alt. theatre
cultural diversity and the stage
Volume 15, No. 3 *$8*

IN THIS ISSUE

Shane Sable, Amei-Lee Laboucan, and **Jennifer Hardwick** explore the impact of an all-Indigenous burlesque collective

Rebecca Burton examines equity, diversity, and inclusion in Canadian Theatre

Marcus Youssef talks about the complex political economy of Canadian Theatre

Zoë Heyn-Jones writes on performing resistance in Guatemala and Toronto

Upcoming in *alt.theatre* 16.1

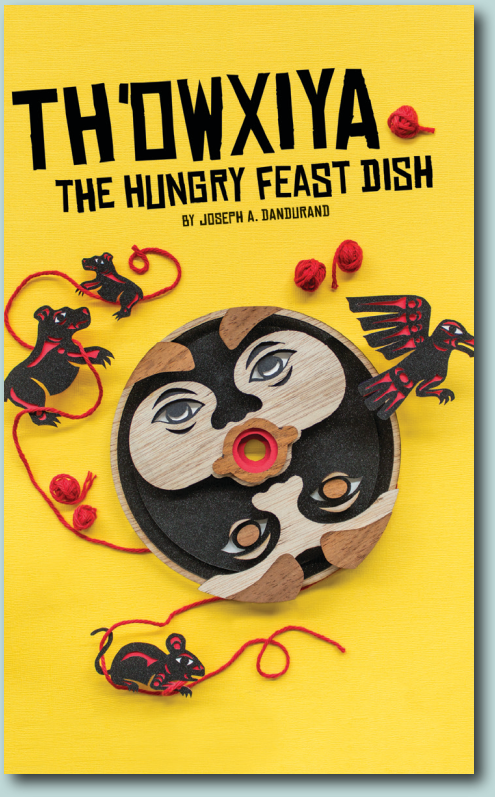
ARTICLE
James Douglas interviews members of the Debajehmujig Theatre Group as they perform their original work *The Quest* on the Holy Cross Mission ruins

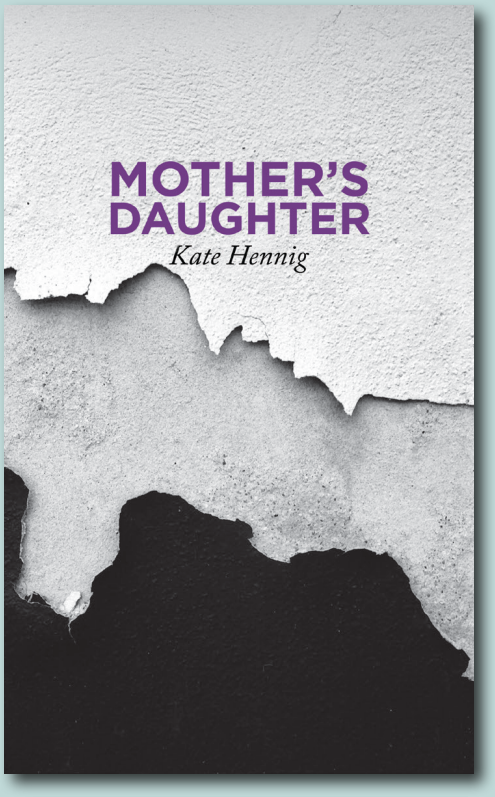
ARTICLE
Christine Tran looks at the tools Vietnamese millennials are using to explore and transform their inter-generational traumas

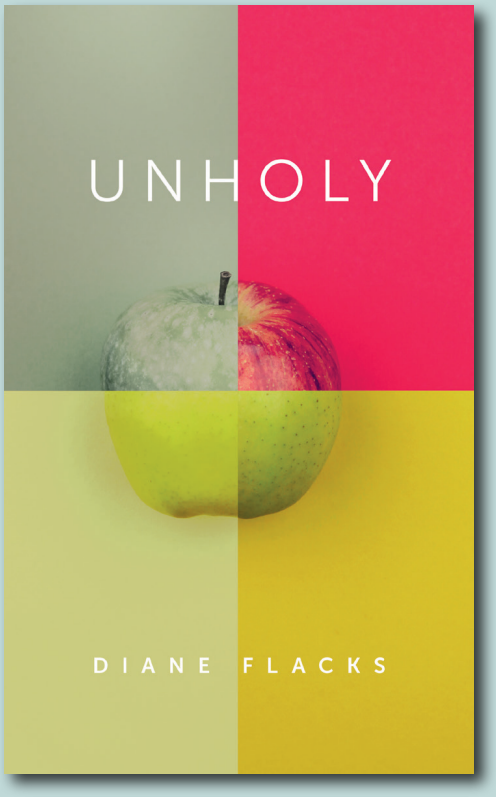
ARTICLE
Mackenzie Lad attends Montreal's *Festival des clowns* to discover the transformative power of social clowning

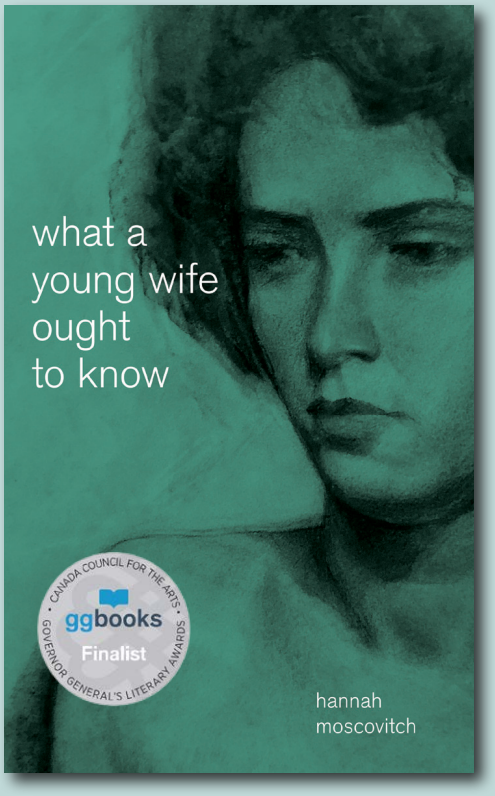
Contents
15.3

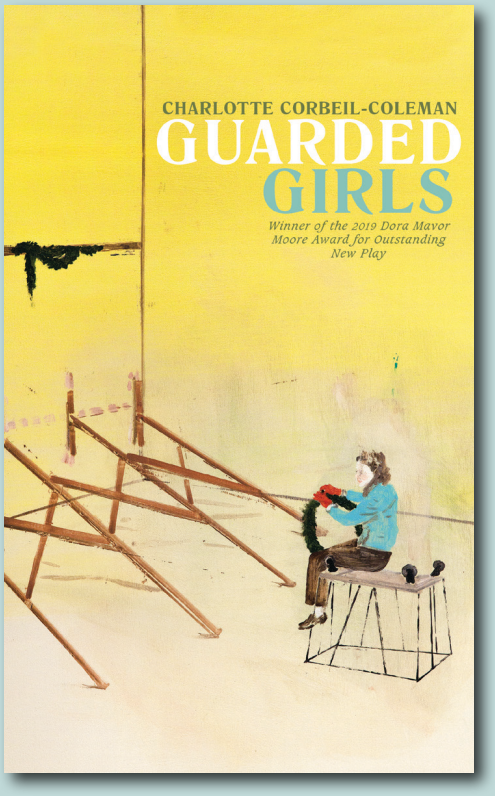
READ CANADIAN THEATRE











Find these new titles from Playwrights Canada Press at playwrightscanada.com

Follow us
facebook.com/PLCNP
twitter.com/playcanpress
instagram.com/playcanpress

alt.theatre
cultural diversity and the stage
Vol. 15 No. 3

alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage is Canada's only professional journal examining intersections between politics, cultural plurality, social activism, and the stage.

alt.theatre welcomes suggestions or proposals for interviews, news, pieces of self-reflection, analytical articles, and reviews of books, plays, and performances. Submissions to *alt.theatre* are vetted by at least two members of the editorial board, as well as external reviewers where appropriate. Contributors retain copyright of their articles with the understanding that any subsequent publication will cite *alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage* as the original source. *alt.theatre* retains the right to distribute copies of published articles for educational and promotional purposes. Please query the editors before submitting any work for consideration: info@alttheatre.ca

Founded in 1998, *alt.theatre* is published three times per year by Teesri Duniya Theatre—an intercultural theatre company with a mandate to produce socially engaged theatre that reflects Canada's social and cultural diversity. *alt.theatre* is indexed in the MLA International Bibliography.

Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales Du Québéc/Library and Archives Canada ISSN 1481-0506

For more information,
contact *alt.theatre* magazine at
Teesri Duniya Theatre
460 St-Catherine W., Suite 916
Montreal QC H3B 1A7
Tel. 514-848-0238
email: info@alttheatre.ca
www.alttheatre.ca

facebook.com/alt.theatre
facebook.com/teesriduniyatheatre

twitter.com/alt_theatre
twitter.com/Teesri_Duniya

alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage
is published triannually by

Teesri Duniya
THEATRE
"Change the World, One Play at a Time"

Cover photo by fubarfoto.

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, which last year invested $157 million to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country.

Nous remercions le Conseil des arts du Canada de son soutien. L'an dernier, le Conseil a investi 157 millions de dollars pour mettre de l'art dans la vie des Canadiennes et des Canadiens de tout le pays.

Contributors 15.3

REBECCA BURTON

Rebecca Burton is the membership and professional contracts manager at Playwrights Guild of Canada, where she co-founded Equity in Theatre (EIT), an initiative redressing the underrepresentation of women in Canadian theatre (2014–2017). Rebecca is also an editor, educator, researcher, and (feminist theatre) practitioner with a BA in theatre and history (University of Guelph), an MA in theatre (University of Victoria), and PhD ABD status (Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Toronto).

Photo by Dahlia Katz.

Article:
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:
Page 18

AARON FRANKS

Aaron Franks is an arts-based researcher and co-founder of the RAFT applied performance company with Rebecca Benson. He worked as an actor from 1996 to 2006, and now focuses on institutions, power, and transdisciplinary methods (not always in that order). He has worked with the Centre for Indigenous Research Creation at Queen's University and was a Mitacs Visiting Fellow in Indigenous Research and Reconciliation at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. He is currently senior manager for OCAP® (*Ownership, Control, Access and Possession*) and Information Governance with the First Nations Information Governance Centre in Ottawa, where he lives with Rebecca and their children Gil and Magda (and dog Archie).

Photo by Rebecca Benson.

Editorial:
Page 9

JENNIFER HARDWICK

Jennifer Hardwick is a settler scholar of Irish and German descent who lives and works on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples. She is faculty in the Department of English at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, where she teaches Canadian and Indigenous literatures, digital media, and writing/rhetoric.

Photo from personal archive.

Article:

Medicine in Our Very Bones: Page 10

ZOË HEYN-JONES

Zoë Heyn-Jones is a researcher-artist and cultural worker who grew up on Saugeen Ojibway land in Ontario (Canada) and on Tz'utujil/Kaqchikel Maya land in Guatemala. Zoë holds a PhD in Visual Arts from York University and a graduate diploma in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from CERLAC (the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, York University). She lives and works in Mexico City and Tkaranto/Toronto.

Photo by Octavio Castro Gallardo.

Dispatch:

Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition: Page 33

AMEI-LEE LABOUCAN

Amei-Lee Laboucan is a proud Black and Indigenous woman who likes to talk and write about all things Indigenous. Her ancestral lands are in Treaty 8 territory of Northern Alberta. Amei-Lee lives on stolen and illegally occupied Coast Salish territories.

Photo by Ivy Edad.

Article:

Medicine in Our Very Bones: Page 10

SHANE SABLE

Shane Sable is a 2spirit Gitxsan artist, activist, and administrator for the Vancouver International Burlesque Festival. Shane is also the convening member of Virago Nation, Turtle Island's first all-Indigenous burlesque collective. Shane's body of work focuses primarily on rematriating Indigenous sexuality through burlesque and community-engaged art and cultural activities.

Photo by Ivey Edad.

Article:

Medicine in Our Very Bones: Page 10

MARCUS YOUSSEF

Marcus Youssef is a playwright, senior artist at Vancouver's Neworld Theatre and international artistic associate at Farnham Maltings in the UK. He is a recipient of numerous awards for his work, including the 2017 Siminovitch Prize for Theatre, and a recent nomination for Berlin, Germany's Ikarus Prize.

Photo by .

Article:

PACTCon 2019 Keynote: Page 26


STREAM TRUTH
TO POWER WITH
CINEMA POLITICA
ON DEMAND
CINEMA POLITICA
SCREENING TRUTH TO POWER
START YOUR FREE 30 DAY TRIAL TODAY TO WATCH
WHOSE STREETS? AND SCORES OF HAND-CURATED,
HARD-HITTING DOCUMENTARIES
ONDEMAND.CINEMAPOLITICA.ORG

Editorial 15.3

BY AARON FRANKS

I often reel at the range of scales people find themselves sprawled out across, or curled up inside. Feeling the spread between the intimate and the seemingly infinite is one of the draws of performance.

So maybe I feel the stretch more intensely now—since I stopped performing (at least on stages), there's less release for the contradiction.

All of the circular, circulating feelings like this, the zeitgeist namings of scalar and locational relationships that, through shorthand, try to tie us together, seem to also have a time stamp: the personal is political ('70's Second Wave feminism), think global, act local ('80's environmentalism), alter/globalization ('90's economic organizing). Maybe we're still too close to the oughts and teens to locate them. Actually, let's dial that epochal deflection back a bit. Instead of blaming an innocent decade, maybe it's me who lacks sufficient awareness to locate myself, and what I did and did not manage to apprehend, in those ten-year spans.

This issue of *alt.theatre* could be said—could be read—to have such a timestamp. Each page could be watermarked "huge" (you may hear "yuge" in your head – I'm sorry). Drink Me. Eat Me. Fill the space of your time and place. Somehow, not quite by accident but not really intentionally, when read together the four pieces that build this issue are like chapters in an epic chronicle. There are time and space/place parts to this reading, which is an active experience like writing. There is a link to curation (as abused as that word now is).

In my own, partial, and possibly peculiar, reading, two takes lean to the temporal, two to the spatial. Imagine a layering of tinted, patterned tracing papers like in an encyclopedia's guide to the human body—skin over vascular over muscles over bone. Don't let "cores" and "centres" enchant you—surfaces are just as important as guts. The skin is our largest organ, perhaps our largest tool for and medium of performance.

In issue 15.2, Rebecca Burton presented a case study of specific equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives of the Playwright's Guild of Canada (PGC) and its Women's Caucus. Here in Part 2, she"move[s] from the microcosm of the PGC case study to the macrocosm of the industry in general, assessing various aspects of the theatre production machine to provide a more holistic picture of current EDI activity." Of particular interest to research-minded readers will be her "historical overview of the purpose and reception of three national theatre studies [on EDI in Canadian theatre] that took place in 1982, 2006, and 2015, assessing changes over time in relation to these studies."

