



Melaina
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Consulting



Larrikin Entertainment Ensemble First Nation Theatre Consultation

Larrikin Entertainment Ensemble has generously taken the lead on consulting with First Nations theatre practitioners in the Yukon to ascertain how it may best include Yukon First Nations people in its work and what role the organization might play in creating meaningful opportunities for First Nation/Inuit and Metis peoples.

Over the course of the past two months 6 conversations have been hosted by Melaina Sheldon Consulting pertaining to First Nation theatre opportunities and accessibility within the territory. This work would not have been possible without those who were consulted which include the generous and honest voices, perspectives and insights of: Christine Genier, Southern Tutchone and Tagish Actor and Activist; Gary Sidney Johnson, Carcross/Tagish Tlingit Actor/Performer and Language Instructor; Guna Megan Jensen, Carcross/Tagish Tlingit Artist, Actor and Instructor; Jacob Zimmer, Nakai Theatre Artistic Director; Krista Reid, Director Culture and Language at Champagne and Aishihik First Nation Da Ku Cultural Center and Sharon Shorty, Teslin Tlingit Comedian and Actor.









The following report also includes my personal perspectives as a practicing First Nation artist within the territory and will hopefully flow as smoothly and with as much enthusiasm and passion as was experienced in each conversation. Please note that the terms Yukon First Nations refer to all First Nations within the traditional territories of the Yukon, First Nations is used as a general term to be inclusive of all Yukon Canadian First Nations, and Indigenous is utilized to include all First Nations of the Americas and Indigenous and Aboriginal people of the world. As these titles are used throughout the document, please keep in mind that they are being utilized here as inclusive of Inuit and Metis peoples respectively.

I have structured the report by order of questions asked. Some participants have been quoted directly and this is noted, but should there be any questions as to which participant shared a specific insight, I will gladly elaborate as to which ideas were generated by which participant. Thank you to Larrikin Entertainment Ensemble for embarking on this very necessary and timely endeavor, for your time in reading and for your consideration of recommendations for inclusion of Yukon First Nation artists, audiences and communities. Let's get started!

What does it mean to have accessible opportunities for First Nations people in the Yukon theatre community?

When asked what people know of First Nations theatre in the territory they most instantly refer to Gwaandak Theatre who self-identify as “the only Indigenous-centered theatre company in the Yukon” and whose mandate is to “highlight and share Northern Voices”. Participants may have mentioned Nakai Theatre, but admitted to not knowing much about that particular company and beyond that, if not fully immersed in the local theatre community, they were not quick to identify the many smaller companies which operate here. Smaller companies are being asked by funders to provide opportunities to Indigenous communities, of which First Nations communities may not even be aware.

So, what does having accessible opportunities for First Nations people within theatre mean?

-  Being willing to share privilege of stage and host space with access to your “theatre tool bag” for First Nation stories to also be created, told and shared.
-  Consulting with First Nations community representatives and mounting shows with First Nation leads/main characters and content; and/or relatable Indigenous/Aboriginal stories from around the world.
-  Making room for, or producing works in which First Nation talent can perform non-Indigenous roles/characters.
-  Making First Nation community aware of opportunities and performances by inviting them specifically; identifying individuals and First Nation communities and then reaching out and recruiting.
-  Meeting people where they are and bringing theatre opportunities and training to them; meeting them “in-community” – bring food!
-  Welcoming inexperienced practitioners by providing access to the theatre world in more non-traditional theatre (less formal) formats and environments. Less pressure = more fun! For example....
-  Being considerate of the Emotional/Physical/Spiritual/Mental safety and working within Cultural Awareness to provide Cultural Safety/when working/engaging First Nation stories, audiences and practitioners.
-  Acknowledging theatre as a very western concept which can and should be adapted to include and highlight Yukon First Nation storytelling traditions. For example...








How might providing opportunities be achieved?

Comedian and actress Sharon Shorty suggested creating a centralized database where local Indigenous talent could self-identify and register as theatre artists and/or technicians because sometimes it is not that the opportunities don't exist, but that companies do not know where to "look" to source talent.

