



SCRIPT & REVIEWS – Retreat Report

Larrikin Entertainment Ensemble, LEE (aka Larrikin)
Board and Organizational Development Training

Strategic Planning including affirmation of Board Values, Organization Vision, Mandate and Priorities

The following weekend goals and outcomes are proposed for discussion in Atlin, BC:

Goals:

- That the Board defines what sustainability of programming/content, people, markets and funding, looks like and to plan for organizational and strategic strength;
- That to funders, partners, markets and the community, LEE is considered a serious non-profit organization; and
- That the Board and Artistic Executive Producer have the support to run LEE successfully, and that the Board has plans in place to ensure sustainable funding and volunteer recruitment, orientation and retention plans.

Proposed Outcomes from our LEE Atlin, BC Weekend

- Understand the history, vision and future opportunities/challenges of LEE;
- To participate in a Governance 101 refresher – may be new to some;
- To understand the operational needs, finance considerations, compensation of the AD, etc.;
- To understand the perspectives and experiences of Yukon First Nations in the performing arts;
- To discuss innovation and creativity in programming, fundraising, partnerships;
- To understand the space that LEE works in – an Environmental Scan and SWOT – behind, beside (internal and external) and forward; and
- To set direction and workplans for the Board and AEP over 3-5 years.

Projected Outcomes from this project:

As defined in the CDF application, LEE will have the training and capacity to maintain affirmed foundational policies, effective operational policies, a game plan to achieve sustainability of governance, funding, programming and supports. We will explore why the Board is a volunteer board and their unique lens on leadership and how to be helpful.

Retreat Outcomes: (what we accomplished)

Discussions and plans related to the Board team, supporting the Artistic Executive Producer (AEP) and Founder, description and alignment of the organization, its name and definition, integrating those values into LEE's vision, work and goals, identifying partners, cross sector collaboration opportunities, funding, governance, priorities, and lobbying and advocacy.

ACT One/ Scene One

- After dinner Katherine, the AEP provided an historical overview of Larrikin Ent. Ens. and engaged with the Board on the hopes and dreams for LEE.

Outcomes: (what we accomplished)

Katherine’s overview: Artistic Executive Producer and Founder, Katherine McCallum, native to Australia and now 15-yr resident in The Yukon, founded Larrikin in September 2015. Katherine has been producing theatre for over 25 years and is a rare asset to the territory. She was the Artistic Director at the Guild for 4 years, has produced theatre for Nakai, Gwaandak, The Guild and Larrikin Entertainment as well as the Not Close But Personal Concert Series in March/April 2020, in association with Whispering Willows Records, as a pandemic response. She has been actively involved in the Yukon arts sector in production and performance since she landed in Canada’s north in 2006.

Two members of the current Larrikin Board are founding board members. The remaining members are multi-year.

The word Larrikin is a well-known Australian term depicting a character or attribute Katherine aspires to emulate in her life and work (see definition below). She has always been inspired to create theatre that is accessible to diverse audiences and founded Larrikin because there were very few opportunities for professional actors outside of Gwaandak and Nakai theatre productions (and neither company was hiring actors regularly, in fact Nakai rarely produces theatre using local actors). In founding Larrikin, she hoped to build a company that professional theatre artists would aspire to work with as a sought-after professional theatre company.

Larrikin Definition: The definition of ‘Larrikin’ has two definitions; an outdated definition that is no longer relevant in the Australian vernacular, and a newer, more widely accepted definition. Katherine has updated the definition based on a more current understanding of the term (below):

Larrikin Former (mid 1800s)	Larrikin Current
<p><i>A boisterous, often badly behaved young man.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A person with apparent disregard for convention, a maverick. 	<p>Noun/adjective: <i>“A mischievous, rowdy but good-hearted person with a healthy cynicism for social and political convention”.</i></p>

The key words for Larrikin as an organisation are: unconventional, maverick, audacious, bold, innovative, pursuing a healthy questioning of authority, aspiring to multi-sensory experiences, and creating theatre that wows, surprises and delights.

Leadership in the Yukon community of performing arts is still predominantly male. It is a significant amount of work for a woman to fight her way through to a seat at the table. It is also a challenge to start a new theatre company and garner the respect of the community at large. Katherine feels that since its inception, Larrikin has achieved a significant amount of respect from colleagues and the community as a whole, although there is still work to do. As a woman in the industry she is still consistently left out of important conversations and meetings. It’s improving slowly but it’s exhausting and morale-diminishing.

While a feminist in her own personal values and, not-so-coincidentally, in her choice of productions, Katherine does not envision Larrikin to be positioned as a ‘feminist company’. This is because the Larrikin brand is so much more than feminism, and the organisation produces a vast diversity of stories. She also doesn’t want Larrikin to be compartmentalised in people’s minds and to alienate more than half of Larrikin’s potential audience.