Marcus Youssef's keynote speech at the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) 2019 conference (Saskatoon, 22–25 May 2019) is a humorous, spiky take on the "Work in Progress" of theatre producer-creator relations in Canada. I attended the conference and it had been a while since I had been around that much "producer." For me it was quite a novel environment. What struck me was not only the ideas in Youssef's speech, but the reception of them among those in attendance. I couldn't say whether everyone agreed with every word he spoke, but the appreciative, engaged vibe in the room suggested to me that at least the terms of his…thesis?…were familiar and important to a large section of Canada's professional theatre-producing companies. Together with Burton's report, I think these two articles offer a rich resource for anyone—practitioner, researcher, or other—with an interest in the arc of professional Canadian theatre.

While Burton's and Youssef's offerings work to make sense of the progressions (with many uneven bumps along the way) of the professional theatre environment, our further two pieces work differently, offering in-close accounts of performing, activist bodies on the line. Shane Sable, Amei-Lee Laboucan, and Jennifer Hardwick's account offers a reflection on Indigenous burlesque troupe Virago Nation and their experience of performing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Their writing deftly telescopes between the vibrancy of their own visceral, placed, and embodied stories—as both Indigenous female and Indigiqueer performers *and* watchers of burlesque—and the broader historical-political context of colonial misogyny and homophobia.

In Zoë Heyn-Jones' dispatch, "Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition," we follow Heyn-Jones' commitments and collaborative interventions against the violence of extractive industries throughout the Western Hemisphere. In a short piece overflowing with further trajectories for readers to pursue, she locates diverse activist practice in the field of performance and finds the performative in a range of activist interventions resisting (primarily Canadian) mining corporations. Many call Toronto home.

Welcome to *alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage*, issue 15.3.

Medicine in Our Very Bones

Bringing Indigenous Burlesque to Kwantlen Polytechnic University

BY SHANE SABLE,
AMEI-LEE LABOUCAN,
AND JENNIFER HARDWICK

On January 24, 2019, Indigenous burlesque collective Virago Nation took to the stage at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) on the shared, unceded territories of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlem peoples. The performance marked the beginning of *"Medicine in Our Very Bones"*[1]*: Gender, Sexuality and Embodied Resistance in Indigenous Burlesque*, a collaborative initiative funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The collaboration was born out of the belief that Indigenous women's art is "good medicine" that holds power to engage, challenge, re-imagine, and transform. Through a series of performances, workshops, and mentorship opportunities at KPU, the initiative would deepen understanding of Indigenous gender and sexuality, introduce new audiences to Indigenous arts, and support students, faculty, and staff working to address historical and ongoing colonization.

The event was coordinated by the primary organizers of *"Medicine in Our Very Bones"*—Shane Sable, a two-spirit Gitxsan performer and convening member of Virago Nation, and Jennifer Hardwick, a settler faculty member in the Department of English at KPU—who have been friends and collaborators for over fifteen years. The audience was made up of over sixty faculty, staff, and students, including Amei-lee Laboucan, a fourth-year Black and Indigenous journalism student with Cree and Métis ancestry from Treaty 8 territory in Northern Alberta. Sable, Hardwick, and Laboucan join here to explore the impact of Virago Nation's performance. We do so with the goal of upholding the power of Indigenous women and two-spirited peoples' ways of knowing and lived experiences within Indigenous arts, the academy, and the territories currently known as Canada.

Pow Wow Go Go.
Photo by fubarfoto.

VIRAGO NATION AND THE LEGACY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Founded in May of 2016, Virago Nation is an all-Indigenous burlesque collective of women/femme/two-spirited artists on unceded Coast Salish Territories that seeks to challenge the toxic effects of colonization by representing positive, diverse expressions of Indigenous sexuality. The group currently has six members representing distinct nations, sexualities, and Indigenous experiences. Together, they employ humour, seduction, pop culture, and politics to challenge colonial stereotypes and dichotomies, speak back to violence, and envision dynamic, multifaceted sexual identities for Indigenous women that are rooted in their own desires. These envisionings take the form of embodied and performed stories that engage and enact Indigenous knowledge, foster awareness of historical and ongoing colonization, and promote Indigenous peoples' (and Indigenous women/femme's specifically) sovereign rights to their own bodies, sexualities, and gender identities.

> **Sable:** *Initially, Virago Nation came together as a community of practice or community of support; making art while Indigenous can be fraught with challenges, and I was reaching out to women in my burlesque community I knew to be Indigenous to see if they wanted to talk about it. We all had connections to one another through the community, and none of us represented our Indigeneity as part of our performance personas at the time. We began by reintroducing ourselves, sharing our Indigenous identities and relating stories of how close or removed we each were from our traditional cultures. Collectively, we were struck by the fact that, although we had widely varying lived experiences, we had larger common experiences that helped us bond and validated our Indigenous identities. It was a salve. Before long, someone asked the question that inevitably comes up when a group of artists spend enough time together: "So when are we going to share these stories with people like us who need to see them? When are we going to make art?"*

Virago Nation's decision to make art was born out of a desire to see their lived experiences represented authentically. Their work is situated within a long history of Indigenous women's resistance, which has sought to uphold and protect identity in the face of colonization. As Métis scholar and activist Kim Anderson argues in *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*,

> Indigenous women have had to become practiced at resistance. Through collective resistance, Native women have worked hard to protect their cultures and sustain the social and political fabric of their nations. On a personal level, Native women have had to defend their identities. This has meant learning to resist stereotypes, imposed roles and negative definitions of their being, as well as learning to cope with the poor treatment from others that results from all of this. (94)

Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson notes that this resistance is a direct response to "White supremacy, rape culture, and the real and symbolic attack on gender, sexual identity and agency" that are used as "tools of colonialism, settler colonialism and capitalism." Attacks on Indigenous epistemologies of gender and sexuality traumatize individuals and communities, disrupt social and political kinship networks, and prevent Indigenous peoples from fully inhabiting their bodies and identities, thus leaving Indigenous peoples, lands, and nations vulnerable. These attacks have been part of the colonial project since contact, and have been conducted through educational policies, government legislation, and the proliferation of harmful stereotypes that have sought to enforce gender binaries, entrench patriarchy, inflict physical and sexual violence, disrupt kinship systems, and dehumanize Indigenous peoples. The results of these attacks have been clear: Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people in Canada face such extreme violence that, after sustained pressure from Indigenous survivors and families, the Canadian Liberal government launched an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in December 2015. In its final report, the Inquiry found that the violence Indigenous women, girls, and two-sprit people experience is part of a historical and ongoing genocide (Reclaiming Power 5).

RE-MATRIATION: THE INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION WE NEED

Public and academic discourses are filled with violent, harmful stereotypes, and Indigenous women often appear as historical relics, victims without agency, or highly sexualized objects. These images fuel colonial genocide and affect the ways that Indigenous women are able to move in the world.

> **Laboucan:** *The things I knew about Indigenous women and sexuality weren't the most positive. The degradation of Indigenous women can be seen everywhere, from famous people wearing headdresses in hyper-sexualized ways to the Disney movie Pocahontas. Because of these representations, owning the fact that I am a whole entire human with sexuality has been fraught. I don't want to feel like I'm perpetuating harmful stereotypes, which can be quite suffocating.*

However, as Lisa Monchalin points out in *The Colonial Problem*, gendered violence has not always been prolific on these territories, and the stereotypes of Indigenous women in no way represent women's power and complexity. Before contact, Indigenous communities were often matriarchal, with Indigenous women holding important and respected roles as leaders (176).

Rather than shying from stereotypes, Virago Nation members decided to use the same bodies that had been subject to stereotypes and the colonial gaze to challenge objectification and tell different stories that acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous women's power, complexity, and strength.

> **Sable:** *Our work offers representations that are meant to counter harmful stereotypes by creating positive, diverse images of Indigenous people exercising agency over their own bodies. Only Indigenous people are equipped and have the right to determine our sexualities and how they are represented. By offering our own iconoclastic*

representations of Indigenous sexuality, we are speaking back to colonial violence, reclaiming it from a toxic patriarchy, and relocating it within matriarchal power structures. We rebuild our systems of governance by centring power for Indigenous feminine sexuality within a community of Indigenous women. From here springs a kind of communal accountability that is vital to Indigenous flourishing and is deeply lacking in colonial culture. We subvert mainstream narratives of women's bodies as consumable items by actively demonstrating our agency over our bodies. Not only is this work decolonial in its refusal of harmful narratives, but it rematriates and Indigenizes our role as women, as community keepers, as sexual beings.

Burlesque—which has a long history of challenging patriarchal views and expanding understandings of gendered identities, bodies, and sexualities—is an art form that is uniquely suited for challenging harmful stereotypes and positioning Indigenous women as sovereign over their own bodies, images, and desires. Taking its name from the Italian word *"burla"* meaning to mock or ridicule, burlesque is a Western medium, born in Italian theatre in the sixteenth century and adopted and adapted in England through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The art form landed on the piece of Turtle Island referred to as America in 1868 when Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes premiered their play *Ixion* in New York's Wood's Broadway Theatre (Glasscock 24). Over the years, the art form has adapted and changed, crossed continents, and been mobilized by diverse communities to explore gender, sexuality, politics, bodies, relationships, and social conventions. Women and LGBTQ2S+ identities have often been central to this work. As Debra Ferreday argues, "Burlesque powerfully dramatizes the fact that femininity is not reducible to a single object or practice: that feminine identities are multiple, and may be experienced as pleasurable…burlesque also works to destabilize the ways in which dominant feminine identities become normalized" (49). In this sense, contemporary burlesque is underscored by its political engagement with women bodies, sexualities, and rights.

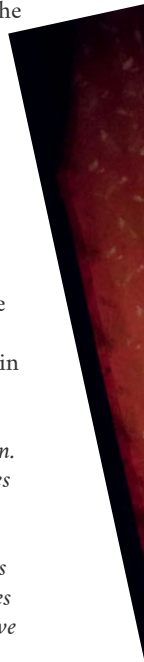
These envisionings take the form of embodied and performed stories that engage and enact Indigenous knowledge, foster awareness of historical and ongoing colonization, and promote Indigenous peoples' (and Indigenous women/femme's specifically) sovereign rights to their own bodies, sexualities, and gender identities.

Laboucan: *I saw the glossy posters on the Surrey campus inviting students to come out and see Virago Nation perform, and I was intrigued. It's not every day you see representations of Indigenous women owning their sexuality and having agency over their (almost) naked bodies.*

The start of the show is a powerful display of all members of Virago Nation performing their Come and Get Your Love *act together to Indigenous rock band Redbone's song of the same name. The lyrics to the song ask, "What's the matter with your head?" and eventually conclude nothing is the matter with the women. Redbone is singing to and for them to come and get their love. Choosing this song to start the night promptly addresses the stigmatization Indigenous women face about their bodies and sexuality, while simultaneously celebrating the oncoming display of women's empowerment. To me, this opening number also looks to celebrate two-spirit identities with the colourful rainbow display of clothing while also speaking back to colonial homophobia that is, sometimes, strongly felt in Indigenous communities and academic spaces.*

Sable: *The primary concept of this act is a coming together of all of us in the circle to dance, like a pow-wow. Our fringe shawls are a burlesque interpretation of those worn by fancy shawl dancers and our pasties were beaded by one of our cousins. Our choreography fuses traditional pow-wow and sixties go-go dance moves, creating a new and harmonious relationship between cultural expressions. The colour palette is also based on the different colours of dancing regalia at pow-wows. While we weren't intentionally referencing queer pride by using this colour palette, I think it's worth noting that the majority of our members identify on the non-binary spectrum, so that's an added layer of meaning that we embrace. The act overall is a lovely representation of the genesis of the group itself. Each of us comes from a different Indigenous nation and pow-wows are meant to be intertribal, so the act represents a coming together of those who are different but also in relation. The costumes were made by Scarlet Delirium.*

After the opening number, Sparkle Plenty, who was the MC for the night, took to the stage and gave the audience a rundown of who Virago Nation actually was, what the group's messaging was, and what they intended to do that Thursday evening. One of the first things brought up during Sparkle Plenty's introduction was how rarely Indigenous women were portrayed positively; the show sought to address and remedy that by empowering women of all shapes, sizes and professions—specifically and most importantly, Indigenous women.



About halfway through the show, Sparkle gets the audience involved. She asks the audience to stand up and shake all their flabbier bits: arms, stomachs, thighs, and butts. During this segment of *"Medicine in Our Very Bones,"* Plenty also talks to the audience about how the bodies represented in the burlesque troupe are ranging and different, yet acceptable and powerful in all forms.

Laboucan: *I will not lie: as a fat Indigenous person, this was fun. Hearing an empowered woman speak about differing body shapes for Indigenous women was important. As an Indigenous woman with a body that is considered unacceptable within Eurocentric beauty ideals, I feel the genuine importance Virago Nation places on representing Indigenous bodies, affirming the lived experiences of Indigenous people, and holding space for us when we often have to navigate unsafe spaces. When I think of past representations of Indigenous women, it's often sexy or unsexy. Sometimes the representation is of a much older Indigenous woman who is wise and all-knowing, which leaves little room for Indigenous girls to see themselves being represented if they don't feel like they fit into either of those categories. Especially when the imaging of the sexy or unsexy Indigenous woman is based on stereotypes through a Eurocentric lens. Sexy can often be seen as skinny with long straight hair, and unsexy is often seen as fat with unruly hair. However, when Sparkle Plenty speaks, she's talking to everybody. Sparkle is letting the audience know that even though they may not look like what is represented in media, they're still just as important.*

Embracing the bodies—all bodies—of audience members carries social and political resonance.

> We subvert mainstream narratives of women's bodies as consumable items by actively demonstrating our agency over our bodies. Not only is this work decolonial in its refusal of harmful narratives, but it rematriates and Indigenizes our role as women, as community keepers, as sexual beings.

Photo of Shane Sable
by MKM Photography.

VIRAGO NATION AT SCHOOL: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND CENTRING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Laboucan: *Growing up, I heard about residential schools and that they were wrought with so much abuse that my grandfather and great-grandmother called them "the house of horrors." And although my time as an Indigenous learner wasn't as horrific as it was for the Elders in my family, racism was still prevalent when I started going to school. I have many stories about the racism I've faced as an Indigenous learner throughout my time in elementary school up until the end of my Bachelor's degree. When I was 12, I was kicked out of my grade seven class for having my hoodie a bit unzipped while wearing a tank top because my developing body was considered so inappropriate by my teacher. Two years later in grade nine, my social studies teacher mocked*

residential schools and the abuses that happened to children who were forced to attend them, such as my grandfather and great-grandmother. Along the way, I was inundated with racial microaggressions and stereotypes. Eventually, I found myself in a place of higher learning where I was faced with the same violence, when a teacher of mine failed to intervene over a fellow classmate's violently racist comment about the "laziness" of Indigenous people. This classmate used her former place of residence, the prairies , as reason enough to be so authoritative in her assumption. My experiences aren't unique. Education in Canada has always been inaccessible to Indigenous folks —through refusal of entry, involuntary enfranchisement, or abuse and violence within these institutions. But it's imperative that Indigenous women and two-spirit people have spaces for ourselves to bask in and feel comfortable about the humans that we are.