Sharon also spoke of attending Nakai's Indigenous lead "Native Theatre School", where the components (playwriting/acting/costume design, etc.) and formulas of the medium of theatre were explained through an Indigenous lens and students learned by doing. Sharon also recalled and suggested less formal auditions for theatre newcomers and spoke of an audition in which she was invited to a day of theatre games and exercises of which unbeknownst to her, was in fact an audition, as it led to her being offered a role in said production. Auditions can be intimidating spaces of "selection" and "competition" and may deter Indigenous community members from auditioning.

Guna (Megan Jensen) attended the M.A.D. program in highschool and stressed the important need to make First Nations people feel safe. Megan noted that performing takes a lot of courage and bravery and that "...being vulnerable was literally beaten out of us and it is big process to get back to [feeling safe to be vulnerable]." Theatre can be an intimidating environment and this, paired with people who may have the confidence or an inherent belief that they are "creative", means that in order to provide access, new ways need to be explored in how to demonstrate that theatre is not "scary", but actually a lot of fun and in most cases, cathartic and healing.

More opportunities could be provided with:

-  More consultation with First Nations representatives.
-  Opening space for First Nation creativity by offering skills and space and being open to whatever may happen within creative exercises.
-  Sourcing, producing and encouraging the writing of new First Nations/Indigenous stories that are uplifting and positive. Many existing First Nation plays are realistic of high quality, but they are also works which are bleak, stereotypical, one-sided or re-traumatizing and it is time for new stories to be told of love, resiliency and strength.
-  Direct casting by reaching out and targeting talent and not just for First Nation/Indigenous roles.
-  Making accommodation (literally!) for talent that lives outside of the capital city where most theatre is produced.
-  "Taking the pressure off" by providing access points to a variety of skill levels, such as play readings or understudy roles.
-  Celebrating First Nation talent and success by highlighting and hearing feedback from local First Nation talents about their experiences working in theatre; speaking to the sense of accomplishment and the entirety of factors which go into a full theatre production, as well as theatre's unique transformational, healing and teaching properties.

- ✚ Being flexible within the traditional theatre art form and creating space for evolution and collaboration with First Nations creativity.
- ✚ Offering training opportunities in the most organic way possible with “no experience necessary” opportunities and non-judgmental encouragement in participation.
- ✚ Bringing in First Nation mentors and advisors
- ✚ Accessibility is varied depending on the organizations and each will have radically different expectations; these will not always fit into government/funding forms which also need to adapt.
- ✚ Paying advisors for content collaboration.

What do you think is the potential for Yukon First Nation performance?

Great optimism exists in the belief of an unlimited potential for Yukon First Nation performance inside and outside of the Yukon. All people interviewed acknowledged the existence of much untapped First Nation talent in the territory, for both on stage and back of stage roles. Potentials, visions and dreams for Yukon First Nation performance included:

- ✚ First Nation theatre is the “mainstream” without having to be specifically sought out, and is the main access point to theatre in the territory with major productions on the Yukon Arts Centre stage.
- ✚ Greater and affordable representation where First Nation theatre is supported, highlighted and valued and given as much space in the spotlight as non-Indigenous theatre, and that the labour of this is not put on First Nations community.
- ✚ Making the production of Yukon First Nation historical stories/perspectives as heavily funded and supported and as frequently retold as other well-known Yukon stories such as the history of the Gold Rush and Alaska Highway.
- ✚ Opening up funding opportunities which are juried by First Nation organizations/funders because “[t]he minute you are making theatre for a grant you are making theatre for ‘white’ audiences.” - Jacob Zimmer, Nakai Theatre Artistic Director.
- ✚ Paid theatre training opportunities for front of stage and back of house roles are abundant and facilitated by First Nation/Indigenous experts, thus supporting First Nation worldviews and ways of knowing, whilst not making scholastic training/formal experience the entry point for participation.
- ✚ First Nations holding creative, decision making roles; First Nation Directors having respected authority in directing First Nation (and non-First Nation) scripts and talent.
- ✚ Authentic collaborations and permissions when working with First Nation stories.
- ✚ Incorporating wholistic frameworks which accommodate First Nation ceremony around performance: acknowledgement of the spiritual transformational properties of doing “the work” and incorporating self-care when dealing with First Nation stories; stories that incorporate cultural teachings both inside and outside of the work.

