spaces, as well as presentation venues, is a major problem for Indigenous theatre companies. In Montreal in particular, we are witnessing the gentrification of spaces previously occupied by artists in favour of condos and commercial spaces. "It's as if we've gone back 20 years," says one artist. A permanent space is a key issue. Otherwise, it's episodic, or you're in someone else's structure. We do not want to simply be welcomed elsewhere. We want to be the ones welcoming others on our own terms," she continues.

There is also a shortage of residential, transmission and mentoring facilities. Places are needed to change the dynamics of exchange and development of Indigenous arts. Many want to establish a network of creative residency spaces, which should include Indigenous communities. Places dedicated to all forms of creation. We need to nourish synergies and interrelationships between artists living in urban areas and communities, and not just going there to give workshops. Create places for rehearsals, places for dialogue, to share imaginary worlds, to offer urban artists the opportunity to create in rural regions.

There are, however, significant gaps in the physical infrastructure dedicated to arts and culture in communities. "Band councils are only beginning to realize that art is

important for identity research and language revitalization in communities,” says one playwright. Nevertheless, within Indigenous governance systems, people still too often think that arts and culture are expendable.

- **Human Resources**

The Indigenous theatre, dance and music sector are in urgent need of Indigenous arts administrators. This shortage of qualified administrators has a negative impact on the health and vitality of Indigenous companies and creative collectives. Finding Indigenous artists, designers, playwrights, and technicians is also a considerable challenge.

Indeed, the problem remains. There is no training in performing arts or arts administration in educational institutions or other Indigenous cultural organizations. Youths are not aware that these trades exist.

There is a consensus on the need for creating and thinking new knowledge-sharing methods such as internships, community training workshops and mentoring within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous arts companies. Access to a diversity of creation and concrete examples of what can be done must be provided. “There is an urgent need for French-speaking Indigenous artist teachers,” says one artist.

For some, the direction and management of a company is too heavy a task, and emerging artists don’t necessarily want to join companies. They envision more flexible structures. They operate on a project-by-project basis. They explore performance art.

However, it is important to consolidate existing companies to ensure the foundation of the theatrical ecosystem in the Francophone space. The theatrical approach is demanding in terms of time and effort. “Just as with biodiversity in the forest, it is essential to support the big trees, and not just encourage new growth,” says a playwright.

- **Partnerships**

There is a surge in interest towards Indigenous arts in Quebec. There is a new curiosity from non-indigenous broadcasters and theatre companies, who are showing more openness. These changes are occurring with the arrival of a new generation of artistic directors in Quebec theatres. In recent years, several partnerships have been

developed, such as an artist residency at Salle Fred Baril, the Onishka company in residence at Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui and the Ondinnok company in co-production with Théâtre Prospero and Espace Libre.

Indigenous artists are often invited into non-native structures, not only for the quality of their artistic work, but very much for the education they can bring to the organization, which ends up being a double task. Non-indigenous theatre companies do not have trained staff to welcome Indigenous artists. Indigenous artists get sucked into ‘flavour of the month’ dynamics instead of investing in the development of Indigenous infrastructure.

Soleil Launière

In the case of the Indigenous artist-in-residence program at the National Theatre School, they had to restructure their entire approach to Indigenous artists. “There is a profound lack of knowledge of Indigenous cultures in these institutions. And it’s getting heavy for Indigenous artists,” says one young artist. “We should develop collaborations with allies so that they can educate themselves and compensate for the lack of knowledge in non-native organizations. We should create these jobs for Indigenous people within companies,” she continued.

- **Networks**

There is no touring network throughout Indigenous communities in Quebec. Actually, on-reserve infrastructure for the creation and presentation of arts and culture is lacking. Nevertheless, over the years, some companies have developed projects for artistic mediation, training, creation and presentation of shows. One example is the *Sakipitcikan* healing theatre project led by the Ondinnok company with the Atikamekw community of Manawan.

Recently, there has been an increased presence of Indigenous performing arts companies and artists in showcases and promotional events such as Rideau or CINARS. For many, it is important to contact broadcasters, create connections and nurture these relationships.

Indigenous Communities

Throughout the interviews, artists spoke at length about the importance of having art in, from, and for the communities. “We need to create relationships between companies to organize events, develop networks and showcase theatre, performing arts in communities—not necessarily bring people from communities to the city,” said one artist. There is talk of a return to the living arts, in nature, on the land: artistic experiences outside the built infrastructure.

- **Urban and Rural Realities**

The rural/urban dichotomy must be overcome. Yet, many speak of a disconnect between urban artists and communities. On the one hand, some Indigenous artists living in urban areas feel disconnected from the communities, while on the other, there is a need to increase understanding of the value of art through artist visits, theatre or music workshops and the creation of long-term relationships.

One example is the Innu artist Florent Vollant, who has created a professional recording studio in Uashat-Malioténam that is open to emerging artists in his community. Several of them made their first musical recordings there.

Theoretical and critical discourse

In the course of this study, we have catalogued and consulted part of the written documentation in French on Indigenous theatre, dance and music. Texts written in French—articles, essays, dissertations, theses, and books—are still mostly published by non-Indigenous authors.

In general, and unlike visual arts, Indigenous performing arts suffer from the underdevelopment of theoretical and critical discourse. According to several artists, this situation reflects a lack of interest and an absence of relevant cultural references.

In Francophone circles, Indigenous art history and contemporary artistic productions are still too often written about by non-indigenous academics, researchers, historians, and theorists. History and Indigenous Studies Departments still frequently take a Eurocentric, neocolonialist, and anthropological look at Indigenous artistic productions. It is also interesting to note the growing number of French immigrants (from France) among these academics. These authors have parameters of analysis that prevent them from understanding the profound nature of the work, i.e., historical, and

mythical references, inversion mechanisms, cultural codes, etc. The lack of proper cues perpetuates the ethnographic view and prevents a true understanding of the artwork.

Quebec lags far behind English Canada in the publication of theoretical and critical works on Indigenous art by Indigenous authors. This is partly a consequence of the virtual absence of Francophone university programs in Indigenous visual culture, curatorial studies, creative writing, and performing arts. Very few Indigenous artists and researchers teach in Quebec universities. This situation perpetuates the extraction of Indigenous artistic knowledge by non-Indigenous people to the academic, professional, and cultural benefit of these individuals and institutions.

The Future of Indigenous Performing Arts

I wish to continue my reflection on my approach to theatre, and to integrate a ceremonial aspect as a soothing practice. I wish to make people recognize the importance of ancestral languages, the beauty of words and what they carry, to talk about the intimate link between the land, writing and identity.

Dave Jenniss

Indigenous theatre must be part of a continuum: a bridge between the past and the future. Theatre can heal, comfort, support, create beauty, connect us to the sacred, to something greater than ourselves.

All the artists interviewed are concerned about the current pandemic and the medium—and long-term impact it will have on Indigenous performing arts. They all hope for a return to a continued and increased presence of Indigenous theatrical creation as a real, meaningful moment between creators and audiences.

There is talk of restructuring the sector, of multiplying one-time events, of finding methods that are closer to our roots and the land. We will have to start again and find the breath and the energy to make up for the cancellations and delays of the theatre seasons, and reach audiences again, rebuilding alliances.

The future also calls for the renewal of medicines. Artists are like medicine people. They can thwart borders and prejudices. Artists are bearers of meaning and expression.

Speaking of the future, many mention the urgency of ecological issues. The playwright concluded "In this extremely critical period, we need a theatre of animals. We need to appeal to spirits and animals to bring humanity back in the right direction, to reestablish that connection. We need a theatre of urgency. And then, we must not be afraid to be afraid. In the animist world everything is alive, on stage everything is alive."



Power Ballad, Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society. Image Source: www.makingtreaty7.com

5. THE WAY FORWARD / THE WAY BACK

Indigenous time is not linear. *Looking forward* frequently becomes a cliché for innovative ideas that then collect dust somewhere on a bureaucratic shelf. *Looking back* often freezes Indigenous cultures in the past, fixed in traditional art forms - a racist understanding of Indigenous people as unable to deal with the contemporary world. We wish to always consider the ancestors ahead and those that are behind us.