The violence experienced by Indigenous people—and Indigenous women and two-spirited peoples in particular—has long been embedded within Canada's education systems. Canada's mandate for dealing with Indigenous people was to "kill the Indian within the child" ("The Residential School System"). The government pursued this directive by sending Indigenous children to residential schools where they were emotionally, physically, and sexually abused; the last school closed in 1996. Canada's colonial education policies have not been limited to residential schools. Since its inception, the Canadian education system has been used as a tool for assimilation, and post-secondary institutions have long histories of marginalizing, tokenizing, and extracting Indigenous knowledge under the auspices of research.[2] For a long time, when Indigenous people wanted to obtain university degrees, they were met with the Indian Act's involuntary enfranchisement law (Faculty of Law), a practice that ended in 1951. While the days of overt abuse within the academy have diminished, Indigenous students still face violence, discrimination, and numerous barriers to learning.

One way that Canada's educational system has participated in colonial violence is by ensuring that Euro-western perspectives are continually privileged. Indigenous voices, bodies, and cultures are absent in academic spaces, relegated to history, or presented as stereotypes. For Indigenous and settler students alike, there are few positive, powerful, and fulsome representations of Indigenous women. And, the opportunities for engaging with Indigenous cultures are extremely rare. As such, there is a revolutionary potential in bringing Indigenous bodies, knowledge, cultures, and art into academic spaces to model different ways of knowing, learning, and engaging.

Sable: *In the years since Virago Nation was convened, we have travelled across Canada and parts of the United States, and it has become increasingly clear that the stories we tell and the representations we offer are needed. Immediately after—and actually even during our performance at the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas 2017—we received messages from Indigenous women all over Turtle Island. Again and again these women thanked us for having the courage to be seen, for reaching out to them through our art and for helping them feel connected and not alone. We had spent so much time focusing on what kind of push back we imagined we would receive that it was deeply impactful to find that the community response was the opposite. Even Elders have embraced us and our work. When I was a guest on the radio show "Native America Calling," an Elder phoned in to share that she knew the work we were doing was important and the conversation we were having had to happen now. She told us this was because she was taught that all*

Bringing Indigenous burlesque into an academic space like KPU is a form of reclamation; our performances create and uphold space. They are a reminder that our bodies, knowledge, and cultures belong here.

art we (all of Indigenous people) make is necessary, is a necessity. Coming into a university environment was a natural extension of our work, because there are so few positive, contemporary representations of Indigenous women, Indigenous cultures, and Indigenous sexualities within academic spaces. Bringing Indigenous burlesque into an academic space like KPU is a form of reclamation; our performances create and uphold space. They are a reminder that our bodies, knowledge, and cultures belong here.

Virago Nation's performances often highlight different facets of Indigenous identity and knowledge, leaving the audience with a better understanding of the diversity and complexity of Indigeneity. Shane Sable used her performance at KPU to explore resistance, solidarity, and her two-spirited identity with *Go My Way*.

Shane: *I create and hold the space...because there is such a lack of representation for non-binary Indigenous folks. If it weren't for the ongoing existence and resilience of the Indigenous women and two-spirit folks around me, I wouldn't be able to create the work that I create.*

Go My Way *was originally created for the opening night party of the Vancouver Queer Film Festival. I was excited to create an act that was an explicit call to action for intersectional pride. As a two-spirit person, I'm acutely familiar with how exclusionary queer and trans rights movements can be for Indigenous people. I find many queer people I speak with don't even know what the term two-spirit means. But understanding why and how the term two-spirit came to be is an integral and necessary part of decolonizing our sexual politics. Set to "Are You Gonna Go My Way" by Lenny Kravitz, the thrust of the narrative is hitch hiking with a sign that has the intersectional pride flag "or bust" written on it. I like how the act queers the main refrain of the song, "Are you gonna go my way," while I do my best to embody a character as self-assured as the man singing the song—the raw, rock and roll, audacious sexuality—to call on the audience for more solidarity but also to cheekily ask the audience on stage who among you is queer like me?*

Since its debut, this act has evolved unlike any other I've ever created. The next time I performed the act, it was for a fundraiser for the Wet'suwet'en Nation's resistance to pipeline interference with their territory. Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan are neighbours. I was born and grew up on land held by the Wet'suwet'en Gidumten. It was important to me to be able to donate my art with this act to support those from my homeland. I amplified the Indigenous messaging of the act by replacing the intersectional fist overlaying the pride flag with the Indigenous feather-wielding fist from the Idle No More movement. I wrote "Skoden" on one side of the sign. When Sparkle, hosting our set, was introducing me and told the audience I am Gitxsan, the audience cheers thundered in my ears. I wanted to cry. The audience was celebrating my specific Indigeneity—my direct relationship to them, to the Wet'suwet'en, to Indigenous people across Turtle Island. That had never happened before and it makes me tear up whenever I think on it.

Go My Way upholds and expands on the sense of community and safety that Laboucan noted in Virago Nation's opening numbers by asserting and celebrating the role of two-spirited people. It serves as a reminder that Indigenous concepts of gender and sexuality are grounded within Indigenous epistemology and tied to nationhood, land, and kinship.

Scarlet Delirium's *Blackfish* similarly draws on Indigenous knowledge and identity by calling on a Kwakwaka'wakw story:

Delirium: *The* Black Fish *routine is inspired by one of the many Kwakwaka'wakw stories. This one tells a tale of my ancestors during a time of war between Humans and Orcas. The Orcas came to shore and shed their animal skins to reveal the humans beneath. They said to man that we are family, do us no harm and let us live together in*

Photo of Sparkle Plenty
by David Jacklin.

peace. Today, large corporations and dying industries threaten the very world we live in, so the Max'inux comes once again to the land to deliver this message.

Laboucan: *The performance* Blackfish *by Scarlet Delirium is about water defending, Indigeneity, empowerment, and agency over sexuality. At the beginning of the performance, which is set to "Save Our Waters" by Kinnie Starr, Scarlet is draped in a kelp boa that I feel symbolizes the pollution of Turtle Island's waters. Slowly, throughout the song she is freed of the net and other restricting material (clothing). Scarlet Delirium's performance articulates the water crisis Turtle Island faces with pollution and extraction, but it also shows the relationship between life bringers and water. Her performance recognizes matriarchs as sacred beings for the life they bring and the water they protect, which is a representation of life. Like water, Indigenous women give, nourish, and uphold life in a multitude of ways.*

Sable: *Scarlet made this act as part of our* Calling in the Dancestors *show for Talking Stick Festival 2019. The show was all-Indigenous burlesque set to an all-Indigenous mixtape. Inspired by other ways members of the group have used their acts to connect with their heritage, Scarlet created a number that allowed her to embody her family crest, the Orca. The choreography incorporates short phrases of traditional women's dance moves. The act is also a call to action to save our orca populations, and it emphasizes the connection between our orca relatives and women as water protectors. She designed and built the costume herself.*

Both *Go My Way* and *Blackfish* express facets of sexuality that speak beyond shallow, derogatory stereotypes of a misogynistic, racist culture. They speak to the roles of Indigenous women and two-spirits as resistors, as political agents, as knowledge keepers, holders of ceremony, and inextricably connected to the land in ways that non-Indigenous culture fails to acknowledge. The acts exemplify ways that Virago Nation creatively brought Indigenous knowledge to KPU, offering students, staff, faculty, and community an opportunity to expand their understanding of Indigenous identity, knowledge, and art.

CONCLUSION

"Medicine in Our Very Bones": Gender, Sexuality and Embodied Resistance in Indigenous Burlesque was formulated with the goal of bringing the medicine of Indigenous women's art into academic spaces. The first performance of the initiative did just that, challenging colonial violence and stereotypes, offering positive and diverse representations of Indigenous women and two-spirit people, building community, and upholding Indigenous knowledges and cultures. The event exemplified that transformative potential of Indigenous women's art and underscored the significant role that performance can play in post-secondary institutions.

Laboucan: *While the academy has not always been a safe space for Indigenous learners, watching Virago Nation perform is what I would call resistance and political action. It's an act of taking up space and creating a space for Indigenous folks and like-minded people to feel safe in.*

Sable: *Given that academic institutions can be notoriously conservative—in part because of their predication on a Christian monastic model—holding space for discussions of Indigenous sexuality at KPU is incredibly valuable. I feel honoured that Virago Nation was given the responsibility of sharing our stories in that space. Not only does it become possible for the next person to enter the conversation, it also helps to heal the damage that academic life hoists on Indigenous participants. I moved through eight years of post-secondary education without ever feeling safe to "indulge" in who I am by openly being Indigenous and two-spirit. When I first started burlesque, I was taught to think of my burlesque persona as the best possible version of myself, all the time. It's been a tremendous learning curve to truly implement that teaching, but Virago Nation has allowed me to do that. Performing in academic institutions like KPU has allowed me to bring that healing into places that have and do create harm for Indigenous people. And I know and have been shown that in doing that healing work for myself, I am doing it for those who witness it as well.*

Notes

1. This title takes its name from a poem by Tenille K Campbell. It was made public as part of her collection #IndianLovePoems. https://twitter.com/EricaVioletLee/status/1026662622052134917.

2. Many scholars have established the relationship between colonization and research. For details, see: *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada* by Roland David Chrisjohn, Sherri Lynn Young, and Michael Maraun; *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith; or *Knowing the Past, Facing the Future: Indigenous Education in Canada* by Sheila Carr-Stewart.

Works Cited

Anderson, Kim. *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood.* Second Story Press, 2000.

Faculty of Law University of Alberta. "Restrictions of Rights: Compulsory Enfranchisement." *Faculty Blog*, 3 October 2018. https://ualbertalaw.typepad.com/faculty/2018/10/restrictions-on-rights-compulsory-enfranchisement.html.

Ferreday, Debra. "'Showing the Girl': The New Burlesque." *Feminist Theory* 9:1 (April 2008), 47–65.

Glasscock, Jessica. *Striptease: From Gaslight to Spotlight*. Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2003.

Monchalin, Lisa. *The Colonial Problem an Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2016.

"Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls." *MMIGW*, 3 June 2019. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamoksake. ""Not Murdered and Not Missing." *Writings*, 5 March 2014. https://www.leannesimpson.ca/writings/not-murdered-not-missing-rebelling-against-colonial-gender-violence/.

"The Residential School System." *Indigenous Foundations*, 2009. https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Canadian Theatre Here and Now

Part 2: Changes in the Theatre Sector

BY REBECCA BURTON

Thus, despite all indications of improvement, as of spring 2015 systemic discrimination remained the norm for women, Indigenous people, people of colour, and others suffering the throes of underrepresentation.

This is the second installment in a two-part series examining the present state of the Canadian theatre industry in relation to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The overarching questions framing this inquiry are: What, if anything, has changed? In what ways has the sector improved (or not)? And why are some industry people talking about a tipping point—or as others have described it, "a breaking of the logjam?" In Part One, which appeared in *alt.theatre* 15.2, I examined the EDI activities of the Women's Caucus of the Playwrights Guild of Canada (PGC), finding an array of targeted initiatives designed to effect change and redress industry imbalances. I interpret this development as representative of a significant sectoral shift towards institutional action in recent years. Here in Part Two, I move from the microcosm of the PGC case study to the macrocosm of the larger industry, assessing various aspects of the theatre sector to provide a more holistic picture of current EDI activity. Specifically, I look at developments pertaining to gender-based research, institutional policies, funding bodies, awards programs, and employment patterns. I begin with a historical overview of three national theatre studies, released in 1982, 2006, and 2015, assessing changes over time in relation to the purpose and reception of the reports. I then narrow in on current EDI developments, tracking actions from 2015 to the present.

THE LONG, SLOW JOURNEY TO NOW

In Part One of this series, I concluded that progress is being made but that we are inching rather than hurrying along. Yes, things have changed, but they've been doing so here and there over time for decades. Is the present moment any different, or have EDI efforts accelerated, as the current industry buzz suggests? Light can be shed on this by examining the changing purposes, findings, and receptions of the three national studies of gender in theatre conducted to date: Rina Fraticelli's "The Status of Women in the Canadian Theatre" (1982); my own contribution, "Adding It Up: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre" (2006); and Michelle MacArthur's "Achieving Equity in Canadian Theatre: A Report with Best Practice Recommendations" (2015).

Fraticelli's 1982 study was commissioned by the Status of Women Canada office as one of many reports prepared for a submission to the Federal Cultural Review Policy Committee (Lushington 10). Fraticelli wanted to articulate "the precise shapes of women's exclusion from the theatre" (iii), as well as the detrimental effects of underrepresentation, to counter false assertions that women enjoyed "most of the same opportunities as their male counterparts" (Fraticelli iv). The actuality fell "far short of the rhetoric" (v). Assessing 1,156 professional productions staged between the years 1978 and

1981, she found that women accounted for 11 percent of the nation's artistic directors (ADs), 13 percent of the theatres' directors, and 10 percent of the produced playwrights (5). Fraticelli coined the term "The Invisibility Factor" to describe "the absence of women from significant roles in the work of producing a national culture" (v). Her report was criticized for "emotionally loaded" graphics, but otherwise, according to Kate Lushington, "the silence which greeted the release of the report was (and has remained) deafening" (9). Fraticelli's study never made its way to the Review Committee (the reports were summarized, reported on, and "effectively suppressed" [10]), and no policy changes occurred. While it galvanized women in theatre with a call to action, the study was not embraced by the mainstream press or the nation's theatre industry. And if not for the alternative feminist and arts presses of the day, evidence of the report's existence would be scant indeed.

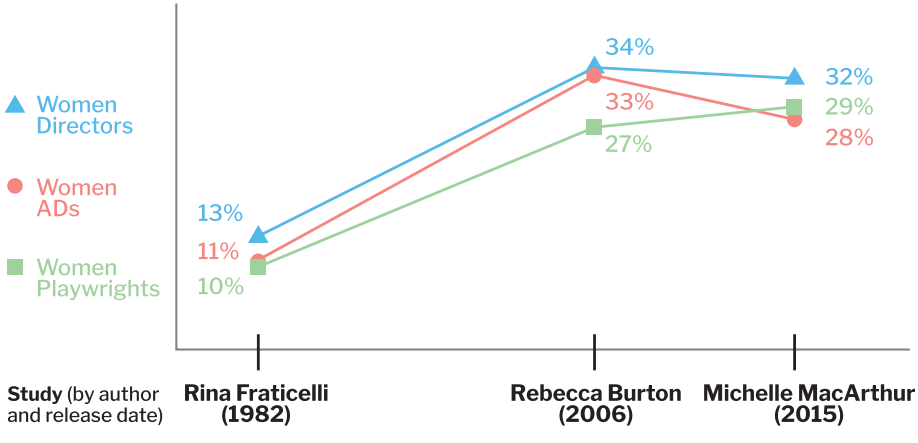
Fast-forward twenty years: in 2006, a long overdue follow-up study was funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, thanks to the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), PGC and its Women's Caucus, and Nightwood Theatre, who joined forces with artists and academics to create the ad hoc group Equity in Canadian Theatre: The Women's Initiative. The purpose of the study mirrored that of its predecessor: to reconcile the "discrepancy between the first-hand, marginalized experiences of many women in the field, and the general society and industry rhetoric that claimed gender equality had been achieved" (Burton, *Adding* 4). The 2006 report expanded on Fraticelli's by incorporating all job roles and rates of representation for racialized artists. It included 113 companies that staged 1,945 productions between the 2000/01 and 2004/05 seasons, for which women formed 33 percent of the theatres' ADs, 34 percent of the directors, and 27 percent of the produced playwrights. People of colour fared similarly regardless of gender, sitting at 11 percent of the ADs (6 percent women and 5 percent men), 6 percent of the directors (less than 3 percent for each gender without rounding), and 9 percent of the playwrights (5 percent men and 4 percent women) (Burton, *Adding* ii). The Invisibility Factor had improved somewhat over time for white women, but the statistics for Indigenous people and people of colour indicated systemic discrimination.