- ✚ Incorporating new technologies in theatre such as video and animation.
- ✚ Utilizing and dramatizing current literature of First Nations people and/or incorporating and re-telling stories recorded from Yukon First Nations people.
- ✚ A lot of First Nations people using their voices and telling their stories with First Nation audiences in mind and accepting that this will not always look like traditional western theatre. Be prepared for audience interaction!

What is an image of excellence of Yukon First Nations live theatre performance?

It was noted by Guna (Megan Jensen, Carcross/Tagish Tlingit Artist) that First Nation people hold unique standards around value, excellence and success. What “feels good” to First Nations people will vary from western ideas, accolades or critiques of non-Indigenous theatre. As formerly noted, there is a sense of unlimited potential for where First Nations people can go within the medium of theatre and these ideals included:

- ✚ First Nation performance getting adequate and sustainable funding. This means having ownership of a space with a proper stage and a minimum of 3 major First Nation productions a season.
- ✚ Residencies that are First Nation story specific so First Nations are given space to write outside of struggle such as: comedy for the sake of comedy, romance, epic dramas, stories about family, to play in new mediums and to have space for discovery.
- ✚ First Nations theatre being prominent and in the spotlight, taking up space, being the mainstream within social media streams and local advertising, etc.
- ✚ Strong First Nation theatre community with drama class in every territorial school and drama clubs in every community to capture talent of all ages.
- ✚ Meeting audiences where they’re at and ensuring their comfort with regular community outreach and consistent community presentations to build community audiences.
- ✚ Lots of opportunities to participate in lots of different ways. First Nations people working in all aspects of theatre, not just as performers/writers and that we have more people and the capacity to fill these roles. Highlighting creative careers as back of stage/behind the scenes roles are year-round roles not just for Indigenous productions and future roles as technology is increasingly utilized.
- ✚ Character roles for First Nations as multi-faceted human beings; no more type cast roles, but also moving beyond regalia/traditional songs and dance; acknowledging First Nations as diverse performers.
- ✚ Balance within casts; First Nation creators and performers receiving an equal level of respect and pay.
- ✚ First Nation artists/actors/comedians being respected and regarded as equally as important as any other profession. “What we do is really important. It makes people think, it gets

them to listen if they are open to the message.” – Sharon Shorty, Teslin Tlingit Actor and Comedian.

- ✚ There is a highlight of comedy and stories of thriving which include humour to share in joy and laughter as it is and has been essential to First Nation resiliency and survival.
- ✚ First Nations people see theatre companies as spaces that are a part of ceremony and that the social nature of this work can be a part of a festival or other community events.
- ✚ Using theatre as a tool, but not a “cure” as First Nation talents intersect with non-Indigenous practitioners.
- ✚ Honouring the storytelling traditions of First Nation people in that we have always had theatre through our mask work, community dance groups, storytelling and potlatch ceremonies. There is room for First Nation historical and contemporary stories as well as Indigenous futurism.
- ✚ Curating shows to correlate with what is already happening in communities.
- ✚ Creating and performing theatre in First Nation languages. This work can be successful without full fluency or interpretation.
- ✚ Making time for visiting artists to engage with community in a multitude of ways to build relationships PRIOR to presentations and providing time and events for post engagement with First Nation talent, audiences and community.

What has been your experience as an audience member in live theatre?