It is not the mandate of this report to make recommendations. As explained in the *Introduction*, we were 'commissioned' by the Indigenous performing arts community(s) to gather and update research. It is clear that our first responsibility is reporting to them. So rather than give recommendations, we offer 'ideas for concrete action' - each with particular challenges - as a way to move forward towards actual initiatives that change the conditions for Indigenous arts creation. These are offered for: Indigenous performing artists; their communities/audiences; Indigenous arts organizations; mainstream presenting institutions; and for funding agencies.

These 'ideas for concrete action' have been articulated by Indigenous artists and writers and by Indigenous arts administrators, community members and scholars. These voices have been speaking ancestrally for centuries and have become more forcefully resonant in the last five decades. We are summarizing what has been said and updating that for 2021.

We offer these 'ideas for concrete action' for feedback from Indigenous arts community(s); for further discussions; and for new research only when appropriate. And we offer them as a provocation to funders and art institutions with considerable performing arts assets to deliver adequate resources to Indigenous performing artists and their organizations so that real actions - not just more studies - will materialize. As we stated in the Introduction:

“This direction was clearly emphasized at Scháyilhen (Salmon Going Up River), the 2018 Industry Series at Talking Stick Festival...We were told by workshop participants that many studies and other documents already exist. They asked straightforwardly: to highlight the history of Indigenous performing arts, to gather these studies, and to point the way forward for concrete actions.”

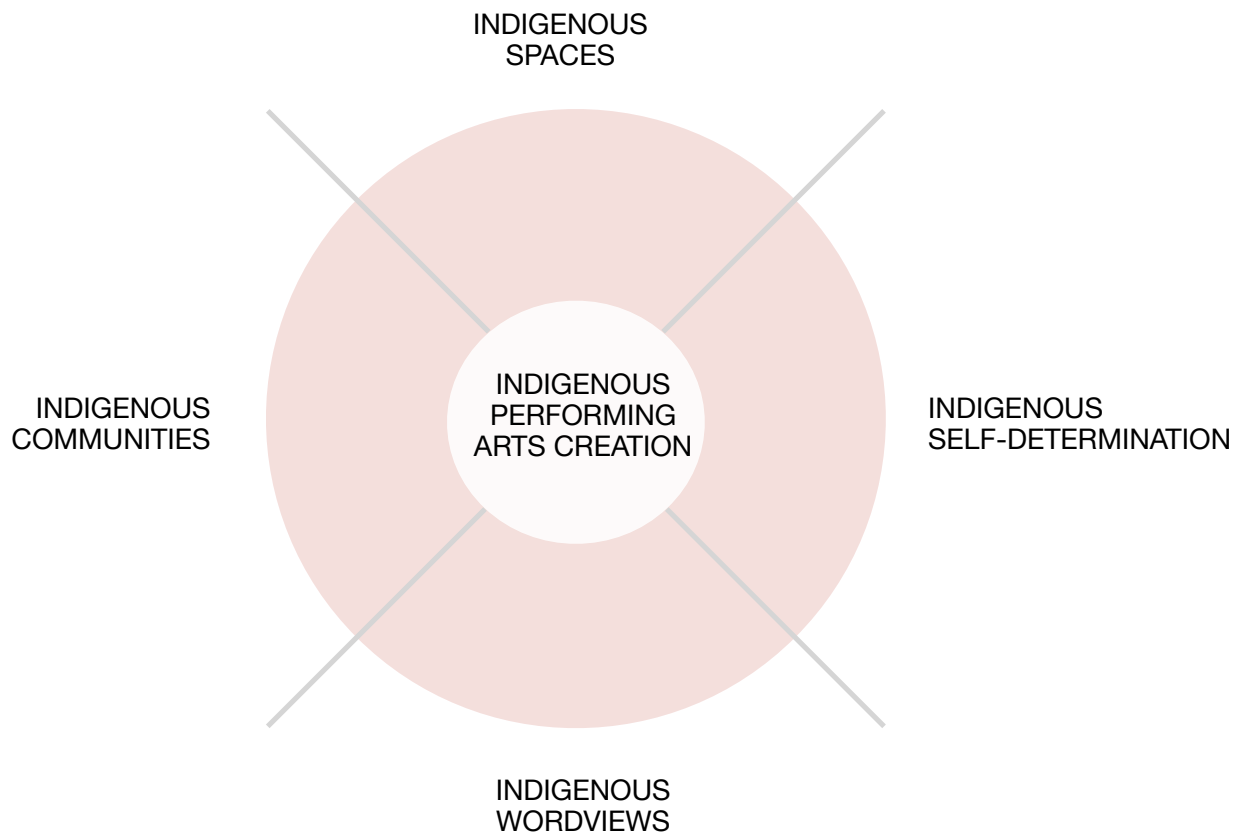
And we restate, from Sara Roque's findings, that our goal is to document **“what needs to happen to make Indigenous theatre thrive in these lands now known as Canada.”**

Repeated attempts to use the 'access model' (1980-1995) - giving meagre resources to Indigenous artists and organizations - proved a failure. Although this approach finally morphed into the 'inclusion model' (1995 to 2010) - including an Indigenous theatre production now and then, or including one Indigenous person to the board - this inclusion model, this way of understanding, has also been revealed to be inadequate.

Why has this been so? Simply put, because the practice of Indigenous performing arts in the territory known as Canada is different. It is not a difference of degree, but a significant difference in kind. The round stick cannot fit into the tiny square Euro-derivative theatre forms and methods of creation. Actually it is more like a large, shimmering globe that is simply inappropriate to fit inside a small, musty box.

Our research - including historic key documents; two bibliographies; in-depth interviews with 12 experienced Indigenous theatre practitioners; and a survey questionnaire - illuminates 4 essential prerequisites for understanding the current situation of Indigenous performing arts.

Four essential, Indigenous-specific prerequisites



This difference in kind influences all aspects of **Indigenous Performing Arts Creation**. That process(es) of creation is at the centre of the circle. It is surrounded by four different essential prerequisites that are Indigenous-specific:

1. Indigenous Worldviews

All Indigenous art practices are different because of what existed before and what was changed by colonial history. Some performing arts date back to before European contact; others show those historic references and mix them with influences from contemporary Western performing art; still others deal in their content with traditional and/or contemporary Indigenous realities. Almost always, there is a link - direct or indirect - to land. In an older paper "Understanding Aboriginal Arts in Canada Today" (2011), we have previously described the link like this:

Land ~ Peoples ~ Languages ~ Cultural Practices ~ Art

In this way, Land is primary and this belief effects the other four components. Art can spring from any one of the other components but, in any case, art goes back to and is grounded in the land.

Many stories have been buried. I am not just talking about the painful stories but also the joyful stories. So much of our history has been sleeping in the deep parts of our lands which we root from and that is why it is important that we do not carry these stories alone. It is important to have family -a sacred circle that can help carry these stories. Together we learn and discuss what needs to stay on our kitchen table - what needs to be shared amongst our community and the stories that the world should know. We decide that.

Samaqani Cocahq (Natalie Sappier)

It is impossible to overstate the importance of Indigenous knowledge - again with roots in the land - to contemporary Indigenous performing arts. The role of elders,

cultural carriers and knowledge keepers is invaluable to creation. Storytelling, oral tradition, intergenerational knowledge transfers, sometimes private ceremonies, all continue to influence the making of performing art works.

2. Indigenous Communities

The cultural genocide produced by colonialism in the territory now called Canada forced many Indigenous languages and cultural practices into hiding, frequently into oblivion. Those that remain to this day are being revived, renewed and reinvigorated. Indigenous communities - both on and off reserve - have been actively sustaining this renaissance.

Within this renewal and survival, complex questions about Indigenous theatre, dance and music are being asked: Where does this work come from? Whom is it for? How(s) is it created? What does Indigenous performing arts 'creation' actually mean? What does the finished work mean when presented to Indigenous audiences? To non-Indigenous audiences?