Much like Fraticelli's work, the 2006 study was not reported on in the Canadian press; but the internet provided a new tool for dissemination, and so the findings reached a wider audience (and continue to do so today) posted online. Interest in the results from theatre administrators improved, as did academic engagement. But ADs were generally unreceptive, as I learned first-hand at PACT's 2006 AGM. I reference the report's reception in an *alt.theatre* article from the time, stating, "The sector can generally be characterized as apathetic, demonstrating complacency with the status quo, and at worst, as openly hostile, justifying the current state of affairs, denying responsibility, and disputing the very existence of discrimination." I concluded, "the Canadian theatre industry is resistant to engaging actively in discourse and/or actions focused on improving gender and racialized inequities" (Burton, "Adding" 8). Further evidence was provided after the fact by the Initiative's inability to secure the necessary support to continue its work, as the 2006 study was intended to be the first of a two-phase action.

Jumping ahead almost a decade, a new initiative formed: Equity in Theatre (EIT). It involved the sector's stakeholders, who came together to improve EDI; a clear indicator of significant change. Previously, attempts to unite the industry's major players failed, but this time, ten organizations partnered to form a Steering Committee.[1] One of EIT's projects was an updated gender-based analysis of the sector conducted by Michelle MacArthur. The 2015 study was supported by a wider funding base, with money from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, suggesting greater institutional interest on the part of granting bodies. The underlying goals of the study remained the same, but there was a discernible shift in emphasis, with the underrepresentation of women treated as well-established fact. The study was not driven by a need to collect statistics and prove the existence of systemic discrimination; rather the *raison d'être* was leveraging up-to-date research "as a catalyst for action" (MacArthur 17). As MacArthur states, the "ultimate goal is to support the move from awareness to action to rectify imbalances in the Canadian theatre industry" (6). The two previous reports likewise included this aim, identifying problems and offering solutions to effect change; but they dedicated less than one-tenth of their content to recommendations, whereas almost 40 percent of MacArthur's study focuses on remedying existent inequities.

While these signs of change are encouraging, the 2015 findings for the representation of women in the professional theatre were worse than those in the 2006 study.[2] Figures for the 2010/11 season, derived from 138 companies staging 597 productions, showed women accounting for 28 percent of the artistic directors, 32 percent of the directors, and 29 percent of the playwrights (19). While numbers are not available for Indigenous and racialized artists, it is likely that the related statistics did not improve over time. PGC's Annual Production Surveys from 2012/13 through to 2016/17 likewise demonstrate stagnation and sometimes regression (see Tables 2 and 3), a catalyst for the formation of EIT. As MacArthur observed, the industry "has generally remained unchanged for the past 30 years," wherein "[v]arious systemic and ideological barriers prevent women from achieving equity, the most significant being bias and discrimination" (6).

TABLE 1: Gendered Theatre Employment Statistics Over Time



Yet there are additional indications of positive change. The report's reception was not dismissive or hostile, at least not publicly. Produced within the context of EIT, the study was backed by industry stakeholders, many administrators, and, perhaps most importantly, artistic directors. As before, open access was provided with online postings, and while the Canadian press showed no interest (despite repeated efforts by EIT), a few articles were published in Canada and the United States.

Overall, the climate and circumstances surrounding the EIT report signal change afoot: interest and cooperation from institutions, a wider funding base, procedural shifts treating discrimination as accepted fact, increased focus on best practice recommendations, and a warmer reception all point the way. But the report's statistical findings paint a different picture, one of an industry unaffected by EDI efforts. Thus, despite all indications of improvement, as of spring 2015 systemic discrimination remained the norm for women, Indigenous people, people of colour, and others suffering the throes of underrepresentation.

ACCELERATED CHANGE: INSTITUTIONAL ACTION

The 2015 report served its purpose, yielding advocacy and social action, particularly on an institutional level, as arts service organizations responded to the call. In Part One I focused on PGC's Women's Caucus, which implemented initiatives in the four areas needing improvement identified by MacArthur. Indicative of a shift in ideology, institutions moved from interest to action, stepping up their EDI efforts. PACT developed a Pledge Project in 2015 to address gender inequities, encouraging its members "to publicly declare an action they will take to help achieve equity in their company, and by extension, in our industry." PACT's website names fourteen companies participating in the program, and it provides sample suggestions for others taken from MacArthur's report.[3] The following year, PACT launched "All In: A National Equity, Diversity & Inclusive Initiative" to train a team of EDI facilitators, who in turn facilitate EDI training in theatres and arts organizations across the country.[4] The program was rolled out to the industry in 2017, along with a new EDI coordinator position. Similarly to PGC, in the last four years PACT implemented member-specific programming, wider sector initiatives, and internal administrative changes to improve EDI.

Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA) also responded to MacArthur's report, reacting to the research findings on racialization (or the lack thereof) by launching a demographic survey of its membership in 2015. As the organization explained at the time, CAEA "supports the creation of a live performance environment that reflects the diversity of the community in which our members work. It is time for us to take action, and it all starts with understanding the composition of our membership" ("Everybody Counts"). The Equity Census provides crucial data about the industry, the particulars of which I discuss below.

Also in 2015, spearheaded by veteran actor-director Jane Heyman, CAEA introduced a survey to discover "how harassment was affecting Equity members." They found that nearly 50 percent of women respondents and

TABLE 2: A Gender Breakdown of All Play Production Authorship in Canada by Comparison of PGC's Annual Production Surveys, 2012/13–2018/19

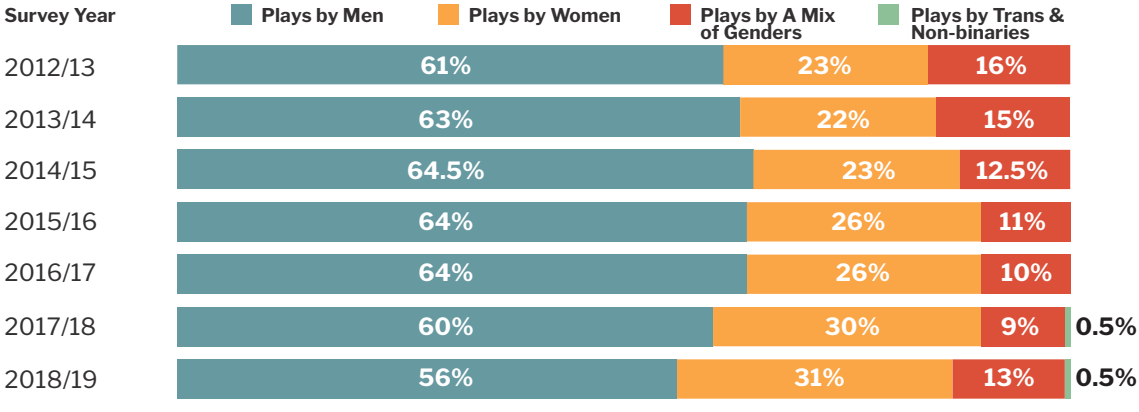
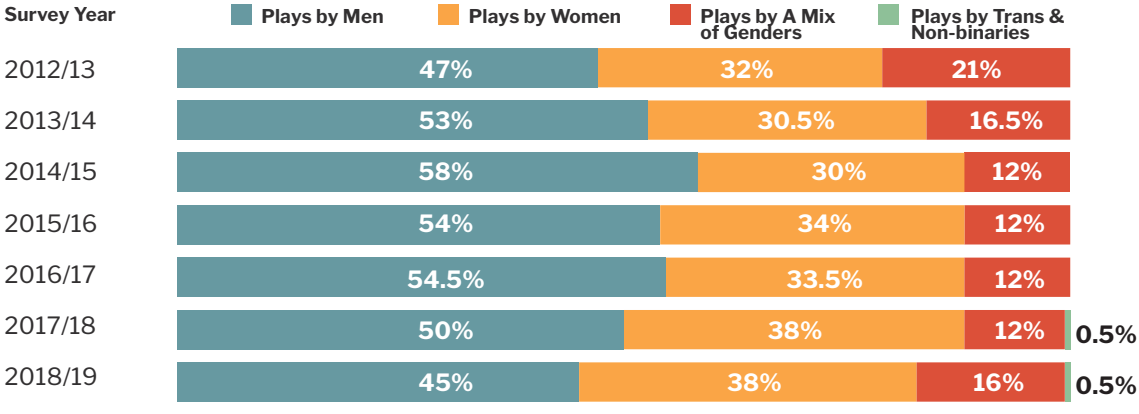


TABLE 3: A Gender Breakdown of Canadian Play Production Authorship in Canada by Comparison of PGC's Annual Production Surveys, 2012/13–2018/19



37 percent of men had experienced inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying or sexual harassment, and 50 percent had witnessed such incidents on the job. Executive Director Arden Ryshpan was caught off-guard: "We were horrified when we saw the responses…There was more unacceptable behaviour going on than any of us had realized" ("Not in Our Space! Campaign" 6). This discovery preceded and foreshadowed the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, usually dated to October 2017 with Harvey Weinstein's public disgrace, although the Canadian public had an earlier taste with the Jian Ghomeshi scandal (2014–2016).

While #MeToo exploded in the film industry, similar incidents were revealed in other sectors, and Canadian theatre was not exempt. The most notorious case is that of Albert Schultz at Soulpepper Theatre in Toronto, but there are others still.[5] CAEA and PACT responded by partnering on Not in Our Space!, "a national anti-harassment and respectful workplace collaboration campaign," seeking "to ensure healthy and productive working conditions for all professionals working in live performance across the country."[6] In addition to providing resource materials, they developed a Joint First Day Statement for CAEA and PACT members to sign when rehearsals start, and efforts are underway to make it a mandatory requirement ("Not in Our Space!"). Individual theatre companies are responding by developing and publicizing anti-harassment policies on their websites and audition calls, and artists are joining grassroots organizations, such as Got Your Back (GYB), to take the work further yet.

GYB Canada formed in late 2017, and it is composed of industry women (the majority actors) who come together in safe spaces to provide "opportunities to connect for advocacy, support, and inspiration" (GYB, "Connect"). An international entity with different chapters, GYB hosts in-person and online meetings, and has private Facebook groups for various regions (Alberta, British Columbia, East Coast, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario). With a mailing list and dedicated website, GYB disseminates resource materials related to workplace etiquette, actor training, wellness, leadership, and anti-harassment policies, while also undertaking letter writing campaigns, working groups, and the occasional event. The Toronto chapter presented an Acting Educators Conference in May 2019, providing "an opportunity for participants to gain practical skills while actively engaging with and sharing expert, informed, critical insights pertaining to the areas of mental health; diversity and inclusion, anti-oppression; and the creation and maintenance of safe spaces" (GYB, "Acting"). Training institutions and educators were also implicated in #MeToo scandals, leading to resignations and occasional convictions.[7] GYB members, concerned about holes in the educational safety net, self-organized and brought together the necessary people to help ensure a safe and inclusive environment for student actors.[8]

In addition to grassroots groups and arts service organizations, government funders also stepped up EDI efforts. In the wake of #MeToo, Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council funded the Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC)'s Respectful Workplaces in the Arts campaign, which provides an industry code of conduct, resource materials, services such as free workshops on Maintaining Respectful Workplaces, and most recently, a reporting mechanism for harassment (CHRC).[9] In addition to #MeToo, other movements and public interventions, such as #IdleNoMore, #BlackLivesMatter, and #MMIW (Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women) have affected the arts, as with The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, launched in 2008 "to contribute to truth, healing and reconciliation" for Indigenous peoples and Canadian settlers, and which published its calls to action in 2015 ("Our Mandate"). That same year, under the direction of Simon Brault, the Canada Council underwent major restructuring; and in the spring of 2017 it introduced a new funding model that included streamlining grant programs, eschewing artistic disciplines, and increasing diversity by supporting Indigenous, Culturally Diverse, Deaf and Disabled, and Official Language Minority arts communities. LGBTQIA2S+ and women artists were not prioritized, which seems short-sighted given their ongoing marginalization.[10] While the verdict is still out as to the effect of the changes, Brault's redesign was considered successful by federal power brokers, given his reappointment to 2023 ("Minister Rodriguez").

Provincial arts councils also responded, manifesting EDI changes in relation to their policies. The Ontario Arts Council developed an equity plan in 2012 based on the values of leadership, inclusiveness, responsiveness, and diversity that was later incorporated into their strategic plan for 2014–2020 (OAC, "Equity Plan"). The British Columbia Arts Council's 2018 strategic plan includes Indigenous Arts and Culture, as well as Equity, Diversity, and Access amongst its key priorities (BCAC, "Priorities"). On the east coast, in January 2019, Arts Nova Scotia introduced three new policies—Cultural Appropriation, Indigenous Arts Protocols, and Respectful Workplaces—"to strengthen" the community and ensure "alignment" with "provincial and national counterparts" (Arts Nova Scotia, "Policies and Reports"). In the last few years, the drive to increase EDI has been adopted by provincial arts councils across the nation.

Municipal arts councils heeded the call as well. In February 2017, the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) established four equity priority groups, identified as persons of colour, deaf persons and persons with disabilities and mental illness, Indigenous peoples, and 2SLGBTQIAP artists. The TAC also introduced an equity priority policy to identify prioritized artists, formed an equity steering committee for oversight, implemented application accessibility support, and created a voluntary self-identification form for grant applicants to collect demographic information needed to fill existing research gaps (TAC, "Equity and Access").

Likewise, the Conseil des Arts de Montreal (CAM) embraced equity as a core principle, and EDI is a top priority for its grant programs, which focus specifically on cultural diversity, intergenerational equity, Indigenous communities, inclusive practices, gender equality, and intangible heritage (CAM, "4 Strategic Priorities"). Moreover, in May 2019, Diversité artistique Montréal released a report on systemic racism in the arts, culture, and media sectors in Montreal, entitled "Towards a Cultural Equity Process," and CAM is reviewing the recommendations put forth ("DAM Presents"). This is a promising development given controversies surrounding inappropriate representations and cultural appropriation in Quebec, resulting in protests by #BlackLivesMatter, Indigenous communities, and other artists, not to mention accusations of systemic racism levied against the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ).[11] Increasingly, arts councils are being held accountable for their operational practices, and some recognize the vital role they can play as supporters of EDI in the arts sector.