Indigenous audience is different than non-Indigenous audience and at times it takes “something else” to get our butts in seats. When a production is successful in this, it has most likely been inspired by one or more of the following:

- ✚ The First Nation audience member has been personally invited by the company and offered complementary tickets.
- ✚ The presenter or performer has extended an invitation to audience members and offered complementary tickets.
- ✚ The First Nation audience member has worked as a part of the production or is a performer/employee working for the theatre/event and has been given a complementary pass to events/presentations (ie: Talking Stick Festival)
- ✚ Price points were made affordable by “pay-what-you-can” or special rates were offered for students/Elders/First Nations, etc.
- ✚ The audience member knows someone who is a part of the show and would like to show their support or they have been encouraged by a friend who has seen the show or has been a part of its production.
- ✚ Marketing for the production was interactive, inviting and done well in advance of show dates: social media was used to introduce the story and actors prior to tickets being sold.
- ✚ Knowing and holding an appreciation for theatre as an artform that is inclusive of many talented individuals working together for a final product.

- ✚ The story content was about Yukon First Nations and “home” and current and relevant to Northern people.
- ✚ Attendance was a part of school curriculum.

Is Indigenous content important for you when you make a decision about buying a ticket and what are your values around content?









Most people who were consulted are in some way associated with theatre and performance backgrounds, but they also spoke to what their incentives beyond receiving complementary tickets, which I believe are broadly applicable to First Nation audience members not directly involved in theatre. Attendance may be enhanced knowing that:

- ✚ First Nation audiences are directly seeking First Nation/Indigenous content that is impactful and meaningful.
- ✚ Indigenous content is important when purchasing, but not always if the story is good and beautiful, even if painful.
- ✚ Price point is not a factor, but complementary tickets are always appreciated.
- ✚ Will most likely attend if there is someone they know who is cast and/or a part of the production.
- ✚ Will perchance if an acquaintance has recommended seeing the show.
- ✚ If the content is contemporary, current and relevant, giving voice to what is happening in present day society with relevance to First Nation/Indigenous people.
- ✚ Interested in seeing work that is not the “norm” or incorporates presentation/content that provides an alternative experience.
- ✚ Seeking work that is a reflection of First Nation/Indigenous worldview and that feels “real”/authentic.
- ✚ Seeing work as a professional courtesy to contemporaries.
- ✚ As a non-Indigenous audience member I am seeking education and to celebrate the resiliency and culture of First Nations people.
- ✚ If the show is building bridges between different types of information, reflecting creative intersectional ways of generating a dialogue.
- ✚ Seeing that work was conducted with a purpose and a reasoning to break down barriers reflecting powerful content.

What does it mean to have theatre that is accessible or culturally relevant to First Nations people? Does the space utilized matter?

There is no way around it, when it comes to accessibility the presentation space does matter, as do price points and culturally relevant material. When mounting works it is important to consider whom the target audience is and if you are hoping to draw more First Nation audience members or build capacity in performers and technical roles, a presenter might consider:

SPACE

-  Space does matter and it depends on the story you are telling. Sometimes outdoor spaces can enhance a production and in other situations, a First Nation story requires a full stage with all of the “bells and whistles”.
-  Accessible may mean bringing theatre to the audience. If theatre is being presented in smaller communities though it is best to be prepared for small and less technical presentation spaces as most community spaces are not equipped to host theatre.
-  Meeting people where they are at may mean piggybacking on other community events and festivals such as First Nation General Assemblies, Adaka Festival or Moose Hide Gathering for example.
-  Being flexible in presentation when attending community events. Perhaps you do not perform the play in its entirety, but a portion of it. This could also act as promotion to attend the full feature production.
-  “The Yukon Arts Centre is not a space that is comfortable for everyone. The space itself is intimidating and terrifying. We need spaces that feel more like we’re sharing something together. There needs to be more relatable, comfortable, genuine relationships and friendship building, especially with children and adults who have experienced trauma. Colonial space and formal theatre environments have an expected etiquette with a lot of rules and restrictions which are not always welcoming for First Nation audiences and can prevent enjoyable, fun and comfortable interactions.” – Guna, Megan Jensen
-  An alternative example is a venue such as The Storytelling Festival which was an outdoor tent with a stage which was a simple and sparse venue, but very organic, inviting and inclusive. Being in a local community center or outside in a forest or beside water or a campfire may feel more relaxing and more safe.
-  Hosting in spaces where there is opportunity to engage with other First Nation performers such as Northern Scene or the Talking Stick Festival.
-  Provide opportunities for community tours of presentation spaces which may feel intimidating by making them less daunting.