Finally, while it is possible to conceptualize certain similarities that arise from various Indigenous arts and cultural traditions, it is imperative to understand that many art practices derive from different roots inherent in the protocols of different First Peoples/Nations. Haida singing is not the same as Abenaki singing which is not the same as Inuit singing.

3. Indigenous Spaces

The idea of Indigenous Spaces refers to actual buildings, theatres and rehearsal spaces. Since it originates in the concept of 'home', it also refers to the ability to welcome visitors into Indigenous spaces whether these visitors are Indigenous or non-Indigenous; whether they are collaborators or audiences.

In addition, spaces provide a measure of security, continuance and certainty. This is evident in Canada's large arts institutions: whatever troubles they may temporarily encounter, they will endure. The Canadian arts system is set up to guarantee that opera and ballet companies, regional theatres or galleries will always somehow be rescued.

Generally, Indigenous arts organizations live in various states of precarity. There is a handful of exceptions to this statement, but typically most Indigenous arts organizations come and go. Most of the Indigenous arts ecology is fragile and subject to bureaucratic decision making.

Alternately, existing cultural institutions have established 'Indigenous sections' within their structures. Underfunded, misunderstood, ignored - sometimes unwelcome - within the institution, these sections can be and sometimes are eliminated at a moment's notice. These sections often generate information and advocacy for Indigenous arts communities in attempts to 'change' the institutions in which they are housed. However, it is problematic to see them as self-determined Indigenous art spaces.

4. Indigenous Self-Determination

Self-Determination is complex, context-specific and essential to the understanding of any way forward. As Sara Roque noted in her notes for this section,

"How can we entrust the very institutions that have historically and explicitly considered our people and our arts as inferior, to protect our arts and culture? These are our bundles that carry our values and our vision. We must closely examine structures that continue to replicate a paternalistic model and its ways of thinking. This means redefining our relationships with these institutions, who need to listen and take the lead from community. This means developing new structures that are horizontally calibrated and that decentralize powers."

There is no point in imagining concepts like 'reconciliation', without centring self-determination. Insisting on colonial structures or governance models does not honour the ways in which Indigenous artists often choose to organize themselves. The much bantered-about process of decolonizing the arts means questioning colonial assumptions and starting again with different premises, not tinkering with Eurocentric models in a hopeless effort to make minor, token adjustments while leaving this same assumptions in place.

Indigenous artists are utilizing the useful, political concept of "Nothing About Us Without Us" to address the multiple, ongoing issues of self-determination. In the arts, that means much more than just access or inclusion, but rather Indigenous community engagement in every aspect of the Canadian arts system - what qualifies

as art; eligibility criteria for applications to arts funding; arts juries; the definition of professional artist; what constitutes a sanctioned venue; what is an accredited degree vs other forms of education/learning; success metrics - the list goes on and on. If Indigenous artists are not involved in every aspect of these determinations, the system replicates itself and nothing changes. By incorporating Indigenous worldviews and values, a new path naturally leads to a new destination.

Boards act as fictional functions. No matter what we do (Indigenous models, councils, circular structures) we are bound to and stuck with the colonial board model and have to bow to the governance structures - forced to work within this model.

Yvette Nolan

While 'official' documents state the importance of cultural rights - e.g. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action in 2015; implementing the Canadian legislation to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2020 - they are mostly ignored. Many Indigenous artists remain sceptical of this bureaucratic backdrop. They observe the glacial rate of change in the Indigenous performing arts and are advocating for more self-determined solutions.

These 4 Indigenous-specific prerequisites point to what we are calling '8 ideas for concrete action'. These are presented here for further community discussions and critique, with a view to moving towards explicit, productive initiatives:

- **A Needs Assessment**

This is an area of immediate concern. If it is initiated, from it will flow possible solutions to the challenges of the other 7 areas. Indigenous artists and their communities will need to be thoroughly consulted. What are the needs? What are the gaps? What is needed to address these gaps? What is the plan (more likely plans) to ensure that this happens in a comprehensive, yet timely, manner?

- ***An Indigenous Arts and Culture Vision***

Simultaneously to a needs assessment, an Indigenous Arts Grand Council - composed of Indigenous cultural persons with roots in their communities: artists, arts workers, elders, cultural carriers, language revitalizers, etc. - could be formed. Working together from various First Nations across the territory known as Canada, the members of the Council would create an 'Indigenous Arts and Culture Vision'. This vision would elaborate the plan (or plans) that would arise from the needs assessment process.

This Council could also emphasize (these are examples) the importance of arts and culture to Indigenous communities and non-arts Indigenous organizations; establishing protocols and guidelines for complex issues like the relationship of Indigenous traditions, languages and cultures to Indigenous arts practices; the serious issues surrounding the problem of cultural appropriation; whether or not mainstream cultural institutions can realistically transform to support Indigenous self-determination and if so, how.

This Indigenous arts and culture vision would also be useful in addressing the patchwork arts policies in which federal, provincial and municipal arts agencies respond to Indigenous artists in all artistic disciplines.

- ***Scaling Up Infrastructure***

How do we stay regional, how do we have many outdoor experiences? How do we make it so we have cultural hubs across the city also so people don't have to walk a lot? How do we spread it out? And then how do we put our feelers out to know what spaces are underused and what are the outdoor spaces that can be used. And how do we build relationships with stewards of those spaces to ensure it is safe - Dish with One Spoon principles - ways that are clean and responsible and people know we will take care of the space?

Ange Loft

There is considerable community-based talk about establishing multiple Indigenous arts centres across the territory known as Canada. There is no clear consensus on what this looks like. Some people suggest a network of Indigenous theatres. Others say that these spaces should be multidisciplinary since Indigenous art practices are not necessarily divided into Western art silos - the sorting that decides that this is theatre, this is visual art, this is literature, etc. Some folks say these centres should be purpose-built. Others say that existing arts organizations could expand or modify their spaces. Some say these should be fully resourced, so-called 'professional' spaces. Others say they should be flexible, as Indigenous communities vary in size; needs and relationship to land.

However, there is near unanimity on these four factors:

- They would be spaces designed for and run by Indigenous artists and arts administrators - spaces to create, to offer space to elders, to rehearse, to exhibit visual art, to meet, to present performing arts, to mentor, to produce, to produce and screen media arts, to make and serve feasts, to run artists' residencies, etc. Or any appropriate combination of these including multiple other activities.
- These spaces, although they could be part of a network, would be spread out, some in every region. The ultimate number is undetermined but beginning with at least one in every region.
- Some spaces would be in urban centres; others in rural settings perhaps on reserve.
- This will only happen with a large commitment from funding agencies - piecemeal, intermittent grants will no longer suffice.

During the period 1950 to 1985, there was a 'Cultural Nation Building' period - The Canada Council, the National Arts Centre, the new National Gallery of Canada, the National Library plus multiple regional theatres and regional art galleries were established - established for mostly European art forms. Indigenous art forms - unique to the territory called Canada, found nowhere else in the world, have long since deserved this type of sustained attention.

This vision would include both tangible infrastructure - e.g. physical buildings; arts administrators; theatre technical professionals; residencies; and intangible

infrastructure - e.g. Indigenous storytelling; what is artistic merit or cultural 'excellence' and who decides?: decolonizing the structure of arts organizations; culturally-specific protocols.

- ***Touring***

Often Indigenous performing arts work is created and presented in a specific context or venue. Even when there are both demand and desire to disseminate the work further, the challenges of touring frequently seem insurmountable: lack of existing Indigenous-specific venues, escalating travel costs, working with existing touring networks that do not understand the work nor have meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and audiences.

Although preliminary partnerships have been initiated by Indigenous arts organizations with the various regional and national arts presenters organizations, there remains the additional possibility of establishing Indigenous touring networks. These networks could exist in urban areas; in rural settings, both on and off reserve; and even internationally.

The development of these networks does not preclude working with mainstream presenters. It is not an either/or choice. Touring to predominantly Indigenous audiences may suit a certain work; other pieces may 'fit' better in mainstream venues. Or both.