Changes have occurred with Canada's theatre award programs as well. In 2015, CAM partnered with Montreal's English-

Language Theatre Awards (METAs) to pioneer a new prize: the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award. It is presented annually "to recognize and encourage practices of access and inclusion, and to celebrate those who embrace the range of cultures, identities and abilities that make up and enrich our city" (META "Honorary Awards"). Vancouver's Jessie Richardson Awards followed suit in 2016, establishing the Vancouver NOW Representation and Inclusion Award, given to "an individual, initiative or company who nourishes the values of empathy, reciprocity, compassion and responsibility, all while empowering the voices of those who have been historically silenced" (Jessies). In 2019, a new EDI prize was introduced by the Vancouver Fringe, which has intensified its EDI efforts.[12] The TD Fringe Forward Award "recognizes a production that centres the work of artists from historically marginalized communities and approaches the work from a place of authenticity." The recipient is selected by a jury and the prize is "a performance opportunity, rehearsal space, mentorship, and cash for future development" (Vancouver Fringe). Not simply bestowing accolades, this award provides marginalized artists with material resources to further their artistic practice.

Additional changes have surfaced in awards programs with respect to gender. Announced in April 2018, the 40th Dora Mavor Moore Awards went "gender neutral with all binary male and female designations eliminated and replaced with gender-inclusive 'Outstanding Performance' categories as applicable" (TAPA, "Announcement"). In June of 2019, Edmonton's Sterling Awards introduced a similar change: "New, gender-neutral categories . . . for Outstanding Performance in a Comedy and Outstanding Performance in a Drama" (Faulder). These adjustments are required if transgendered, gender fluid, genderqueer, and non-binary artists are to be included in the industry's machinations.

Awards, councils, governments, organizations, and grassroots bodies are responding to the EDI predicament and changing their practices. While this is not an entirely new development, it seems that since 2015 and especially from 2017 on, institutions have increased and deepened their actions. Taken together, these are significant markers of change; but do they represent a tipping point? An examination of the industry's recent employment patterns for playwrights, actors, and artistic directors will provide additional evidence.

Within two years, the Canadian theatre landscape shifted considerably with respect to AD gender demographics. There are no current statistics to ascertain the exact balance, but it is hoped this change indicates a new, sustainable trend. Time will tell if women at the helm of Canada's largest theatres spreads change throughout the industry.

SUDDEN MOVEMENT: PRODUCTION MATTERS

In Part One of this series, I provided an overview of PGC's gender-based annual production surveys from 2012/13 through to the 2016/17 season, illustrating that women playwrights accounted for less than 27 percent of the nation's produced playwrights (see Table 2), or if Canadian plays were considered alone, 35 percent of the produced playwrights (see Table 3).[13] Currently, women form 54 percent of PGC's membership, but their production statistics do not reflect that fact.[14] Still, there are recent signs of improvement. Women had a record-breaking year in 2017/18, hitting the 30 percent marker with overall productions, a 4 percent jump from the previous year. This is a historic first, representing the breaking or at least cracking of a glass ceiling. The same phenomenon occurred in relation to Canadian work, as plays by women surpassed 35 percent for the first time, moving up 5 percent from the previous year to 38 percent of the productions (PGC, *Survey 2017/18*).[15] While more gender-balanced programming is promising news, I feared the statistical upswing was an anomaly, as witnessed previously at the provincial level.

PGC's 2018/19 Annual Production Survey indicates that gains made in the previous year held steady; for the second year in a row, plays by women accounted for 30 percent of the overall productions and 38 percent of Canadian-authored shows.[16] It would be informative to know who is benefitting. Is it all women, or primarily able-bodied, heterosexual, economically privileged white ciswomen? PGC does not have the resources to expand its research efforts to track racialization, dis/ability, sexual orientation, and other factors for all produced playwrights each season. One new addition was added in the last two seasons, though: productions written by transgender, non-binary, and/or gender fluid playwrights, which make up less than 0.5 percent of the nation's shows (PGC, *Survey 2017/18* and *Survey 2018/19*). Similar to the changes reflected in awards programs, the industry's research mechanisms must also adapt to EDI concerns.

While there is much to be done in EDI research to fill knowledge gaps related to production figures, we have a clearer snapshot of the industry now with respect to actors, directors, dancers, choreographers, fight directors, and singers/opera performers, thanks to CAEA's Equity Census. The "ground-breaking" results, released in the fall of 2015, reveal the gender composition of CAEA's membership to be 54 percent women, 45 percent men, and less than 1 percent trans or other gender (CAEA, *Equity Census* 4).[17] Once again, the numbers point to inequities: women are in the majority, yet they find themselves disadvantaged, with the average ratio for acting roles being 2:1 for men and women (Burton, "Adding" 24). Not surprisingly, a major finding was women reporting underrepresentation and a lack of opportunities as barriers to employment (CAEA, *Equity Census* 6). Regardless of gender, ageism was also identified as a problem, as 70 percent of members who joined before 1999 believed their age group was not represented in live performance, and 65 percent reported age as an obstacle for work (6).

With respect to racialization, 70 percent of CAEA's members identify as Caucasian/white, while 15 percent have "racially diverse" identities (12 percent people of colour and 3 percent Indigenous) (McQueen 19). Revealing another imbalance, 48 percent of racially diverse members reported feeling underrepresented in live performance, compared to 9 percent of Caucasians/whites. Moreover, 44 percent of racially diverse members and 33 percent of Indigenous members indicated that employers are less likely to perceive them as belonging to the ethno-cultural group with which they identify, compared to 75 percent of white members (CAEA, *Equity Census* 6). Understandably, grassroots groups have formed to combat racialized (under)representation and employment problems, such as Vancouver's Visceral Visions, which in September 2019 launched CultureBrew.Art, "a digital platform that promotes and fosters intersectional interculturalism throughout the performing and media arts sector." The project's centrepiece is a searchable database of Indigenous and racialized artists that will serve as a "tool for building a more inclusive theatre culture that more authentically reflects Canada by promoting Indigenous and racialized artists; increasing hiring opportunities for IARA; and fostering intercultural connection, community, and artistic collaboration."

When it comes to ability, the CAEA survey found that 90 percent of members are able-bodied and 8 percent are D/deaf and/or have a physical or mental disability (2 percent preferred not to say). With respect to sexual orientation, 78 percent of CAEA's members are heterosexual and 16 percent identify with the LGBTQIA2S+ spectrum (4 percent preferred not to say). In total, 34 percent of Equity members identify as "Diverse," which is defined as having one or more of the above traditionally marginalized identities" (McQueen 20).

Aside from supplying demographic information about the industry's workforce, the CAEA study demonstrates the economic impact of marginalization. Average annual incomes were lower for "female members, younger members, D/deaf and/or members with a disability and Racially Diverse members," with the greatest discrepancy occurring between members with disabilities and able-bodied members. D/deaf people and/or members with disabilities, members over 56, and racialized members reported the lowest income rates for individual engagements (CAEA, *Equity Census* 6). Returning to the overarching question of progress, clearly there is still a great deal to be done to ensure equitable representation and compensation. Looking at the survey results, there is no way one can conclude that the industry has changed significantly for the better. Women, people of colour, older people, D/deaf people and/or people with disabilities, and racialized artists feel and are underrepresented, and do not enjoy the same opportunities or incomes.

A final area of examination undertaken here in relation to EDI and employment patterns is that of artistic directors, significant for their influence on programming and hiring practices. Three years ago, in 2016, employment patterns for artistic directors had stagnated, so much so that the phrase "white guy shuffle" surfaced to describe how a number of AD positions were filled by the same white men moving about the country. Responses of indignation were vocal and widespread. Industry insiders bemoaned the status quo and lost opportunities to pluralize and de-homogenize our theatres. Panels emerged, articles were written, hiring practices were questioned, social media posts circulated, and letters were sent by various people and groups.[18]

And then a sudden shift occurred: several women were hired into AD positions, not just at small theatres but at some of the country's most prestigious companies. Eda Holmes was appointed AD at the Centaur Theatre (January 2017), Montreal's largest English language theatre. Ashlie Corcoran took over the Arts Club in Vancouver (February 2018), the largest theatre in Western Canada. Natasha MacLellan became the head of Theatre New Brunswick (July 2018), one of Canada's longest-running regional theatres; Kelley Thornton was appointed the first woman AD of Winnipeg's Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (October 2018), the oldest regional theatre; and Jillian Keiley's contract was extended at the National Arts Centre (February 2019), Canada's flagship theatre. Within two years, the Canadian theatre landscape shifted considerably with respect to AD gender demographics. There are no current statistics to ascertain the exact balance, but it is hoped this change indicates a new, sustainable trend. Time will tell if women at the helm of Canada's largest theatres spreads change throughout the industry.

The women named above are all white, so it seems while some things change, others remain the same. Or do they? The list is shorter, but Weyni Mengesha is now the AD of Soulpepper Theatre (as of October 2018), Audrey Dwyer is associate artistic director at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (March 2019), Marjorie Chan is AD of Theatre Passe Muraille (July 2019), and Tanisha Taitt is running Cahoots Theatre (July 2019). These gains are promising given the potential boost to representation that could trickle down across the discipline.

Also indicative of change—and heeding the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)—is the creation of an Indigenous Theatre section at the National Arts Centre. Despite the failure of Canadian Heritage to fund this historic first (and

the controversy that ensued), the NAC's Indigenous Theatre, spearheaded by Kevin Loring as artistic director (October 2017), successfully launched a multi-disciplinary season in September 2019, opening with a focus on MMIW via Marie Clements's *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*. The birth of a national Indigenous Theatre constitutes a momentous moment in Canadian theatre history: one that acknowledges and incorporates the TRC's call to action, furthering EDI practices in the arts.

Where does all this leave us? It is important to remember that we have a long history of activism. We did not arrive at this juncture by happenstance; people have worked for decades to bring about the current landscape. Often the pace has been slow and painful; but evidence suggests a shift in ethos has occurred, resulting in increased EDI activity since 2015, and especially since 2017. Industry stakeholders are working together, institutions are implementing corrective actions, grassroots initiatives are organizing, and employment patterns are altering. Unequivocally, we are in a different place now than we were a decade ago, and it may well indicate a tipping point. We shifted from interest to action with the demand for greater accountability and targeted initiatives for change, and given the presence of #IdleNoMore, #BlackLivesMatter, and #MeToo, EDI has moved into the mainstream of our arts institutions. The representational logjam is loosening, and we must celebrate each success; but ultimately, given the bottom-line statistical reality, our problems are not solved yet. Still, the potential for change seems more promising than ever, provided we enact continued vigilance, coordinated efforts, and sustained actions to improve EDI in the arts and culture sector—and, by extension, Canadian society at large.

Notes

1. Organizations represented on EIT's Steering Committee included: the Ad Hoc Assembly; Associated Designers of Canada; Canadian Actors' Equity Association; Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario; Indigenous Performance Arts Alliance; Literary Managers and Dramaturges of the Americas–Canada; Pat the Dog Theatre Creation; Playwrights Guild of Canada; Professional Association of Canadian Theatres; and The Deaf, Disability and Mad Arts Alliance of Canada.

2. The 2006 study offered an absolute best-case snapshot of the industry, as proportionately more companies run by women than men completed the surveys used to compile the statistical data (Burton, *Adding* 8).

3. PACT's website states: "Many of our members have made a pledge—to do something to foster equity by implementing change in their own organizations: at the board level, in artistic decisions, in strategic plans, and more." The website lists 109 regular and commercial members ("Our Members—Regular") and 47 affiliates for a total of 156 members (PACT, "Our Members—Affiliates"). That means 9 percent of PACT members committed to the Pledge Project, or 13 percent if regular and commercial members are considered alone. Either way, this is not a very efficacious result, but better than nothing; change must start somewhere.

4. The stated aim is "to develop a national cohort of arts equity facilitators and advocates, who collaborate on increasing the reciprocal participation of equity-seeking artists and companies, the potential for equitable cross-cultural collaboration and the promotion of a truly diverse theatrical landscape" (PACT, "Announcing All In").

5. In Edmonton, Craig Craddock, previous artistic director of Rapid Fire Theatre, was disavowed by the company after his self-confession about "contributing to rape culture" in 2017 (Ahearn). The Citadel issued a public apology in March 2018 for harassment, revealing no names at the time, but more than a year later, Bob Barker, previous artistic director (1999–2016), was expelled from CAEA based on "the findings of a Disciplinary Committee relating to a safe and respectful workplace complaint" (Lederman). In Ontario, aside from the allegations levied at Albert Schultz and Soulpepper Theatre, there was also Antonio Sarmiento, who in September 2019 was charged with seven counts of sexual assault and three counts of sexual exploitation from his time as artistic director at the Capitol Theatre in Port Hope (2013– 2018) ("Breaking").

6. The objectives of the Not in Our Space! initiative are:
   - stopping harassment before it starts
   - educating Equity members and their co-workers about prohibited workspace behaviours, to prevent them from happening in the first place
   - encouraging witnesses as well as subjects to come forward when they experience or observe harassment and bullying (collective responsibility)
   - empowering individuals to act (see the Equity Support Spectrum) through multiple reporting options, including easy access to Equity support networks
   - providing resources and assistance for situations where problems do occur (Not in Our Space!)

7. Cases include the resignations of George Randolph at the Randolph Academy and Todd Hammond at George Brown College, both in Toronto, and the sexual assault conviction of vocal coach Jose Hernandez in St. John's.

8. As GYB noted in its literature:
   Acting education in Canada has evolved; there are now over 45 performance training programs and many independent coaches who teach. Without a national dialogue or association for acting educators, there are few professional development opportunities to update/upgrade teaching skills related to the specific needs of training performers. The majority of performance teachers in Canada are either private coaches or part-time/sessional/guest artists within large institutions and many feel left out of the conversation about acting training in Canada. In the wake of #MeToo and #TimesUp, it's time to come together and speak about our challenges. Got Your Back has recognized a void in this communication and is trying to bridge the gap through a curated selection of panels, workshops, long table discussions, and networking events…Together, we can continue to evolve acting training to be more diverse, inclusive and safer for the next generation of artists. (GYB, "Acting")

9. CHRC and Canadian Heritage are rolling out Phase Two of the campaign currently. It is "a first for any industry in the country: Trained facilitators (12 Anglophone and 6 Francophone) are available to present a three-hour workshop based on the principles of the Respectful Workplaces in the Arts program. The workshops are being offered free of charge between September 2019 and March 2020" (PACT, "Maintaining Respectful Workplaces").

10. See the Canada Council for the Arts' "Equity Policy" for more information.

11. Instances of cultural insensitivity and appropriation include: the use of blackface at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert in November 2014; the commandeering of slave songs by Betty Bonifassi and Robert LePage with *SLĀV* for the Montreal Jazz Festival in 2018; and LePage's *Kanata*, about relations between Canada's Indigenous peoples and colonial settlers but which did not involve Indigenous people, prompting protests and cries of *nihil de nobis, sine nobis* (nothing about us without us). Artists in the community, such as Rahul Varma, Artistic Director of Montreal's Teesri Duniya Theatre, finds these actions indicative of colonial and racist perspectives linked to identity and funding:

    > These repeat occurrences of cultural appropriation are undeniably intertwined within the cultural politics of Quebec, which dismisses egalitarian multiculturalism in favor of a Quebec brand of interculturalism. At its core, it demands acclimatization of marginalized cultures to the taste of dominant culture, which includes reformation of identity, values, and ideologies. Interculturalism without equality is assimilation, which is made possible by disproportionate (inferior) access to resources afforded to artists of color throughout the country. Cultural appropriation is an inevitable outcome of systematic racism which still exists. ("Featured Member")

    The Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ) has been accused of such racism, as in 2017, given the disproportionate cutting and freezing of funds for racialized arts organizations in Montreal ("Minority Arts").