Katherine’s ultimate dream is to help build and contribute to an industry of regularly working Yukon arts professionals. She imagines actors growing their profession from Yukon, going outside to go to theatre school (or even here at YukonU one day), and coming home because there is work in the Yukon for them and they can make a living here. She finds it exciting to think of Larrikin contributing significantly to that outcome.

Formally educated in theatre in both Sydney Australia and the United States, Katherine attended acting school in New York City and received a formal, classical theatrical education. This education has contributed to Katherine’s expectation that Larrikin achieve the highest level of professional standards in production, performance, design and reputation.

In the Yukon performing arts sector, there are many places for professional development that Larrikin can lead or contribute to including industry development, performance techniques, writing, producing, directing, and casting – there is always room for everyone to continually improve their professional skills. Larrikin can play an important role in the Yukon theatre community as a leader, learner, collaborator and storyteller.

The audience/market in The Yukon provides space and opportunities for very diverse entertainment experiences. Larrikin aspires to differentiate by delivering consistently professional excellence and producing stories that we can all see ourselves in... that we can relate to ... and that leave us feeling...wowed.

This presentation and the ensuing discussion was helpful for everyone because some board members were not aware of the entire history of the organisation.

Saturday, June 12, 2021, Atlin, BC 9-4 pm

ACT Two/ Day One MORNING

- The morning was dedicated to setting our rules of play, talking about the impact of COVID on the theatre industry, sharing hoped-for accomplishments/shared expectations, sharing the value propositions for Board members, discussing what the EAP needs from the board, identifying values – internally and externally, doing an activity around Visioning (the Headline Story), etc.
- Talking about Governance 101 and the purpose for the Board, the EAP, funders, partners, Yukon Government, Corporate Affairs, identifying purpose, gaps, and manageability.

Outcomes: (what we accomplished)

Values – as individuals, for the team of Larrikin and for our audience, we value, and perceive our audience to value, the following:

Perspective	Values
Individually	Curiosity, inspiration, kindness, solidarity, inclusion, excellence, innovation, reflection, knowledge, open-mindedness, family connection
Team	Openness, equality, qualified team members, common goals, shared vision, role clarity and clear expectations, open communication, sharing work and success, common vision, emotional compatibility, listeners
Audience	New sensory experiences, emotional outcomes i.e. feeling something, losing themselves for a time in pure entertainment, exposure to new ideas, seeing people and being seen, strong and interesting stories (heroes/heroines that inspire), theatre magic, to be awed, reputation for excellence, desiring an experience expressed by ‘that was awesome’, diversity and inclusion.

The Governance Discussion – Roles, structures and sustainability of Larrikin through a governance lens

To begin this session, we shared stories of Boards that work well that those that didn’t work so well. Lessons learned included:

- Committee structures – can be helpful but need clarity and purpose and a Terms of Reference to be effective;
- Information preparation and sharing – a package is only as good as it’s advance distribution and that volunteers review prior to meetings – maximize productivity, come prepared to share, work and volunteer;
- Decision-making protocols – what is our role, how to move through discussion to action and in formalizing a decision – what is the process and how can we delegate the work;
- Autocracy – when sr. leaders and staff do all the work, control the agenda and are not transparent – things fall apart;
- Good Board mix – boards that have diversity and lead with hard work and results are inspiring. A skills matrix will keep us current with gaps, needs, opportunities and for sure, we need to ensure that Board members have the inspiration to think audaciously and boldly;

- Admin organizations – like sports – usually have administrators that do all the work and direct or delegate to the Board;
- Organizational structures need to support the work, reality, resources, decision making of the Board and organization and it's team or staff;
- Boards need flexibility with some structure – too formal can leave volunteers struggling to know how to contribute or muted with governance blasé;
- Board communication is essential – What's happening? What is expected of me? How can I be successful?; and
- Common values – in how we work, govern, direct, collaborate, work in and outside of the organization.

Multiple models of governance include:

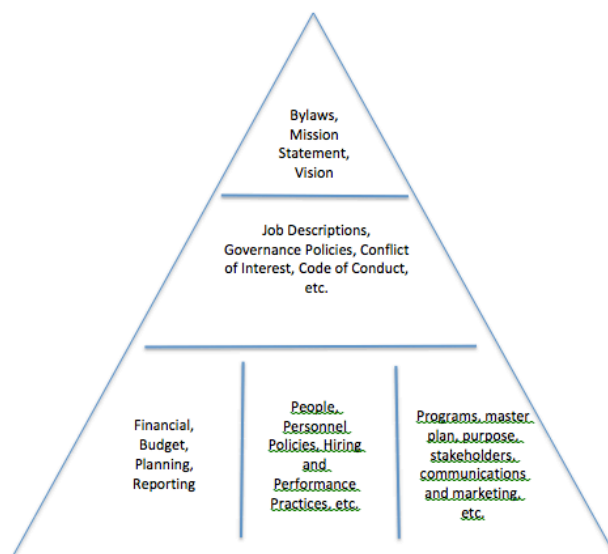
- **Administrative** – Where the Board does the work, there is no full time sr. staff person, and the duties and tasks of the organization are assigned to the working Board. A Holocratic governance structure may or may not have a sr. staff person and is characterized by a distribution of power among self-organizing groups, rather than the top-down authority in the typical hierarchical corporate culture model. A holocracy provides a flat management structure that distributes authority.
- **Policy** – Similar to the Carver Model of Governance or a Policy Board, the policy model implies there is senior leadership to do all the implementation, alone or with a team, and that the direction and vision is set and directed by the Board to their sr. staff person. Carver sets ends and limitations to the work of the sr. staff person. Convention or complementary policy models have the Board and sr. staff person working as a team with shared roles in oversight or implementation and planning.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that LEE operate as a Policy Governing Board of Directors, supporting and providing oversight to the Artistic Executive Producer, while also providing volunteer support, in a non-governance capacity to events, meeting notes, funding application support, etc.