- ***Training***

Formal Indigenous performing arts training has been both complicated and historically declining but currently needs new build-up.

While it has been correct to say that many Indigenous arts organizations were 'training' performing artists over the decades, serious problems came to the fore when some of them attempted to obtain increased funding for these activities. The essential nature of Indigenous training - being culturally grounded; practicing certain traditions which are often frowned upon in mainstream settings; mentorships; connection to land; not working in an academic teaching setting; graduation certificates; storytelling as dramaturgy (to name just a few) - did not fit the criteria for adequate and sustained funding.

This untenable position led to the formation of the Indigenous Trainers' caucus which is currently attempting to develop Indigenous pedagogy, ways of learning and metrics. New models are being researched and developed.

It should be emphasized that any Indigenous 'training' model must include playwrights, choreographers, actors, directors but also elders and cultural carriers.

In addition, while paying attention to what's 'onstage' is critically important, so is the training of stage managers, lighting directors, sound technicians, production managers, etc. Not to mention performing arts administrators, box office managers, audiences development coordinators and myriad other folks involved.

- ***Indigenous Performing Arts History***

What is Indigenous performing arts history? When did it begin? Clearly First Peoples had dance, theatre and music art forms long before Europeans began to colonize the territory now known as Canada. Did they understand their rituals and ceremonies - whether formal or informal - as 'theatre' or as 'a performance' or as presented 'onstage'? What are the implications of that history(s) on current 'contemporary' Indigenous performing arts?

A few people have mentioned the importance of a detailed time line as a preliminary method for beginning to understand these histories. This could be written or spoken or even better, both. But it would be a compelling addition to understanding the art practices of this land. In this context, it is important to recall that Indigenous artists who are Francophones have different histories and perspectives than Indigenous artists who are Anglophones.

- ***Critical Commentary***

In our in-depth interviews we framed the issue this way:

"Most mainstream reviews or commentary on Indigenous theatre falls into 3 categories:

- *effusive praise, usually naïve, not wanting to be politically incorrect or be called 'racist';*
- *unsure of how to critique, so becomes a simple description or narration of the work;*

- *uses a colonial, Eurocentric framing to trash work because it does not meet 'Western art standards' of what is good theatre."*

From your perspective, how can we move past these categories? How can Indigenous critics create a robust, rigorous framework for the evaluation of Indigenous theatre? What does Indigenous critical discourse look like?"

Most Indigenous artists stress the importance of not making commentaries that promote 'artistic competition' - this piece is better than that one; so this person is a 'better' artist. These folks suggest that whatever critical commentary looks like, it acknowledges collective recognition of history, of symbols and therefore of cultural meanings.

This non-competitive understanding has been inherent in Indigenous ways of 'doing' performing arts for millennia. This tradition continues until this day, whether we are speaking of critics' reviews, popular culture meanings, research studies or academic theoretical writing. They are culturally grounded and not necessarily concerned with validation by colonial metrics.

More and more Indigenous artists are insisting on the specificity of different Nations. They are challenging the one-size-fits-all definition of something called 'Indigenous Theatre'. Different First Peoples have different knowledge; different stories; different cultural traditions, etc. The implication of this is different definitions of theatre, dance or music.

This complexity also includes different performing arts practices that recognize different ways of performing arts creation. They could be community-based, land-based, Traditional Knowledge-based(TK) or aspiring to a professional, contemporary practice. Though it must be clarified that these 'differences' are often present in a given piece and although the different understandings can be traced, they are woven together in renewed, vibrant and sometimes startling ways.

- ***Educating Mainstream***

This is a somewhat difficult area of concern to discuss. On the one hand, some folks reiterated the need for non-Indigenous artists and arts organizations (still the vast majority of the Canadian arts milieu) to learn the details of Canada's legacies of

colonialism and how that history has established the baked-in, systemic racism that infects the entire arts system.

On the other hand, different folks do not wish to engage in the tedious and often unsuccessful task of 'educating white administrators and bureaucrats' as they feel their primary work relates to Indigenous communities and NOT with contesting existing Eurocentric systems.

Some Indigenous non-profit organizations, not necessarily in the performing arts - for example, The Indigenous Curatorial Collective (formerly known as the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective) - are developing policies which rethink the terms of engagement with mainstream artists and arts organizations - engagement with certain protocols; developing relationality; following principles of self-determination.

Finally it is critical to mention that this 'educating' conundrum does not have to be seen as an either/or choice. Many Indigenous artists work directly with Indigenous organizations and audiences plus simultaneously working on a more mainstream creative project. This is a choice that is context-specific; in a particular moment; with certain people; shaped by distinct events; trying to reach a target audience - every artist will make their own discrete artistic decisions.

We have presented these 8 'ideas for concrete action' for discussion in and among Indigenous performing arts communities. We expect that there will be feedback, critique, elaboration and refinement of these ideas. These conversations are welcome.

However, we reiterate the purpose of this work: '**...to make Indigenous theatre thrive**'. That thriving necessitates both current concrete actions to continue and for new ones to be initiated. These new actions are not just possible; they are necessary.



Full Circle First Nations Performance. Photo: www.fullcircle.ca

6. ANNOTATED KEY DOCUMENTS

This section groups 20 Annotated Key Documents on Indigenous performing arts in Canada. They provide an historical perspective on the practices and the key issues that have emerged over the years. Of these 20 documents, 13 are in English, 3 are in French and 4 are available in both colonial languages. These bilingual documents are marked by an asterisk.*

* APTN & NVision Group. National Indigenous Music Impact Study, 2019

<https://corporate.aptn.ca/musicstudy/>

This broad study engages with those involved in the Indigenous Music Community, including musicians, music agents and presenters. Presented in a standard status quo report style it presents numerous recommendations with graphs and pie charts. One of the first studies of its kind it provides a baseline on the Indigenous music

sector, and can be built upon. Despite the differences in the music and theatre sectors, there are still a number of overarching commonalities that demonstrate the interconnections and lived realities of Indigenous artists. Funding access is the top perceived barrier from the findings, next to professional development and training opportunities for those living in small, rural and remote communities.

Archibald-Barber, Jesse Raie, Kathleen Irwin, and Moira J. Day (eds.) *Performing Turtle Island: Indigenous Theatre on the World Stage*. University of Regina Press, 2019.

A powerful collection of essays and stories of Indigenous performance as tools for community engagement, education and resistance. Premised on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action #83, the book was born in part out of the 2015 gathering, *Performing Turtle Island: Fluid Identities and Community Continuities*, at the University of Regina and the First Nations University of Canada. This is an excellent current resource featuring a range of articulate voices, including a lively conversation with the late Daniel David Moses, a historical account on the roots of Indigenous theatre training by Carol Greyeyes and a poetic essay on cultural fluency by Kahente Horn-Miller.

CAPACOA, Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, Ontario Presents. *The Indigenous Performance Professional Development Initiative Pilot Program: Final Report*, 2017. capacoa.ca/documents/news/IPPD1%20ES%20final%20report%20March%202017.pdf

This report documents the background, implementation and outcome of a one year pilot initiative developed by CAPACOA, IPAA and Ontario Presents. In an attempt to create more presenting opportunities for Indigenous performers, the initiative paired three Indigenous and Non-Indigenous performing arts presenters in three regions of Ontario and opportunities to debrief these exchanges. This detailed report captures the spirit of the conversations that occurred, and highlights many of the barriers Indigenous participants have experienced working within mainstream venues and performance spaces. The success of the pilot report secured funding for a three-year mentorship program yet to be reported on. Not explicit in the report but what is interesting is how the work starts from a place of relationship building.

Clements, Marie. *The Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations STUDY*. Canada Council for the Arts, 2005.
nativeearth.ca/en/assets/images/DSATO%20STUDY%20FINAL.pdf

Written in the inimitable voice of artist and playwright Marie Clements and commissioned by the Canada Council for the Arts, the scope and depth of this report goes far beyond a routine program evaluation. It is an important archive that documents the history of Indigenous Theatre, including the impact of community-based Indigenous theatre training on the sector. Through one-on-one interviews, the report depicts the general lack of understanding of Indigenous artistic practices and hence, support for the sector. Its release created a flurry of critical discussions and community based action at the time, recorded in subsequent reports. Unfortunately, many of the inequities which Clements highlights continue to exist today, elucidating colonial structures and historical inequities within arts funding agencies.