12. Vancouver's Fringe has "committed to making equity, diversity, and inclusion a priority," and to this end, the Fringe conducted an EDI audit (completed in January 2018); hired an equity, diversity and inclusion director; and implemented a new EDI program responsible for the Fringe Forward Award ("Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion").

13. The accounting included theatres (but not festivals) of all shapes, sizes, and geographic regions. The sample sizes for the various seasons were as follows: for 2012/13, 177 companies that produced a total of 646 shows; in 2013/14, 183 companies, which presented 812 productions; in 2014/15, 219 companies that staged 668 works; in 2015/16, 220 theatres producing 769 shows; in 2016/17, 246 companies that delivered 804 productions; in 2017/18, 294 theatres, which staged 961 shows; and in 2018/19, 258 companies presenting 1002 productions (PGC, *Surveys 2012/13–2018/19*).

14. As of September 2019, the gender breakdown of PGC's membership was 44.2 percent men, 54.2 percent women, 0.9 percent non-binary, 0.4 percent trans, and 0.3 percent unknown (PGC, "September Report").

15. Another departure from previous years is that the 5 percent increase in women's work is directly related to a 5 percent decrease in work by men, whereas in the previous five seasons, any gains women made were reflected in decreases in productions by mixed gender partnerships (PGC, *Survey 2017/18*).

16. The figures for men fell 4 percent for all play productions and 5 percent for Canadian authored work, being redistributed into mixed-gender partnerships (PGC, *Survey, 2018/19*).

17. A total of 3,156 surveys, representing 56 percent of CAEA's membership, were completed by regular and life members in good standing between April 24 and May 25, 2015 (McQueen 18).

18. To cite an example, during the Next Stage Theatre Festival in January 2017, the Toronto Fringe partnered with Generator on an Urgent Exchange community conversation called "The White Guy Shuffle—Changing Hiring Practices in Canadian Theatre" ("Event").

Works Cited

Ahearn, Victoria. "Chris Craddock, Canadian Playwright, Apologizes after Admitting he Touched Women without Permission." *Global News*, 20 October 2017. https://globalnews.ca/news/3817135/chris-craddock/.

Arts Nova Scotia. "Policies and Reports." Arts Nova Scotia website, 2019. https://artsns.ca/about/policies-and-reports.

"Breaking News—Cobourg's Artistic and Creative Consultant Facing Several Criminal Charges." *Today's Northumberland* website, 2018. https://www.todaysnorthumberland.ca/2019/09/12/breaking-news-cobourgs-artistic-and-creative-consultant-facing-several-criminal-charges/?fbclid=IwAR1YSuGOwESrFnPXR2B_SkGoWvbelpM9INMthhqfWSSs7bvNO18UoNyOVr0.

British Columbia Arts Council. "Priorities." British Columbia Arts Council website, 2019. https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/priorities/.

Burton, Rebecca. *Adding It Up: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre—A Report on the Phase One Findings of Equity in Canadian Theatre: The Women's Initiative*. 2006.

———. "Adding It Up: (En)Gendering (and Racializing) Canadian Theatre." *alt.theatre: Cultural Diversity and the Stage* 5:1 (2007), 7.

Canada Council for the Arts. *Equity Policy*. CCA, April 2017.

Canadian Actor' Equity Association. "Not in Our Space!" CAEA website, https://www.caea.com/Features/Not-In-Our-Space.

———. *The Equity Census: Staging the Future—Executive Summary*. 9 November 2015. https://www.caea.com/Portals/0/Documents/Features/Equity%20Census/EquityCensusRPT-ExecSummary.pdf.

Conseil des arts de Montréal. "4 Strategic Priorities from Now to 2020." CAM, 2017. https://www.artsmontreal.org/media/docs/CAM_orientations_EN.pdf.

Cultural Human Resources Council. https://www.culturalhrc.ca/.

"CultureBrew.Art." Visceral Visions, 2019. https://culturebrew.art/.

"DAM Presents Proposals for Cultural Equity." Conseil des arts de Montréal, 31 May 2019.

"Equity Diversity, and Inclusion at the Fringe." Vancouver Fringe Festival website. http://www.vancouverfringe.com/edi/.

"Event: #UrgentExchange—The White Guy Shuffle—Changing Hiring Practices in Canadian Theatre, Toronto Fringe & Generator." Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts website. https://tapa.ca/event-urgentexchange-the-white-guy-shuffle-changing-hiring-practices-in-canadian-theatre-toronto-fringe-generator/.

"Everybody Counts." *Equity Quarterly* (Spring 2015): 13–16.

Faulder, Lian. "Sterling Awards Launch New Format for 2018-19 Theatre Nominations." *Edmonton Journal*, 4 June 2019. https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/theatre/sterling-awards-launch-new-format-for-2018-19-theatre-nominations.

"Featured Member—Rahul Varma." *Medium*, 16 July 2018. https://medium.com/@pgc/featured-member-rahul-varma-dfe198a9d6cf.

Fraticelli, Rena. *The Status of Women in the Canadian Theatre: A Report Prepared for the Status of Women Canada*. June 1982. Unpublished.

Got Your Back. "Acting Educators Conference." https://gotyourbackcanada.com/2019/05/07/acting-training-conference/.

———. "Connect." https://gotyourbackcanada.com/2019/05/07/contact-us/.

Jessies. "Special Awards." The Jessie Awards. https://www.jessieawards.com/special-awards.

Lederman, Marsha. "Bob Baker Ousted from Canadian Actors' Equity Association." *Globe and Mail*, 14 September 2019. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/article-bob-baker-ousted-from-canadian-actors-equity-association/.

Lushington, Kate. "Notes towards the Diagnosis of a Curable Malaise—Fear of Feminism." *Canadian Theatre Review* 43 (Summer 1985): 5–11.

MacArthur, Michelle. *Achieving Equity in Canadian Theatre: A Report with Best Practice Recommendations*. Equity in Theatre, April 2015. www.equityintheatre.com/achieving-equity-canadian-theatre.

McQueen, Lynn. "The Equity Census: Our Ground-breaking Demographic Survey." *Equity Quarterly* (Fall 2015): 18–20.

"Minister Rodriguez Announces Reappointment of Director of Canada Council for the Arts." *Cision* (News provided by Canadian Heritage), 4 March 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/minister-rodriguez-announces-reappointment-of-director-of-canada-council-for-the-arts-825376363.html.

"Minority Arts Organizations Denounce Systemic Racism in Quebec Cultural Funding." Centre for Research Action on Race Relations. http://www.crarr.org/?q=node/19920.

Montreal English Theatre Awards. "Honorary Awards." META website, 2017. http://metas.ca/awards/honorary-awards/

"Not in Our Space!" CAEA website. https://www.caea.com/Features/Not-In-Our-Space.

"Not in Our Space! Campaign." *Equity Quarterly* (Spring/Summer 2017): 6–9.

Ontario Arts Council. "Equity Plan." OAC website https://www.arts.on.ca/access-equity/equity-plan.

"Our Mandate." *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. http://www.trc.ca/about-us/our-mandate.html.

Professional Association of Canadian Theatres. "Announcing All In: A National Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative for Canada's Theatre Sector." PACT, 26 September 2016. https://pact.ca/announcing-all-in-a-national-equity-diversity-inclusion-initiative-for-canadas-theatre-sector/.

———. "Maintaining Respectful Workplaces." *PACT News*, 11 September 2019.

———. "Our Members—Affiliates." PACT website. https://pact.ca/community-networks/our-members/#1487367424467-eecb283e-d1ad.

———. "Our Members—Regular and Commercial Members." PACT website. https://pact.ca/community-networks/our-members/#1487367424467-eecb283e-d1ad.

———. "Pledge Project." PACT website. https://pact.ca/initiatives/pledge-project/

Playwrights Guild of Canada. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2012/13*. http://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2012_13-Theatre-Survey-Charts.pdf.

———. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2013/14*. http://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PGC-Theatre-Survey-2013-2014-Handout-1.pdf.

———. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2014/15*. https://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PGC-Annual-Theatre-Production-Survey-2014-15.pdf.

———. PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, *2015/16*. https://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PGC-Annual-Theatre-Production-Survey-2015-16.pdf.

———. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2016/17*. http://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PGC-Annual-Theatre-Production-Survey-2016-17-FINAL.pdf.

———. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2017/18*. http://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PGC-Annual-Theatre-Production-Survey-2017-18.pdf.

———. *PGC Annual Theatre Production Survey, 2018/19*. http://playwrightsguild.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/PGC-Annual-Theatre-Production-Survey-2018-19.pdf.

———. "September 2019 Membership Report." Internal document.

Toronto Alliance of Performing Arts. "Announcement: Gender-Neutral Performance Awards for 40th Anniversary, Dora Mavor Moore Awards." TAPA, 2019. https://tapa.ca/announcement-gender-neutral-performance-awards-40th-anniversary-dora-mavor-moore-awards/.

Toronto Arts Council. "Equity and Access." TAC website. https://torontoartscouncil.org/about-us/equity-and-access.

———. "Toronto Arts Council Equity Framework." TAC website. https://torontoartscouncil.org/reports-and-resources/toronto-arts-council-equity-framework.

Vancouver Fringe. "Fringe Awards Night." Vancouver Fringe Festival 2019 website. http://www.vancouverfringe.com/fringe-awards-night/#Forward.

PACTCon 2019 Keynote by Marcus Youssef:

A Work in Progress

Last May, the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) held its annual conference in Saskatoon. Jointly hosted by Saskatoon-based Persephone Theatre and Dancing Sky Theatre in nearby Meacham, the conference theme was "A Work in Progress."

The keynote speech was given by Marcus Youssef, playwright and senior artist of Vancouver's Neworld Theatre, where he was artistic director from 2005 until September 2019. *alt.theatre*'s editor-in-chief Aaron Franks attended the conference and was fortunate to get a chance to speak with Marcus immediately after the speech. We are even more fortunate that Marcus graciously agreed to allow *alt.theatre* to feature his words here in issue 15.3.

What follows is a lightly edited transcription of Marcus' speech to the assembled ADs, administrators, tech directors, publicists, board members and myriad others who came to PACT to share ideas, learn, debate, and take stock of the "work in progress" that is Canadian professional theatre. As you'll see, a wickedly sticky part of this "work in progress" was (and, at the time of publication, to my knowledge still is) the Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) negotiations between PACT and the Canadian Actors Equity Association (CAEA). Whatever happens with the CTA, Marcus Youssef's views on the complex political economy of professional Canadian theatre in 2019 are a provocative snapshot of institutions reacting to cultural change.

Morning. 9:15 a.m., best time for a keynote. Good thing everybody was in bed by 10 p.m. Sorry, just before I start, are there some kind of negotiations going on?

I'm a little nervous. Just about a year ago Kevin Loring stood up in Ottawa and spoke beautifully to the theme of last year's conference, which was "The Future of Storytelling." As most of us remember pretty well, it was an extraordinary speech, about the precise cultural moment we are in, a moment that Kevin and Lori Marchand put themselves so profoundly in service to as stewards of the National Arts Centre Indigenous Theatre Department.[1]

Kevin's speech—"The Future of Storytelling Is Indigenous"—was, as I know most of you already know, a reminder of how complex this current moment is. It was a deeply inspiring call to action and a nuanced vision of how each of us might stand in the centre of the multiple histories that we all occupy, often through no desire of our own, and, through the work we all do, try imagine a future that is at least somewhat a little bit richer, fuller, more just, and better.

But while I have the platform…I think the Heritage Canada folks are here today. Welcome! It sure sucks that Kevin and Lori didn't get their Heritage funding. To be clear, this is me talking, not them. But honestly, what is up? I mean, can you get the minister to read Kevin's speech? Seriously. It might make a difference. And now I stop harassing you.

And so, as folks have been told numerous times, this year's theme is… "A Work in Progress." After I got the call asking me to do this keynote, it actually took another four or five days for me to fully understand that "work in progress" wasn't just a way of saying "Theme TBA" on the website.

Beware any conference with the theme "A Work in Progress"—or, embrace it. Because that is kind of what we always do, right?

Marcus Youssef delivers his keynote speech.
Photo by Mirette Shoeir.

Embracing things is what I believe all of us in this room do best. And what I would further argue we in our profession may actually have to offer the wider world: our ability, willingness, and the professional necessity for us to embrace what occurs. It is the heart of our art form. It is, for me, the primary definition of "play."

So, for real, "A Work in Progress."

This conference, as we have already heard and will hopefully continue to hear, takes place on Treaty Six territory, which I did not know until I looked it up on the internet three days ago.

It is also not long after the prime minister of this country more or less fired its first ever Indigenous Minister of Justice, Jody Wilson-Raybould, despite the fact that he made reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples, along with electoral reform, a central component of his government's mandate.

Indigenous reconciliation: a work in progress.

In my view the whole Liberal government debacle/meltdown happened in part because that first-ever Indigenous Minister of Justice refused to do something that has more or less been considered business as usual: find a quiet way to help a big Canadian corporation avoid prosecution for bribing a murderous dictator in a region of the world my family is from, where Western governments and corporations have been bribing murderous dictators in exchange for their resources for a very long time indeed.

And I get it's politics and for sure Jody Wilson-Raybould knows the game, but even from an optics perspective, it's almost as if the Prime Minister and his people didn't realize that if you invite folks who belong to groups who have been systematically excluded from the circles of majority power, they might actually try to change how things get done. It could almost make you—or I should say it did make me—suspicious that the Prime Minister's much vaunted dedication to reconciliation (not to mention feminism) might be as much about electability and image as it is about ethics and conviction.

And if the Liberal party loses the next election and the Conservatives win and then implement some of the more regressive social policies that I think many of us fear they might, I'll be very curious to see what happens to the powerful surge of attention all of us in this room have paid to the idea of reconciliation over the last, honestly, not very many years.

Because if there's one thing I've learned over the fifteen years I've been running a small, somewhat political indie-producing company called Neworld Theatre, it's that systemic change is always a work in progress. And that we, all of us, are far more dependent on the winds blowing from those who control levels of power—i.e. where we get our money—than we, or I, ever really want to admit.

I believe the real test of our commitment to whatever it is that reconciliation might become in our sector will be when the government of the day is not using it in part as a relatively painless way to occupy the moral high ground and consolidate the progressive vote. It will come when the government of the day drops reconciliation as part of its political agenda. It will come when the National Arts Centre Indigenous Theatre Department is denied funding for the second year in a row, by a government that has staked their moral and ethical claim to power on that very same reconciliation.

Oh, hang on. That just happened. Sorry. "A Work in Progress" is the best theme! I just say whatever I want to say and it's all good.

You know what, I actually want to go back. I kind of want to start again.

One of the great personal benefits I have received from our sector's recent attention to reconciliation and the ideas and agendas of our Indigenous colleagues is learning to speak about how each of us is fundamentally always a work in progress. I have learned that I really like, especially in formal contexts, when we introduce ourselves not just with our job titles, but with a bit of the story about where and who we come from, how we all find ourselves in this place, at this moment.