ENTRY POINTS

- ✚ Being open to what we quantify as theatre – an opening talking circle can be theatre, an entrance song is theatre, a parade is theatre.
- ✚ Accessibility is First Nations people “...telling whatever stories they want to tell and using theatre in the way that best serves them.” – Jacob Zimmer. First Nation story creation should never have to be “explained” or justified to non-Indigenous audiences.
- ✚ Focus on telling GOOD stories, not just stories with “traffic accident” appeal. First Nation and Indigenous story sharing does not just have to be stories of trauma. Be prepared for non-traditional theatre audiences. First Nation audience members will want to laugh, interact and respond to performances and performers.
- ✚ Presenting relatable stories for First Nation audiences from other global Indigenous communities.
- ✚ Sharing works in which First Nations people can see themselves participating in the future.
- ✚ Having an opportunity to be “in” the show without having to be on an “expert” level to participate and gently guiding those who are participating from all levels of experience.
- ✚ Finding ways to be really genuine in recruiting if First Nations participation is sought.
- ✚ Being considerate of how an uplifting experience can be facilitated when working with First Nations people and being considerate of traumatic histories.
- ✚ There needs to be a lot of encouragement and genuine sharing of one’s passion for the craft.
- ✚ Provide opportunities for First Nation people to familiarize themselves with the artform.
- ✚ It means making theatre accessible to varying incomes and levels of privilege. Being considerate of a what it takes to attend a night of theatre. Attending a performance at the Yukon Arts Centre will require income to purchase a ticket, a vehicle/transportation, access to technology/computer to purchase a ticket, free/available time, potentially child care, and the list goes on and grows for audience members who live outside of Whitehorse.

Where do you learn about theatre experiences?

Word of mouth seems to be the way most hear about theatre experiences via colleagues and mentors or by being directly involved within the industry. Personal connections/like-minded friends or having friends or family involved in a show is also how “advertising” is happening. It should be noted that there needs to more marketing that is kept up to date! Other popular formats included:

- ✚ Online/social media platforms: Facebook (when events are shared by friends), Instagram, etc.
- ✚ Radio (but not NWTEL cable!)









Do you believe there is a need for and are there enough training opportunities for Yukon First Nation artists, writers, performers, directors/producers, etc.?

There is definitely a need for theatre training opportunities in the Yukon and though there are plenty they are sometimes not the most accessible. We must also acknowledge the need for providing an access point prior to role-specific training such as an “introduction to theatre” workshop and targeting specific individuals who have demonstrated inclinations to performance.

- ✚ There is a need for training just as there is a need for telling Yukon First Nation stories from Yukon First Nations perspectives based in First Nation values and practice.
- ✚ Opportunities exist, but there could be more frequency in their occurrence.
- ✚ More training opportunities led by local and national First Nations talent.
- ✚ Paid training opportunities which lead to employment would potentially get greater dedicated participation.
- ✚ Paid residences specifically for First Nations artists, writers and performers to tell Yukon First Nation stories.
- ✚ There exists space within the theatre community and productions to invite mentorship and hands on training via job shadowing for First Nations people of all ages.
- ✚ Inviting and targeting individuals to attend training and mentorship opportunities to build confidence in skills.
- ✚ Training opportunities mean individuals can learn at home and may not have to leave to pursue education or explore interests in theatre.
- ✚ Through training opportunities and building skills, First Nations people could step into leadership positions and bring more diversity to decision-making roles within theatre.
- ✚ Training opportunities can demonstrate how theatre work can be flexible and sustainable.
- ✚ Sometimes there are barriers to access including: finding information/advertising ahead of time, being available for workshop times, workshops only hosted in Whitehorse. There is a need to identify the barriers to participation and help to eliminate them so training is effective.