Denomme-Welch, Spy. Book review of Jean O'Hara ed. *Two-Spirit Acts: Queer Indigenous Performances*. *Theatre Research in Canada*, Volume 36, Number 1, 2015.
journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/tric/article/view/23116/26857

In this book review, musician, dramaturg, composer and scholar, Spy Denomme-Welch reminds us of the frequent absence of Indigenous Queer voices, particularly Trans voices, within the Indigenous Theatre sector's discourse. A critical consideration and reminder of how heteronormative and colonial values can be unconsciously replicated within Indigenous arts infrastructures and discourse.

Jimmy, Elwood and Vanessa Andreotti. *Towards Braiding*, Musagetes, 2019.
musagetes.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Braiding_ReaderWeb.pdf

This short and practical book is the first edition of the ongoing collaborative work between authors Elwood Jimmy and Vanessa Andreotti with Musagetes, a private arts foundation. Based on a year's worth of research and deep engagement with Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, Elders and thinkers, the authors explore the possibilities of reconciliation within the arts from an Indigenous perspective on 'diversity' that centres the earth. Their work advocates for the reclamation of 'exiled sensibilities' and the honouring of our relationships with the human, non-human and beyond-human world". The result is a powerful book and accompanying online

toolkit that can assist in identifying institutional and personal habits that perpetuate non-generative, hierarchical and colonial structures within the arts. The book opens with an incisive short story that depicts those instances when good intentions around reconciliation in non-Indigenous organizations goes wrong.

Lachance, Lindsay. *The embodied politics of relational Indigenous dramaturgies*. University of British Columbia Library, 2018.

open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0363947

Grounded in an Anishinaabe worldview and concepts of self-determination, resurgence and lateral love, this beautifully written dissertation documents the authors research and investigation into Indigenous dramaturgical practices and processes on Turtle Island. It is an essential piece of scholarly work on Indigenous Theatre that uses a participatory research approach. The dissertation outlines four distinct waves of Indigenous theatrical expression beginning in the 1700s and proposes a new taxonomy for defining Indigenous dramaturgical processes: land-based (working within one's Nation/land), place-based (working with diversity of Indigenous artists) and community engaged (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous).

* Ondinnok. *Manifesto for the advancement of Indigenous arts, artists, and arts organizations in Québec*, 2017.

<http://www.ondinnok.org/en/manifesto-for-the-advancement-of-indigenous-arts-artists-and-arts-organizations-in-quebec/>

In May 2017, the Indigenous theater company Ondinnok organised a gathering of Indigenous artists from all disciplines and representatives of the main Indigenous artistic organizations to Montreal to take stock of Indigenous arts in Quebec. At the end of the meeting, the participants published a major manifesto intended for arts councils and other funders. This text is intended to be a witness to the assertion of Aboriginal arts in Quebec and a powerful plea for the recognition of artistic expression as a place of self-determination and affirmation of identity.

Ross, Kidd. *Reclaiming Culture, Indigenous Performers Take Back Their Show*, 1982.
<http://www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/4.1/kidd.pdf>:

This historical report recounts details and events from the second World Indigenous Theatre Celebration in Nogojiwanong (Peterborough ON) in 1982. Organized by James Buller, founder of the Association of Native Development of Performing Arts (ANDPVA), and billed as a celebration of culture through performance, this ten day gathering brought together seventeen international Indigenous Theatre companies from around the world. The document captures the spirit of this groundbreaking event, and reflects growing global Indigenous performance culture movement of the time.

Ryan, Brittany. *Freedom to Engage, An Indigenous Approach to Ways of Being, Knowing and Doing in the Performing Arts*. Report for Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, May 2015:
web.archive.org/web/20160510214045/http://ipaa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Freedom-to-Engage-draft-05.02.2015.pdf

This research paper explores the relationship between Indigenous performance art and theatre associations. The author was a student at Ryerson University at the time, and the paper is part of her final project for an undergraduate degree in fine art. Using one-on-one interviews and a comprehensive outline of professional theatre associations and unions (CAEA, ACTRA, PACT), she illuminates the ways in which these organizations meant to benefit theatre practitioners, more often than not fail to serve Indigenous artists. Although this tension is well known anecdotally, discussion on the topic have often been reserved to in-camera 'diversity' sessions clarity and the cogent articulation of her sentiments, illuminates another way in which mainstream structures and laws are often incongruent with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Stanley, Sarah Garton & Corey Payette, *POWER SHIFT: The Story (Summit/Study/Repast)*. Report for National Arts Centre, 2015.
naccna-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/power_shift_-_the_story_.pdf

This text is a witness to the conversations, activities and outcomes from the 'Indigenous Cycle', a trilogy of community gatherings, spearheaded by the National Arts Centre English Theatre, to 'investigate the state of Indigenous Theatre in the

country'. The gatherings included a number multi-generational participants from across Turtle Island and provides a record of the consultations and conversations that (presumably) guided the creation of the National Art Centre's Indigenous Theatre department. The report appendix includes a list of 277 original Indigenous theatre works, generated by participants throughout the Cycle.

Robinson, Dylan. *Hungry Listening. Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

Writer and scholar Dylan Robinson considers the act of listening from both Indigenous and settler colonial perspectives. Grounded in Indigenous decolonial theories of resurgence and refusal this expansive work in its form and function, is a powerful disruption to what he terms 'the whiteness of sound studies'. This dense book offers Indigenous approaches to listening and Indigenous music that disrupts the ongoing tendency of colonial approaches to music theory and practices that often assimilate, erase or denigrate Indigenous cultures.

Simpson, Leanne. *Dancing on our Turtle's Back. Stories of Nishaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2012.

In this book, activist, artist and scholar Leanne Simpson asserts that resurgence as well as reconciliation must be grounded in Indigenous ways of being and knowing, including Indigenous languages, oral cultures, philosophies, and traditions of governance. Her writing is born out of her deep engagement and conversations with Anishinaabek Elders, some of whose stories are included. It is part of the first published works that mark the beginning of a critical mass of scholarly work that has emerged in the last decade.

Smith, Annie. *Indigenous Languages on Stage: A Roundtable Conversation with Five Indigenous Theatre Artists*, Theatre Research in Canada, Volume 38, Number 2, 2017. journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/TRIC/article/view/25898/30081

A recording of recent roundtable conversations between Annie Smith, a Euro-Canadian Indigenous Theatre scholar, and five individual Indigenous Theatre artists whose practices are engaged with Indigenous languages and culture. The

conversations include some of the considerations which these artistic practices necessitate. In addition to language, each of the artists share and reflect on their own personal journeys that have brought them to where they are today. Their stories demonstrate how theatre and artistic practice can allow individuals to radically reconnect with necessary cultural life-ways.

Todd, Zoe. "Rethinking Aesthetics and Ontology through Indigenous Law on the work of Val Napoleon and Loretta Todd." In magazine, Issue 126, Summer 2015.

cmagazine.com/issues/126/rethinking-aesthetics-and-ontology-through-indigenous-law-on-the:

Zoe Todd reflects on her journey in academia and the value of mentors whose guidance and approach to their work has enabled her to not just survive but thrive as an Indigenous scholar within the colonial structures of the university setting. What is striking is her observations on the criticality of Indigenous legal traditions and notions of law when decolonizing academia and the arts, which she has learned through her mentor, scholar Val Napoleon. She describes this inclusion as an expansion from the accepted and more passive paradigm of Indigenous ontological difference to a more active and wholistic paradigm that includes Indigenous traditional law and governance. This article speaks to the importance of mentorship, relationality and how Indigenous approaches and ways of being are action based.