Vancouver-based Indigenous playwright Kim Harvey, who made a kick-ass, hilarious first play called *Kamloopa* that played here at Persephone this season, tells me that scholar and theatre-maker Lindsey Lachance calls this *presencing* yourself. As opposed to presenting. Sharing how the stories of your ancestors and you collide.

So, while I unquestionably speak to you now as a playwright and artistic director, I also speak to you as a mixed-race son of an Egyptian immigrant father and middle-class American mother, someone who grew up across suburban North American long before mixed-race was recognized as an actual thing.

I speak to you as one of globalization's beneficiaries. Without globalization and its good pal capitalism, my father never would have gotten a foreign exchange scholarship to Berkeley and boarded that jet plane that, over the course of two days in 1960, flew him around the world to a brand-new life in an utterly foreign culture. This is something that would have been close to unimaginable for human beings to do just twenty or thirty years previous.

I speak to you as someone who met half his family, the Egyptian half, for the first time six years ago, at the age of 43, when I first travelled to my father's home. Speaking of ancestors.

I speak to you as someone who inherited a lot of his creativity, sense of humour, and commitment to shit-disturbing from his iconoclastic, rebellious, deeply unhappy mother. Who my partner Amanda and I cared for through 15 years of her early onset Alzheimer's', while we raised our own young children and I tried to build a career as an artist.

These glimpses of my and my family's stories hopefully give you a clearer idea of, not who I am, but where I've come from. They are stories that I bet, though unique for sure, are also probably not really that much different than the stories each of you brings with you into this room. Because I think it is undeniable that all of us, very much including those Equity staff members we've been bargaining with, are all works in progress; the product of rich, complicated, absurd, tragic, joyful, and conflicting histories that do and don't make sense to us. This is something I always try to remember, particularly when I'm writing, and particularly when I find myself in the midst of conflict.

Our histories are important, because, inevitably, they will collide with other people's very different stories and histories. I think that's

worth thinking about in relationship to the big ol' shit-storm that is the current attempt to renegotiate the CTA (Canadian Theatre Agreement). It's a work in progress much like, I'd argue, the theatre ecology in this country, which might be in the midst of as much change as it ever has been since the original decision by government through the Canada Council to fund an officially sanctioned theatre culture in this country more than half a century ago.

The theatre institutions that were set up fifty or so years ago were mandated to serve communities that tended, like most majority groups of human beings, to be largely unaware that the shows they were making (or, to put it differently, the *performance rituals* that they enacted), and the values and organizational structures that defined them were not, in fact, universal. They were specific. They were not inevitable, but constructed—the products of a particular time and place. They were not natural or the norm, but simply an expression of culture; an entirely legitimate culture, but a single one; like any culture, one among many.

And lest anyone think that I'm now going to starting taking a big dump—wow, I can't believe I wrote that—on poor old William Shakespeare and big musicals and the hundreds of thousands of majority white Canadian theatre-goers who love our Shakespeare festivals and *The Sound of Music* at Christmas, let me assure you I am not. I went to high school in London, England. I became a theatre artist because of the years I spent at the Stratford Youth Festival doing workshops with hundreds of other young people, led by Kenneth Branagh, and Cicely Barry and Trevor Nunn. I'm writing a Christmas musical right now, for the Arts Club. In fact, I'm actually writing two Christmas musicals. I'm no dummy. I love them both. Unreservedly. And 90 to 95 percent of the thirty to forty thousand people who will see those musicals will be white.

But it's also kind of weird how I always get sweaty and a bit nervous when I use the word white in the presence of a group of white people, in a way that I don't feel nervous when I say Asian or black or brown when speaking to a group of folks who identify that way. If anybody can explain why that is, I'm around until Friday morning. Because white is a thing, right? It exists. It's not bad, not at all. In fact, as those who know me know, and as someone who grew up as the only brown kid for miles, I'm very into white people. Like so into them. I'm just saying let's not be afraid to say the word.

It's like if I tell you, "I was sent to elite private schools in the UK and didn't have to go into debt for university." Or, "My successful, businessman father helped us buy a house in Vancouver. In 2005." Those are not my only identities. But they're real. And they matter.

And things are changing. PACT has for a while now been led by theatre-makers who learned our trade outside of those older, originally mandated institutions with majority white audiences. As everyone is very aware, its current president, Nina, is a Filipino Canadian. Its vice president, Mike Payette, is black. Ish. Just kidding, Mike! See, I can do that. Oh, the jokes we brown people get to make! With no fear of retribution! Or maybe not no fear. Anyway…it's a perk.

But it matters. Because I think the CTA negotiations taking place, and my hope that we will radically rethink the rules which govern how we make theatre in this country, are a work in progress that is attempting to reflect many of the profound changes that have been taking place not in our sector, but in our society, over the last generation. When I was kid in the 1970s, mixed-race was not understood to be an actual thing. In the 1970s, the idea of reconciliation was forty years from entering public consciousness. In the 1970s, the idea of a person in a wheelchair onstage was unimaginable.

So, it's about time. And it's really hard work. And again, in recognition of that hard work, I ask for another round of applause for all of our extraordinary friends on the PACT negotiating team. Plus, a round for all the folks doing them on behalf of Equity. Please. We're all people. Inside of institutional structures, yes. But surely the people part is what actually matters.

I believe the negotiation process might be so challenging in part because the rituals and protocols that define the process you all have been busting your butts on for the last three years comes to us directly from the history of industrial relations. It is a model born out of the brutal exploitation of factory workers in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent organization of those workers into collective bargaining units. This was an act of underclass solidarity that in North America was first treated as a criminal act, met by governments and state security forces with brutal violence and repression, and, since the 1980s, a concerted, neo-liberal project to marginalize organized labour out of existence.

It is thinking about this history that helps me understand why, when I open the Canadian Theatre Agreement, I feel like I'm reading a list of every single shitty thing that's happened in Canadian theatre for the last forty years. It's like a shitty thing happens somewhere and there's twenty-six emails and seven committee meetings and a clause is added that is basically a translation of whatever real transgression took place into legalese in an attempt to guarantee that this single shitty thing that happened one time in one place is never repeated by thousands of other people, many of whom know each other very well and have absolutely no relationship to that single shitty thing whatsoever.

It's a history that helps me understand why at the Magnetic North Festival about ten years ago I was asked to attend a meeting with Equity folks in which the agreed-on protocol was "impunity". I.e. we could tell the truth about the ways in which we had done end-arounds on the agreement that we felt were unavoidable, given CTA and ITA protocols that were so labour intensive that it was patently unreasonable to ask any artist or organization that isn't structured like a corporation to comply with them.

Kim Harvey says: it's when one bad practice is universalized and turned into bad policy. It is when the specific and individual is assumed to be universal.

The meeting at Mag North was a good thing, a helpful step, a sign of flexible, responsive leadership, and I was grateful for the opportunity. But we had to create a one-time only special protocol in order to be honest. Not a good sign.

A not-good sign of a system born out of pain, struggle, and fear. A model that assumes that exploitation is the fundamental value in our relationships to each other. It is also cultural. It is a model that emerges from a history and culture that is singular, not universal; constructed not inevitable; one among many, not the norm.

And so, a new generation of artists and theatre-makers comes along, artists and theatre-makers from different cultures, generations, and aesthetics. Artists who work with non-

Beware any conference with the theme "A Work in Progress"—or, embrace it. Because that is kind of what we always do, right? Embracing things is what I believe all of us in this room do best. And what I would further argue we in our profession may actually have to offer the wider world: our ability, willingness, and the professional necessity for us to embrace what occurs.

professionals. BIPOC artists. Artists whose work is part performance, part activism. Artists with disabilities. And artists whose work sometimes but not always centres the lives and experiences of those with histories and experiences often but not always at the lower end of hierarchies of power and access. A range of histories and experiences that also more accurately reflect the multiple cultures that populate the country we live in.

Many in this new generation are people whose histories and experiences have limited connection to—but certainly don't negate—those of regional theatre managing directors and props makers, or, for that matter, the workers of the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919. But the model they are asked to work within sometimes suggests, not deliberately, but implicitly, that the way they like to make work either threatens the livelihoods of their fellow, more traditional artists, or is somehow inherently exploitive of the very marginalized voices, stories and people their work is designed to amplify and empower.

This was the AdHoc Assembly's[2] response to a request that they "enumerate clause-based concerns" with the proposed agreement in-progress. "While we appreciate that clause-based specificity is more tangible, the labour of enumerating them has, thus far, not borne fruit. We do not believe the answer lies in adding more clauses to a document that is already 200+ pages. We believe that the necessary shift is better located in the agreement's underlying philosophy."

The necessary shift is better located in the agreement's underlying philosophy.

Before I realized that work in progress was the actual theme for this conference, I came up with a very long title for this keynote: "I think it's Probably Good that Everyone's So Pissed off or Freaked Out but Are We Really Sure This Is the House We Want the Keys To?"

As someone who runs an organization, I also know how fucking irritating the "burn down the house" argument is. I actually don't think, or I think I don't think, that the house should be burnt down. All these histories are real, on all sides, and they're the house we are inside, whether we like it or not, and the circumstances of my

PACTCon 2019 closing dinner at Remai Mode.
Photo by Mirette Shoeir.

life have meant that I am often straddling multiple, contradictory histories, feeling like I'm neither one nor the other, that I'm both inside and outside—it's the mixed-race experience that's now an actual thing. It's a very work-in-progress place to be, both precarious and full of possibility, like all good art making.

A couple of years ago Kevin Loring and I were on a retreat for BC artists of colour at Harrison Hot Springs (I'm just going to keep saying Kevin's name over and over again, and I'll be fine). In what was I think our first lengthy conversation with each other, we smoked a joint by Harrison Lake and talked about family. He tried to explain to me what it meant to come from a single place, one spot that your ancestors have been for hundreds or thousands of years. And I tried to explain to him what it meant to have grown up moving every eighteen months, be the son of father whose culture is completely different than the one you were raised in, and having only met your family for the first time when you were 43 years old.

Very different histories colliding. There was no conflict or labour negotiation in that talk. Just a joint and, later, a performance by Kevin, of something I think he called Indigenous Agency. It was one of the funniest things I have ever seen in my life. But I was also very high.

The necessary shift is better located in the underlying philosophy.

It's the easiest thing to forget, when you're overworked and underpaid, when you've devoted endless hours to an underappreciated, undercompensated labour of love, as almost everyone in this room does or has. It is so easy to forget that it is not about the remittance or whether the grant went in or what somebody said about what somebody else said. The only thing that gives us any real perspective or agency in the maelstrom of details and unpredictability and emails coming at us 24/7, whether we're in a board room or a rehearsal hall, is the *underlying philosophy*.

I think it is currently our most important, maybe our only truly important, work in progress. And the good news is, this shift in underlying philosophy is already happening, in so many places. I only know about a few of them.

In the 1990s in Vancouver, a bunch of us were part of starting companies: Boca del Lupo, Conspiracy, Urban Ink, Electric Company, Neworld, Ruby Slippers, to some extent Pi and Rumble, who were a bit older. We did so because there was no room for us. Things were pretty quiet in Vancouver and the bigger organizations felt impenetrable, maybe like they do to all young artists. But they didn't just feel impenetrable, they felt like secrets. Like the folks running them at the time wouldn't tell us—or maybe just me—how things actually worked. They played their cards very close to their chests. They behaved like corporations, polite on the outside but also like they had control over resources they were afraid someone would take away from them if they were transparent about how they got them, and what their underlying philosophy was.

As our little companies grew, we started choosing to spend more and more time together. Led by Kim Collier and inspired

Because I think the CTA negotiations taking place, and my hope that we will radically rethink the rules which govern how we make theatre in this country, are a work in progress that is attempting to reflect many of the profound changes that have been taking place not in our sector, but in our society, over the last generation.

PACTCon 2019 opening night reception.
Photo by Mirette Shoeir.

by Blake Brooker and One Yellow Rabbit (with apologies to those who've heard this a million times), we formed a loose network of a dozen or so artist-run companies called Progress Lab, who met regularly for drinks and conversations. What I experienced in this group of like-minded artists was that my feelings of loneliness and isolation lessened and my confidence in what might be possible for me and all of us grew.

We started making things together and organizing, and driving it all was a conscious decision to change our underlying philosophy. In the fraught environment of a bunch of independent artists who'd barely kept it going into their early-mid thirties, we made an explicit decision to treat each other not as competitors, but as collaborators. When one of us got a gig in Timbuktu, or something great happened to Jonathon Young (again!), we chose to take a deep breath and forgive ourselves for feeling jealous (because jealousy is a normal human emotion) and trust that something good happening to them would in some way or another be good the rest of us.

Because we were an invisible, little not-yet scene on the far-flung edge of continent thousands of miles from Toronto in a small city whose identity wasn't and will never be defined by its theatre. What was the option? To try to eat each other alive?

In my view, this shift in underlying philosophy led to one of our little scene's most significant contributions to the sector as a whole: concrete evidence of the benefits of transparency and collaboration. It also led to growth and success. Not evenly shared of course, but as a whole.

Which also makes me think of those larger institutions that felt so impenetrable to us twenty-five or thirty years ago, institutions that are only now seeing a generational change in leadership. How many new artistic directors of larger theatre institutions have there been over the last few years? On behalf of Gen-X, thanks a lot Baby Boomers. Oh, well. Guess it's the Millennials' turn! No, please, go right ahead!

The potential impact of this generational change in our larger institutions first became clear to me last year, when I received an invitation from the very same playwright and producer Kim Harvey, to come down to the BMO Theatre Centre at 8:30 a.m. on a weekday morning. I and others were to be "community witnesses" to a treaty Kim was going to sign, supported by her Indigenous treaty signatory witness Lori Marchand, with Ashlie Corcoran and Peter Cathie-White from the Arts Club and Daryl Cloran and maybe someone else from the Citadel.

The Citadel and Arts Club had commissioned a new work from Kim and, to formalize this commission, Kim had negotiated the signing of a treaty, instead of a PGC contract. I know at least some of you know Kim and her ferocious writing, and her equally ferocious commitment to remaking and Indigenizing the protocols and processes by which we make our work.

It was a hell of a morning. Musqueam actor/writer Quelemia Sparrow began with a welcome to the forty or so of us from the theatre community who had gathered to be witnesses. She then began to speak in absolutely direct, unqualified terms—without I might add, being blamey or mean at all—about the long history of exclusion that she and other Indigenous artists had experienced at both the Citadel and Arts Club.

I could not believe these things were being said publicly, in the Arts Club itself, in the presence of the Arts Club leadership. I was emotional and moved. I also felt jealous. Kim's thirty years old. She had the guts to take something I've talked about doing for decades—shifting the underlying philosophy, speaking publicly and directly about some of the challenges we've experienced dealing with our larger, historically mandated institutions—and actually did it.

It's amazing how powerful that jealousy thing can be. I've gotten a lot of validation over the last few years. As much or more than any one person in this business should reasonably expect, given how constrained things are. And yet, there I was, feeling it about someone I love.

So, I took a breath. And told myself, what's good for one of us, is going to be good for all of us. And it was incredible to me, how it turned a bureaucratic business ritual—signing a contract—into a what we do. A piece of theatre. A ritual, a kind of community performance. Equally important is the role Ashlie, Peter, and Daryl played in that ritual. They were consciously and generously choosing to be present and presence the experiences of those who are critical of that institution and its history.