Is it important for Yukon First Nations to have specific opportunities with other theatre companies and talent from across Canada? Why is it important? What do you value?

Yes, it is important for Yukon First Nations to have specific opportunities with other theatre companies and talent from across Canada. Exposure to outside sources and talents lets First Nations people know what is possible and that theatre lives across the nation, not just within our territory.

-  We may not have all of the First Nations talent in the North, but we do have the talent base from across Canada and right now we especially need Indigenous experts to learn and mentor with.
-  Working with non-Indigenous theatre talent and companies provides perspective and exposure and it is important because we are regionally underrepresented in the nation. “We have very distinct voices here.” – Sharon Shorty.
-  “It is important to include broader perspectives because the world is full of different people with varying skill sets and lived experiences and we need to hear those perspectives.” – Gary Sidney Johnson
-  When experts from the south travel to Yukon we are provided with a fresh audience and fresh eyes. It also affords the opportunity for First Nation talents to meet and work with other artists and be exposed to their creative process.
-  Yukon First Nations need to be performing alongside national and other Indigenous artists as it is a way to support one another, but also provides an opportunity for suggestions and critique.
-  Need training opportunities that evolve into trusted and employed positions that First Nations people do not get stuck in training program cycles. There needs to be trust in skills that were developed from training.
-  “Training is necessary and paid learning opportunities that paint a picture for future opportunities to build the bridge of relevance and purpose in being a theatre practitioner.” – Guna, Megan Jensen
-  “There is a potential with young people to help them understand the creative fields with good work ethic and demonstrating that talent isn’t just born, it takes dedication and practice.” – Guna, Megan Jensen.
-  To live as a full-time actor is a challenge across the nation and it is important to be realistic about the scale and understand that people will come in and out of the field.
-  There are things to learn from outside of the territory and a real use is connecting and having contacts in the south should employment opportunities present themselves in the south.


What do you see as the future of the industry in the Yukon? What do we need to get there?

Optimism is also high for the future of the industry in the Yukon as there still exists much to attempt and accomplish with the promise of affordable infrastructure and technological advances. Our foundation for producing work is strong and the audience members have become accustomed to having a variety of shows in which to partake. What remains always is the need for an increase in accessible and consistent funding that supports all that the creative sectors and theatre especially bring to our territory.


-  The future is wide open to possibility for how theatre can grow and what it can encompass.
-  That the arts are accepted as essential to human health and well-being.
-  There is still a need for the creation of a proper and appropriately sized rehearsal and presentation space specifically equip for theatre.
-  There needs to be an increase in funding as the trend for smaller theatre companies will continue which will mean fewer operating dollars overall.
-  There should remain a willingness for the artform to adapt and evolve. We live in a time when information is quick hitting and emotional impactful in shorter amounts of time. The future may mean we are telling more short stories/tales.
-  There will be a redefining of how we experience theatre as virtual realities become more of the norm and audience members are not physically sharing space with performers.
-  Theatre and the arts are supported and acknowledge for how they bring benefit to the community as entertainment and social discourse.

Do you see a role for Larrikin Entertainment Ensemble within this?


Are any of these answers specific to Larrikin Entertainment Group? No, but can Larrikin participate in providing meaningful access and opportunities to First Nations community? Yes. Larrikin is on the right track by doing research with the First Nation community and it would serve them (and other companies as well!) to keep consulting as many voices as possible while following through on commitments. Some of the ways Larrikin may do this are to:

-  Meeting people where they are at by:
 - Inviting in artists of different skill levels
 - Utilize alternative teaching methods other than western models.
 - Offering workshop opportunities which teach theatre production “basics” running through all of the roles required within a fully mounted production.
 - Provide acting classes in partnership with another company such as Nakai Theatre or Gwaandak Theatre.
 - Adapt the auditioning process to be conducted in a group setting opposed to secluded/solo one-on-one auditions.
 - Facilitating training opportunities that lead or guarantee employment


- Host a year-long residency focused on the writing of a script through to full production.
- Put First Nation people in creative leadership and decision-making roles as well as casting First Nation actors.
- Be open to exploring different methodologies and practices for those who may feel like they “can’t” – such as going off script, improvising, or stream of dialogue.
- How can you foster confidence in skill levels?