* Trépanier, France & Creighton-Kelly, Chris. *Understanding Aboriginal Arts in Canada Today, A Knowledge and Literature Review*. Canada Council for the Arts, December 2011.

www.canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2012/05/understanding-aboriginal-arts-in-canada-today

Using a community-based research approach, this foundational report represents the first extensive study of Indigenous arts in this land now known as Canada. Though the title refers to a 'literature review', the writing is neither bureaucratic or academic and honours oral traditions by centering the voices of Indigenous artists throughout. The paper includes a good explanation of the tension of worldviews and misunderstandings within institutions and includes a Medicine Wheel methodological approach for presenting these differences of being.

* Trépanier, France. Final Activity Report: Aboriginal Arts Administration Forum Aboriginal Leadership and Management The Banff Centre. The Banff Centre, 2008.
canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2009/02/final-report-aboriginal-arts-administration-forum

This report documents the outcomes from the first Aboriginal Arts Administration forum by and for Indigenous arts administrators at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity hosted by the Aboriginal Leadership & Management Program. Though the curriculum and recommendations were developed by a group of experienced Indigenous arts administrators and considerable funding was provided by the Canada Council for the Arts, the initiative was never actualized. Many of these recommendations remain relevant today because of the care and knowledge that was invested.

* APTN et NVision. Étude nationale sur l'impact de la musique autochtone, 2019.
https://corporate.aptn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/APTN_NIMIS_Report_FRE-1.pdf

Le but de cette étude est de comprendre la communauté musicale autochtone au Canada au niveau national et régional. Elle constitue un point de référence et permet une compréhension plus approfondie de ce secteur et de son impact tant sur l'économie que sur le tissu social du Canada. Ce rapport offre un aperçu du projet, et étudie les peuples autochtones et leur engagement auprès de l'industrie de la musique à travers le Canada. Il présente un profil national et régional des artistes autochtones et des compagnies de musique autochtones et non autochtones, une évaluation de l'impact économique de la musique des peuples autochtones au Canada. Le rapport se termine par des considérations pour le développement futur.

Guay, Mylène et Trépanier, France (2020) "N'tagam8bna maalhakws – Nous (exclusif) frappons le frêne noir - Enjeux dans les milieux culturels autochtones francophones au Québec", (Camille Larivée et Léuli Eshraghi, Dir.) D'horizons et d'estuaires. Entre mémoires et créations autochtones. Éditions Somme Toute, 2020
<https://www.editionssommetoute.com/Livre/dhorizons-et-destuaires>

Ce texte place les enjeux actuels touchant les arts autochtones au Québec dans un contexte historique, culturel et politique. Il énonce clairement les sources et manifestations du racisme systémique qui caractérise encore trop souvent le milieu

des arts au Québec. Il propose également des pistes d'action. Cet essai fait partie de la toute première collection de textes critiques sur les mémoires et les créations autochtones d'aujourd'hui, offerte par des auteurs autochtones aux publics francophones d'Amérique du Nord.

* Ondinnok (2017). Manifeste pour l'avancement des arts, des artistes et des organisations artistiques au Québec.

<http://www.ondinnok.org/fr/manifeste-pour-lavancement-des-arts-des-artistes-et-des-organisations-artistiques-autochtones-au-quebec/>

En mai 2017, la compagnie de théâtre autochtone Ondinnok a accueilli à Montréal des artistes autochtones de toutes disciplines et des représentants des principales organisations artistiques autochtones, pour dresser un état des lieux sur les arts autochtones au Québec. Au terme de la rencontre, les participants ont publié un important manifeste destiné aux conseils des arts et autres bailleurs de fonds. Ce texte se veut un témoin de l'affirmation des arts autochtones au Québec et un puissant plaidoyer pour la reconnaissance de l'expression artistique comme lieu d'autodétermination et d'affirmation identitaire.

Sioui Durand, Yves. OKIHOÛEY ATISKEN - L'ESPRIT DES OS. Écrits théoriques, poétiques et polémiques, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2020.

<https://www.pulaval.com/produit/okihouey-atisken-l-esprit-des-os-ecrits-theoriques-poetques-et-polemiques:>

Cet ouvrage est un document fondateur portant sur le théâtre autochtone dans les Amériques. Ce livre rassemble les écrits de l'homme de théâtre Yves Sioui Durand qui a construit, sur quatre décennies, une unique et singulière dramaturgie autochtone dans l'espace francophone. Ce recueil comprend des textes de fond, des entretiens, de la poésie, des prises de position politique, des dénonciations et des textes sur l'histoire qui traduisent une lutte, une quête, une éthique. L'auteur y aborde le théâtre comme élément essentiel à la décolonisation culturelle et sociale en cours chez les Autochtones, au Québec et au Canada. En 2020, Sioui Durand est l'un des tout premiers artistes autochtones à être publié par une presse universitaire francophone au Québec.

Tirel, Astrid (2017). Le théâtre autochtone francophone contemporain au Québec: Enjeux esthétiques, éthiques et politiques, (thèse de doctorat sociologie), Université du Québec à Montréal, 2017.

<https://archipel.uqam.ca/11062/1/D3353.pdf>

La chercheuse et sociologue Astrid Tirel est d'origine indienne, chinoise, française et anglaise. Cette posture identitaire, alliée à une approche interdisciplinaire, trouve un écho dans son objet de recherche, le théâtre autochtone, alors que ses artistes revendiquent l'interdisciplinarité comme élément constitutif de leur théâtre. Cette recherche interroge la validité des critères esthétiques occidentaux appliqués au théâtre autochtone au Québec. Elle porte, entre autres, un regard sur les enjeux esthétiques reliés aux politiques culturelles et sur les processus de décolonisation inscrits dans l'histoire du théâtre autochtone.

* Trépanier, France et Creighton-Kelly, Chris (2012). Comprendre les arts autochtones au Canada aujourd'hui: une analyse de la connaissance et de la documentation, Conseil des Arts du Canada.

<https://conseildesarts.ca/recherche/repertoire-des-recherches/2012/05/comprendre-les-arts-autochtones-au-canada-aujourd-hui>

Utilisant une approche de recherche communautaire, ce rapport représente une étude approfondie des arts autochtones dans ce pays maintenant connu sous le nom de Canada. Bien que le titre fasse référence à une «analyse de la documentation», l'écriture n'est ni bureaucratique ni académique et honore les traditions orales en centrant les voix des artistes autochtones. Le texte aborde la question des tensions entre différentes visions du monde et des malentendus au sein des institutions. Il adopte la Roue de médecine comme approche méthodologique pour présenter ces différences.

* Trépanier France (2009). Rapport final: Forum sur l'administration des arts autochtones, Centre d'art de Banff.

<https://conseildesarts.ca/recherche/repertoire-des-recherches/2009/02/forum-sur-l-administration-des-arts-autochtones>

Ce rapport documente les résultats du premier forum sur l'administration des arts autochtones par et pour les administrateurs des arts autochtones au Banff Centre for

Arts and Creativity et organisé par le Aboriginal Leadership & Management Program. Bien que le curriculum et les recommandations aient été élaborés par un groupe d'administrateurs d'arts autochtones expérimentés et qu'un financement considérable ait été fourni par le Conseil des Arts du Canada, l'initiative n'a jamais été concrétisée. Bon nombre de ces recommandations demeurent pertinentes aujourd'hui en raison de l'attention et des connaissances qui ont été investis.



The Hours That Remain, Gwandaak Theatre, Playwright: Keith Barker. Photo Credit: Bruce Barrett

APPENDICES

a. BIBLIOGRAPHY (ENGLISH AND FRENCH)

A note about this bibliography:

This bibliography was generated as part of the preliminary research for Looking at Indigenous Performing Arts. It is not intended to be exhaustive or authoritative by any means. For the purpose of this phase, an effort was made to locate and include any historical 'grey' literature on Indigenous theatre that could be found - materials and research produced by organizations outside the traditional commercial or academic publishing and distribution channels. While acknowledging the limitations of the written format, these documents provide important records of various gatherings, conversations or events. Often they are accompanied by recommendations. In the past reports with recommendations on action by Indigenous peoples have a tendency to get shelved, ironically often by the very institutions that had requested or

commissioned the report in the first place. In addition to reliving the spirit of the times that they were written, we hope that we can illuminate and revive some of the recommendations that are still relevant in the next steps of our collective research. Selected anthologies are also included in this curated list to include a multitude perspectives in the way that an anthology format can offer. We have also included current works on decolonial texts that frame our research. A couple government statistical documents are also included to give a context to the worldviews that many Indigenous artists have to work within.