It's happening a lot of places now, as generational transition takes place, as the leadership of our larger organizations is being assumed by folks who learned their trade outside of cultures of large institutions, in a milieu that was perhaps slightly more aware that the way one set of people does things is never universal, but specific; not inevitable, but constructed; not the norm, but simply one way.

For me, Ashlie and Peter and Daryl were modelling a way to lead a historically determined structure without feeling forced to take personal responsibility for every single shitty thing that has happened there, or every resentment, whether justified or not, that people in their communities might have. By not taking it personally and feeling like they needed to protect or defend, they were making it more likely for those who have come from

different histories and experiences to feel like it might be possible for them to have some agency within those institutions as well.

I think it's exactly what's happening right now, with the CTA. But I don't believe it's only Equity staff who bear responsibility for getting the CTA some of us, including me, are very much hoping for. I think we bear an equal number of very important responsibilities. Because if we want to move to a more collaborative, more responsive, more generous system—one that allows us all to be more human in our work—then I believe it is also our responsibility to do exactly that: to be more human.

To not hide behind rules and regulations and minimum fees; to provide supportive work environments that might make it easier for employees and contractees to have children and be good parents; to listen to artists when they say what they think they need in terms of process; to always presence and prioritize the human needs of the artists and technicians and administrators we hire.

If we want to convince a not-quite-union run by folks steeped in the culture of adversarial labour relations that another way of doing things is possible, then we who control the dollars and the work hours and the work-life balance of those we hire must attempt to make generosity, flexibility, and transparency the engine of everything we do.

What some of us on the smaller end of the sector have learned over the years is that however small the resource we control is, it's always more than that of most of the individual artists contractees we work with. And so, whatever our revenue pressures, it is critical that we shift the underlying philosophy and not behave like profit-driven corporations, with secrets, like Smaug guarding his pile of treasure underneath Lonely Mountain (yeah, that's maybe a bit much. I wrote that quite late).

The benefit? The sum total of all the work we make is much more likely to reflect the actual society we live in, which, if you're in a big city, is barely majority white and definitely includes folks with disabilities and Indigenous people, too. I'm not saying we should stop doing musicals and Shakespeare and working with TRG Arts (an arts-based consultant that focuses on goodies like "Loyalty Planning" and "Demand Management and Revenue Sprints"—although actually I do think we should seriously stop the spread of demand-based pricing…it fundamentally sucks). I am saying we all need to figure out a way to enable and prioritize the other work as well. If we have the courage do so in a way that is both ethically *and* fiscally responsible, my experience tells me that the whole thing will get better, and we as a sector will, in fact, gain influence and grow.

Another, more granular action I think we might be able take is something I just heard about yesterday. Kevin told me that one of the few areas of current agreement with Equity is around community engagement protocols. Kevin and Savage Society General Manager Chelsea McPeake wrote those protocols. Their protocols became, as I understand it, the basis for the agreement about how we can work with non-professionals, one of the most interesting and exciting aesthetic developments in our form over the last generation. A guide—I'd imagine—based on how they work with people in Kevin's ancestral community.

The only thing that gives us any real perspective or agency in the maelstrom of details and unpredictability and emails coming at us 24/7, whether we're in a board room or a rehearsal hall, is the *underlying philosophy*.

It's how good policy is written: people who know about something write plainly and clearly about how they do it. And there's no way that the good folks at Equity could ever be expected to know how to do what Kevin and Chelsea did. And the thing is, if we don't end up getting an agreement, we're going to have to do it anyway.

Either way, I feel absolutely confident that we're going to shift the underlying philosophy. Because, it's already happened. Right now, I think a lot what we're actually doing is figuring out how to help our administrative systems catch up.

Not a super rousing finish, but it's what I got. Always end with administrative systems! Work in progress. Thanks so much everybody.

Notes:

1. Kevin Loring and Lori Marchand are, respectively, the first artistic director and managing director of the National Arts Centre Indigenous Theatre Department.
2. In their words, the Ad-Hoc Assembly is a national arts advocacy collective dedicated to the sustained forward movement of the ethno-cultural and socially diverse performance works, processes, and traditions. It convenes gatherings, investigates gaps, and amplifies voices formerly marginalized by systemic inequity.

Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition

BY ZOË HEYN-JONES

Photo by Katherine Cheng.

Today is, as I write this, an international day of action in support of the ongoing barricade against OceanaGold's mining operations at its Didipio copper-gold mine in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. The company's twenty-five-year permit lapsed in June 2019, although they did not cease operations until faced with a blockade by local communities. The peoples' blockade began on July 1, 2019, and continues, with allies around the world standing in solidarity.[1]

On July 30, 2019, Tahoe Resources took formal responsibility for 2013 human rights violations at their Escobal silver mine in southeastern Guatemala in a precedent-setting case heard by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The plaintiffs—members of the peaceful resistance—are celebrating the fact that a Canadian parent company has been held responsible in the Canadian courts. But they remain vigilant, as the conflict on the ground is far from over.[2]

These are only a couple of instances of the violence that extractivism inflicts on lands and bodies—and the resistance, embodied and otherwise, that counters this violence. Macarena Gómez-Barris defines extractivism as "an economic system that engages in thefts, borrowings, and forced removals, violently reorganizing social life as well as the land by thieving resources from Indigenous and Afro-descendent territories."[3] While these are often material—minerals, petroleum, gas—they can also be knowledge-based resources similarly extracted from communities for researchers' or artists' cultural capital. The ideologies and policies that enable the extraction of these material and knowledge-based resources—and the multifaceted resistance to this extraction—are what we aimed to explore in the Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition project.[4]

This project emerged from my postdoctoral research with the Canadian Consortium on Performance and Politics in the Americas and York University's Graduate Program in Theatre and Performance Studies.[5] It has four components:

- a collaborative art-making workshop in Mataquescuintla, Guatemala, with JODVID (Jóvenes Organizados en Defensa de la Vida/Youth Organized in Defense of Life), a youth group that uses performance and art tactics to resist the Canadian-owned Escobal silver mine on their territory;
- a day-long symposium at OCAD University on the convergence of art and anti-extractivism;
- a gallery exhibition retrospective of the Toronto-based Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN)'s actions; and
- a film screening that highlighted Indigenous and Mestizx perspectives on extraction.

In November 2018 I travelled to Mataquescuintla, Guatemala, with collaborator Lilian Galante Ríos to work with JODVID (Jóvenes Organizados en Defensa de la Vida/Youth Organized in Defense of Life) in a collaborative art-making workshop. We arrived without predetermined notions of what we would create together. As facilitators, we simply wanted to enable a small space for collaboration, provide the group with some additional resources, and celebrate what JODVID has accomplished.[6] When we arrived, the group shared with us a script for a performance they had previously co-written to honour the life of Topacio Reynoso Pacheco, JODVID's co-founder. Reynoso Pacheco was murdered in 2014 at the age of sixteen for her activism in resistance to the Escobal mine.[7] We spent our time together brainstorming, storyboarding, filming, and editing a video based on this script with the intention of sharing it in Toronto—the city of the headquarters of many Canadian-owned mining companies and where the Prospectors and Developers' Association of Canada (PDAC) holds their annual meeting, the world's largest and longest-running mining convention.

On March 1, 2019, mining executives, prospectors, engineers, and organizations from around the world descended upon Toronto to take part in PDAC's 86th annual convention. We tactically held the Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition symposium concurrently in order to speak back to the mining industry—and its stronghold in Toronto—through creative and performative actions. That night we hosted a film screening

program entitled Beyond the Extractive Zone of short films that consider (anti) extractivism from Indigenous and Mestizx perspectives. The screening was co-curated by Scott Miller Berry of the re:assemblage collective and presented with the support of OCAD's Culture Shifts collective.[8] We also opened the exhibition *Educate, Advocate, Agitate: The Mining Injustice Solidarity Network's Creative Interventions*, co-curated by Valérie Frappier.[9] We presented video and photo documentation of MISN's actions, banners proclaiming support for victims of extractive violence, and props and costumes from MISN's "Spoil Sports and Smear Leaders" street theatre resistance to the Pan Am games (and Barrick Gold's involvement). In this way, we celebrated how these local activists use creative interventions to confront extractive power and to stand with impacted communities.

The following day we welcomed members of the Indigenous Environmental Justice project to open the Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition symposium. This was to ground what would follow in a "framework that is informed by Indigenous knowledge systems, laws, concepts of justice and the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples."[10] The IEJ's presentation of their work was followed by a keynote address by Gómez-Barris, in which she spoke to the performative repertoire of decolonial gestures in the work of visual artists Cecilia Vicuña and Francisco Huichaqueo Perez.

Visual artists Dana Prieto, Warren Cariou, and Maggie Flynn then discussed their material and performative practices that resist extractivism in various guises:

- Cariou's *Petrography* (2014–ongoing) project, which uses tar sands bitumen as a photographic medium;
- Prieto's *1:10,000* (2018), centred upon ceramic replicas of the Bajo de la Alumbrera mine in Argentina, handmade by the artist with soil contaminated by this Canadian-owned mine; and
- Flynn's *Paydirt* (2017) project, predicated upon the artist's research into Canadian extractive industries through Freedom of Information requests as performance.

Trevor Schwellnus, Marion de Vries, and Shandra Spears Bombay reflected on their work together in Aluna Theatre's verbatim theatre piece, *The Last Walk of Adolfo Ich*. This work uses court transcripts to tell the story of Maya Q'eqchi' community leader Adolfo Ich Chamán, who was assassinated for his resistance to the HudBay Minerals project in the El Estor region of Guatemala. Law student Isabel Dávila of the Justice and Corporate Accountability Project spoke to the convergence of law and performance. The symposium concluded with a keynote by Kirsty Robertson, who presented material from her recent book *Tear Gas Epiphanies: Protest, Museums, Culture*, in which she explored artistic activism at museums against oil investment and why this type of activism is missing in the Canadian context.

The Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition project is premised on the concept of extractivism as the logic of reducing nature to commodities and the resultant imperialist hyper-exploitation of the mining, oil, and gas industries. Canada/Toronto's particular relationship to extractivism—and how Canadian domestic and foreign policy and legal systems bolster and perpetuate this particular form of imperialism (particularly in the context of Latin America)—are at the core of the project. How extractivism in all its guises is resisted and refused is a crucial question. Performance studies is a particularly generative lens through which to consider how both extractivism and its opposition are enacted in public spaces as embodied and reiterated behaviours—at once real and constructed—that transmit cultural memory through an intricate interplay of repertoires and archives. Performance is relational and therefore collaborative, and collaboration as a research-creation method is fundamental to this project, as we work together to devise creative, collective, and just ways to resist extractivism.

I write this from Mexico City, the other place in which I live and work. Reflecting on this project from this position—as a settler Canadian in Mexico—makes me uneasy. The privilege that allows me to live comfortably here is enmeshed with the Canadian state's fundamentally extractive domestic and foreign policy.[11] There is no place of innocence from which I can approach extractivism.[12] I was born implicated and can only work toward untangling the web of implications for any land on which I find myself standing—staying with the trouble[13] and sitting with the discomfort. And hoping that it might somehow be productive.

Notes

1. "OceanaGold Philippines Mine Shut Down: Villagers Blockade Site, Permit Renewal Withheld," *MiningWatch Canada*, 9 August 2019, https://miningwatch.ca/news/2019/8/9/oceanagold-philippines-mine-shut-down-villagers-blockade-site-permit-renewal-withheld.
2. The Escobal mine has subsequently been purchased by Pan American Silver. See, "Plaintiffs Conclude Lawsuit with Pan American Silver over 2013 Shooting in Guatemala, Communities Reaffirm Opposition to Escobal Mine, Warn of Rising Tensions," *MiningWatch Canada*, 31 July 2019, https://miningwatch.ca/news/2019/7/31/plaintiffs-conclude-lawsuit-pan-american-silver-over-2013-shooting-guatemala.
3. Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Duke UP, 2017), xvii.
4. Using the word "explore" here itself has extractive valances. I am indebted to Merle Davis Matthews for conversations around how the language we use as scholars, organizers, artists, etc. is often laden with colonial and extractive violence.
5. In collaboration with OCAD University's Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Graduate Studies program, and Art and Social Change minor.
6. "In Their Own Words: JODVID on the Importance of Youth Leadership in the Movement to Defend Life and Land," NISGUA website, 29 September 2017, https://nisgua.org/in-their-own-words-jodvid-on-the-the-importance-of-youth-leadership-in-the-movement-to-defend-life-and-land/.
7. Kate Linthicum, "'If We're Attacked, We'll Die Together,' A Teenage Anti-Mining Activist Told Her Family. But When the Bullets Came, They Killed Only Her," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 December 2017, https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-environmental-activists-guatemala-20171227-htmlstory.html.
8. Zoë Heyn-Jones, "Beyond the Extractive Zone" (Program notes), http://zoeheynjones.com/beyondtheextractivezone.
9. Zoë Heyn-Jones, "Educate, Advocate, Agitate: The Mining Injustice Solidarity Network's Creative Interventions" (Exhibition text), http://zoeheynjones.com/educateadvocateagitate.
10. Indigenous Environmental Justice Project, York University, https://iejproject.info.yorku.ca/.
11. Todd Gordon and Jeffery R. Webber, *Blood of Extraction: Canadian Imperialism in Latin America* (Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing), 2016.
12. See the discussion of "settler moves to innocence" in Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang,"Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1:1 (September 2012).
13. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2016).

vol.16

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

alt.theatre magazine is excited to announce its themes for the upcoming Volume 16. We're looking for pieces—feature-length articles, dispatches, creative interventions, reviews—that bring critical energy and perspectives to:

Issue 16.1 spaces

Where productions take place—from the playing spaces themselves to the neighbourhoods, towns, reserves, and cyberspaces they shape and are shaped by. How are theatres and performers using space to tell the stories needing telling? How does distance impact theatre in a territory?

Issue 16.2 traces

History and futures. Memory and projections. Maps and messages. The physical artefacts left behind by a largely ephemeral medium, and the residual effect of mounting a production or just existing as a company.

Issue 16.3 faces

Colour blind. Colour conscious. Colour mind. Identity, race, ethnicity, culture. Indigenous-, Settler- , and Newcomer-colours—including Whiteness. Who is pushing the boundaries of theatre, and the importance of visibility and representation?

alt.theatre welcomes **submissions of completed pieces, as well as suggestions or proposals**.

To submit something you feel fits with the *alt.theatre* mandate or touches on any of these three topics, please send an email to **submissions@alttheatre.ca** that includes your first and last name, contact information, a CV, and your piece or idea.

alt theatre
cultural diversity and the stage

A magazine for artists, thinkers, and changemakers

A group of readers around the world engaged in politics, cultural diversity, social activism, and the performing arts.

alt.theatre alt_theatre

Visit our blog for reviews of theatre and performance happening across the country. **alttheatre.ca**

Interested in reviewing a production for alttheatre.ca? Have something you'd like us to review? Contact us at **reviews@alttheatre.ca**.

Photo of d'bi.young anitafrika by Che Kothari.