 As an artist run company, being prepared to speak with/invite/engage & travel directly to communities.

- Remain open to learning – there are cultural workshops that can be hosted by First Nation communities to deliver to Larrikin Entertainment Group
- Partner to incorporate acting into cultural/First Nation workshops.
- Deconstruct the hierarchy of theatre roles so that everyone in the room is on a level play field.
- Maintain a “safe space” when working with First Nations people and be open to an ongoing dialogue and discussion where everyone’s input and perspective is considered vital
- Remove sense of “critique” and the requirement for reporting or evaluation
- Consider how you can offer mental/emotional/spiritual/physical health supports when working with First Nations communities and story
- Make schedules flexible to incorporate time for feelings, emotions and new experiences.
- Offer multi-year experiences.

 Work on marketing and name recognition for the company with First Nation spheres:

- Does Larrikin want to be “known” by First Nations community and if so, for what specifically?
- Send invitations to specific First Nation community members and provide complimentary tickets to spark “word of mouth” marketing.
- Engage beyond the “known” names / regular representatives from First Nation community. Reach beyond and partner with organizations “outside” of the theatre community.
- Where can Larrikin contribute to the sector where there are gaps in other organizations mandates?

 Questions to consider:

- How you are giving back to the First Nations community and how will you help citizens and talent grow?
- How is Larrikin filling in the gaps in the market annually?
- What are the missing pieces that you will reconfigure to enhance First Nations creativity and participation?
- What is it specifically about your organization that is distinguishable from what other organizations are providing?

- How can Larrikin foster space that is creative and healing without putting further demand on First Nations creatives?
- What is the special gift that Larrikin can bring and what gift can you give back?
- How will you create long-lasting relationships with community?

Larrikin Entertainment Ensemble Response

Melaina's work on this report is a gift that we are extremely grateful for. Our conversations with Melaina have been safe, confronting, challenging and rewarding, and this report is invaluable in more ways than we are able to express. We thank the artists that took part in these conversations and shared so generously with us their insights and experiences. We honour the vulnerability and bravery that it took to share these insights and we will be working very hard to implement many of their suggestions into the work we do at every level.

There are many offerings in Melaina's report that are instantly applicable to the work that we are doing at Larrikin, and we are excited to implement new ways of working, thinking and doing so that we can ensure that our work is more accessible to First Nations artists and audiences.

Other suggestions will take further thought and planning as to how we can incorporate them into our work, or alter the type of work that we're doing to ensure that we are considerate of all that was shared.

Through our work with Patti, we have identified that we are positioning Larrikin as a regional-style theatre company which produces traditional-style theatre experiences. Under our current circumstances, Larrikin is able to produce one production, one workshop and have one production in development on an annual basis. Larrikin will, when it has garnered sufficient operational funding, have the capacity to expand and create more diverse programming which could certainly involve outdoor experiences in the summer and other outside-the-traditional-theatre-setting theatre experiences.

Everyone who participated in this experience with Melaina is excited about how we can use the privilege of theatre creation (and public funding) to give back to First Nations contemporaries and audience members. This conversation will be ongoing and will be an agenda item for all future board and programming meetings.

We look forward to holding these conversations regularly in our personal and professional lives and working to remain open hearted, open minded and diligent in adapting our work, addressing our biases, and redirecting as we find ourselves needing to.

We are aware that the work that needs to be done is our responsibility, and that asking First Nations people who are friends and colleagues to shoulder that responsibility is burdensome and fosters further emotional and cultural trauma. We are committed to working with our friends and colleagues in a gentle and respectful way, and to be humble and self-aware when asking for guidance.

We are looking forward to the future of Larrikin Entertainment after having completed this incredible project, and to seeing the community grow and our work transform as a result.