Although there is a critical mass of publications and scholarly work by Indigenous peoples, until recently much of the dissemination of Indigenous arts histories existed within the realm of oral traditions, specifically Elders and senior artists who generously share their knowledge with the next generation, at gatherings, at receptions, at kitchen tables. We hope the grassroots reports in particular will provide a glimpse into the past work that has been buried in dusty cabinets and computer folders, as a way to honour those who have used their voices in an effort to increase understanding and equity for Indigenous arts. It is also intended for emerging Indigenous artists and arts administrators to help arm themselves with the knowledge when working within dominant institutional settings. This is just a start as we begin to unearth these documents and connect the stars that will reveal a bigger picture.

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b. Questions for one-on-one interviews

Question 1: Indigenous Infrastructure

Could you please describe the current state of Indigenous Theatre Infrastructure, infrastructure meaning processes, relationships, structures and knowledge. Also meaning both tangible infrastructure (presentation venues, administration, funding, etc.) and intangible infrastructure (reconciliation, community or Nation wellbeing, arts and cultural resurgence, etc.)?

Question 2: Gaps & Successes

Indigenous theatre - that is created on the territory called Canada - needs many resources to succeed. Other than the reality of inadequate funding, what are some other resource gaps that continue to exist? What is needed for these gaps to be addressed? Also, what are some success stories that you know about that have tried to address these historical resource challenges?

Question 3: Community(s)

How does the creation of Indigenous theatre connect with Indigenous communities, Indigenous life-ways and Indigenous ways of knowing? (creation process, language resurgence, Indigenous values, leadership structures). What is the role of Elders, cultural carriers or knowledge keepers?

Question 4: Critical Commentary

Most mainstream reviews or commentary on Indigenous theatre falls into 3 categories:

- effusive praise, usually naïve, not wanting to be 'politically incorrect' or to be called 'racist';
- unsure of how to critique, so the critique becomes a simple description or narration of the work;

- uses a colonial, Eurocentric framing to trash work because it does not meet 'Western art standards' of what is good theatre.

How can we move past these categories from your perspective? What does Indigenous critical commentary look like to you? How can Indigenous approaches create a framework for the evaluation of Indigenous theatre that is both robust and rigorous AND is informed by Indigenous cultural traditions and contemporary theatre practices?

Question 5: Increased Visibility

Could you suggest one or two ways to increase the visibility of Indigenous theatre - this could be within the mainstream theatre; within the Indigenous theatre world; or within Indigenous communities - either on or off reserve?

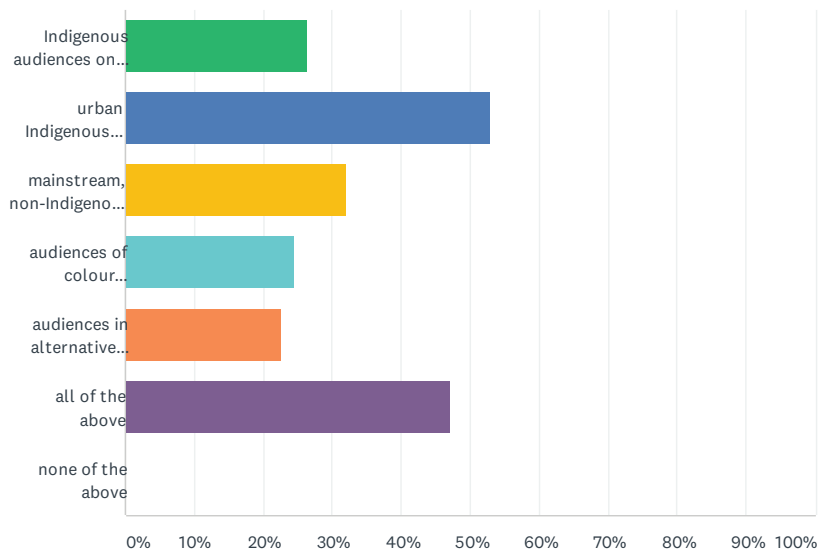
Question 6: Future of Indigenous Performing Arts

Given the past and present state of a global pandemic that has put a pause on life as usual, what do you see as the future of Indigenous performing arts? Please answer any way you like.

c. Break-down of on-line survey results

**Q1 AUDIENCES For whom do you make your work?
Who does it serve? Who are your audiences?
From the list below, please choose the three most relevant:**

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Indigenous audiences on reserve	26.42%	14
urban Indigenous audiences	52.83%	28
mainstream, non-Indigenous audiences (mostly European-based arts organizations)	32.08%	17
audiences of colour (existing audiences from BPoC arts groups)	24.53%	13
audiences in alternative presentation spaces (e.g. artist-run centres, community centres)	22.64%	12
all of the above	47.17%	25
none of the above	0.00%	0

SURVEYMONKEY COMMENTS - QUESTION 1

"Myself, Land, my Ancestors and yours"

"- schools, museums, libraries"

"Indigenous audience off reserve, non urban, not necessarily BIPOC arts identified"

"Indigenous audiences in rural communities (incl. reserves but not necessarily on reserve)"

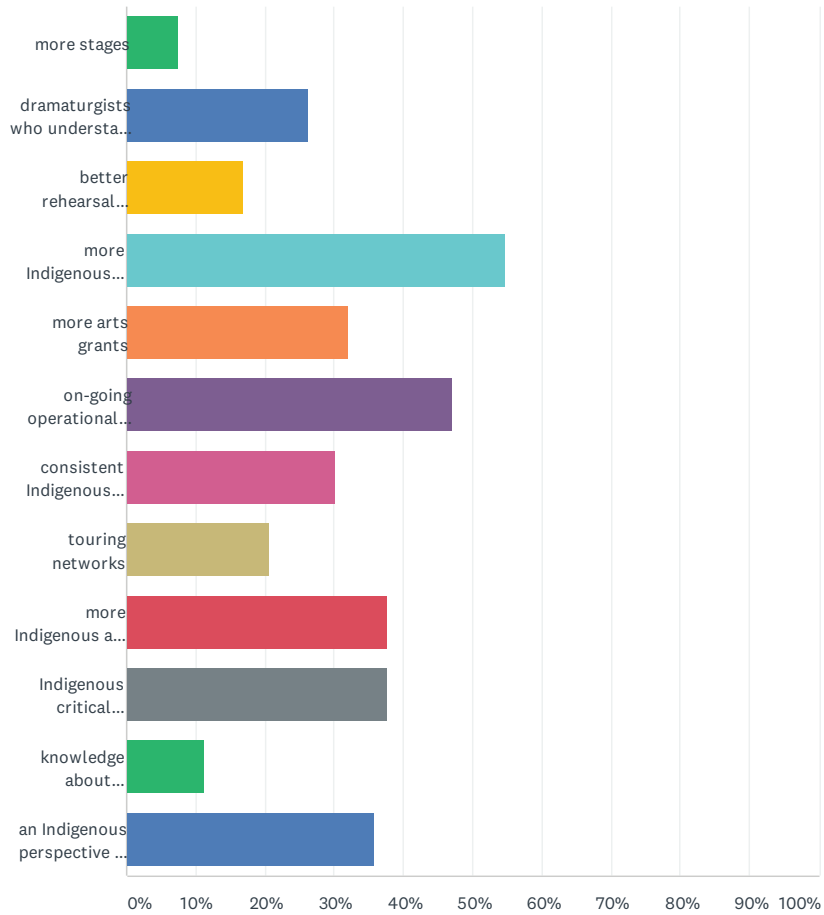
"Inuit audiences Inuktitut/subtitle to other languages"

"International Indigenous"

"White audiences interested in Indigenous work"

Q2 YOUR NEEDS RE: INDIGENOUS INFRASTRUCTURE What are your most pressing needs in creating, producing or presenting your work?
 From this list, please choose a maximum of four:

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
more stages	7.55%	4
dramaturgists who understand Indigenous performing arts	26.42%	14
better rehearsal spaces	16.98%	9
more Indigenous cultural training, mentoring and/or professional development	54.72%	29
more arts grants	32.08%	17
on-going operational funding for Indigenous performing arts organizations	47.17%	25
consistent Indigenous protocols within the process of theatre creation - e.g. smudging or talking circles within the rehearsal room	30.19%	16
touring networks	20.75%	11
more Indigenous arts administrators	37.74%	20
Indigenous critical commentary & discourse - both popular and academic	37.74%	20
knowledge about Indigenous performing arts history	11.32%	6
an Indigenous perspective on theatre working conditions - e.g. unions, regulations, safety	35.85%	19

SURVEYMONKEY COMMENTS - QUESTION 2

"All of this and also more opportunities to connect with other Indigenous artists and administrators"

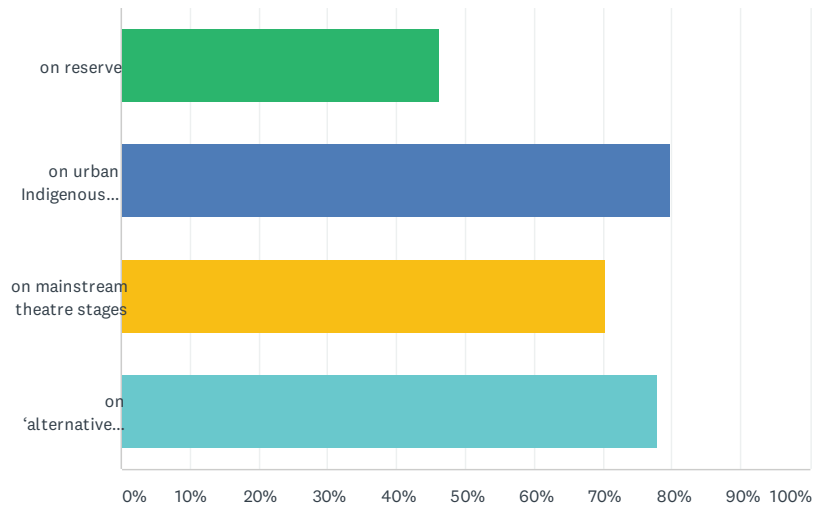
"1. higher production budgets / support for ambitious works, 2. funding for longer development / research phase"

"Having the time...space ...to explore the process with decolonization"

"No more grants but higher funding to make more equitable grants."

Q3 PRESENTING AND TOURING Where do you present your work? (as many as apply)

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
on reserve	46.30%	25
on urban Indigenous stages	79.63%	43
on mainstream theatre stages	70.37%	38
on 'alternative' stages (e.g. Fringe Festivals, community centres)	77.78%	42

SURVEYMONKEY COMMENTS - QUESTION 3

"University venues"

"Educational focus leads to presentations for school audiences, folk/world music festivals, one-off performances for special events - venues may depend on partner organizations, as well as the form and substance of the work"

"Online"

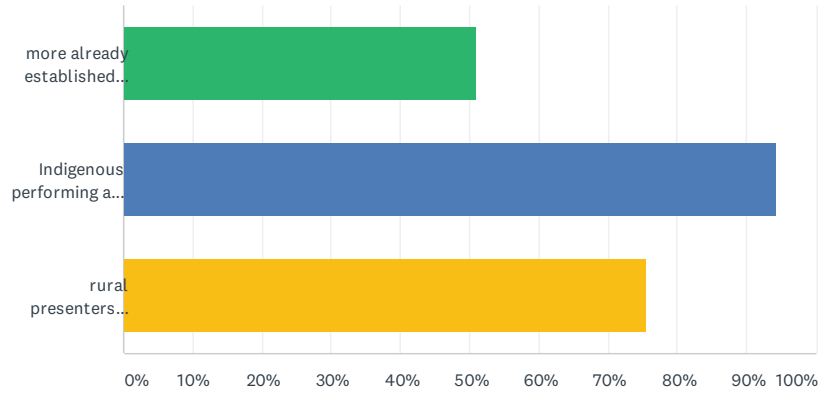
"Very rarely on-reserve"

"In unpopulated regions sometimes alone"

"Within the elementary and high school systems, on and off reserve"

Q4 What type of presenting network would you like to see? (as many as apply)

Answered: 53 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
more already established mainstream presenter organizations	50.94%	27
Indigenous performing arts companies network	94.34%	50
rural presenters network (both Indigenous & non-Indigenous)	75.47%	40

SURVEYMONKEY COMMENTS - QUESTION 4

"Theatre for Young Audiences"

"I would like to see more collaboration/bridging between mainstream (non-indigenous focused) and indigenous focused presenting networks, the former may be eager to engage - but may have limitations related to cultural competence and awareness, the latter would benefit from broadening the scope of their audience beyond indigenous focused presenters and thus create more opportunities for indigenous artists, while educating and building cultural competence capacity in non-indigenous focused organizations"

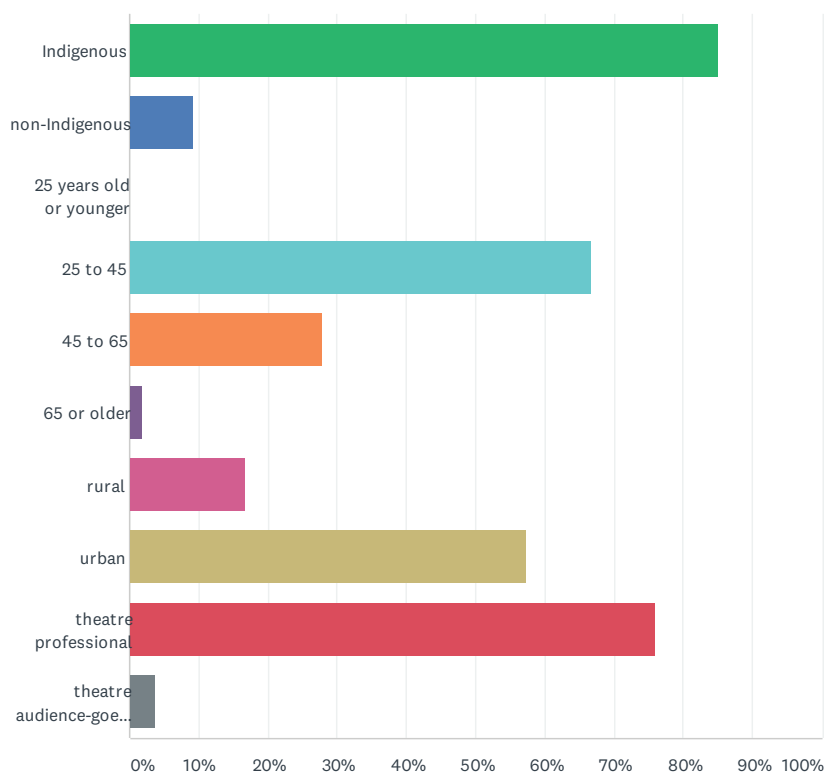
"International Indigenous network, Indigenous artists directory hub, institutional organizations who present"

"Elders telling stories"

"Indigenous arts companies (all genre) network"

Q5 YOUR PROFILE

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Indigenous	85.19%	46
non-Indigenous	9.26%	5
25 years old or younger	0.00%	0
25 to 45	66.67%	36
45 to 65	27.78%	15
65 or older	1.85%	1
rural	16.67%	9
urban	57.41%	31
theatre professional	75.93%	41
theatre audience-goer, not a theatre professional	3.70%	2

SURVEYMONKEY COMMENTS - QUESTION 5

"2spirit Indigiqueer"

"On reserve"

"Musician, singer songwriter, visual artist, traditional Indigenous arts creator"

"Opera singer, musician, arts entrepreneur, law student"

"Indigenous Administrator"

"Urban w rural roots"