Patti shared the governance pyramid, proposing that any organization benefits from clarity through structures aligned with.

- **Foundational Policies** such as Vision, Mission, Values, Bylaws – top of pyramid.
- **Governance Policies** such as Governance policies of the board and key operational policies to direct people, programs and money, committee terms of reference, code of conduct, conflict of interest, etc. – middle of pyramid.
- **Front line or Operational structures** in money, people and programs – base of pyramid.



ACT Two/ Scene Two AFTERNOON

- The afternoon was dedicated to overviews, presentations, discussions – understanding the Yukon First Nations performing arts experience and expectations (Melaina Sheldon), a scan of the environment in which LEE operates and the future, re: seeing around corners, opportunities and innovation – in the name of sustainability and staying ahead of the curve.

ACTION (what we planned): Defined insights from the SCAN that impact LEE, could be an opportunity or innovation to serve mandate, vision, sustainability, programming and more.

Outcomes (what we accomplished):

Larrikin contracted Melaina Sheldon to lead an engagement project, hosting interviews with stewards and leaders in Yukon First Nations performing arts including producers, writers, actors, etc. The report is attached to this document and represents distinct Yukon First Nations perspectives on the role and support that could be valuable from the Yukon-wide performing arts community and specifically, from Larrikin.

Highlights included:

- Larrikin and others have the opportunity to ‘share the privilege of the stage’ with Yukon First Nations in the performing arts; and
- Outreach, engagement and exploration of co-production or mentorship opportunities are examples of Larrikin’s role or opportunity with Yukon First Nations in the performing arts.

Contributing to a flourishing Performing Arts Sector in the Yukon:

In the environment or market in which Larrikin operates, we discussed what a healthy sector looked like and who was in the space and what elements contributed to healthy:

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|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| • Inspiration | • Venue or performance, | • Leadership |
| • Equality | high-quality theatre | • Respect |
| • Employment | • Coleagiality | • Relationships |
| • Money | • Collaboration | |

Larrikin (theatre production NGO) shares this community space with the following organisations:

*(*AOF means Arts Operating Fund)*

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative Labs North – A new NGO (2019) which advocates for the pursuit of artistic innovation and arts infrastructure in the Yukon• Gwaandak Theatre – IBPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Northern Stories. First Nations artists. NGO/*AOF• Nakai Theatre – uniquely Yukon theatre, NGO AOF• Open Pit Performance Group – verbatim theatre, mask, devised performance. NGO• Ramshackle Theatre – experimental, unique venue and puppets, annual Theatre In The Bush event. NGO• The Guild – community theatre. NGO/ AOF• Yukon Theatre for Young People – NGO• Yukon Arts Centre – Presenter, Crown Corporation, arts space, hosts, funded | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yukon Film Society – film presentation and workshops related to film making NGO• Yukon Circus Society – circus performance and workshops NGO• Borealis Soul – Professional dance performance NGO/AOF• Larrikin Ent Ensemble: a professional regional theatre company that presents at least one theatrical production, one play in development and one workshop per year. |
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Note: Larrikin differentiates through their unique commitment to unexpectedly innovative theatre that embraces traditional presentation structures.

ACT Three/ Scene One to the finale MORNING

- Here we brought together the culmination of our previous ACTS to affirm vision, mission, values and priorities – in the spirit of financial and programming sustainability, value and engagement.
- LEE defined goals to vision for the next 3 years and used the plan as a guide for future Board work and meetings as they implement their priorities. Included were outcomes for each priority, impacts, lead roles, timelines and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

ACTION (what we planned): A draft understanding of next steps was defined with timelines including plans for Board engagement and training needs and AD training/support

Outcomes (what we accomplished):

The morning of Day Three focussed on the definition, vision statement and mandate of Larrikin. We did an exercise in what Larrikin means, aspiration, ultimate impact from Larrikin in the future if it accomplished its goals and how the mandate could be refined to achieve that.

	Larrikin Mandate	To fulfill this mandate by:
Since founding 2015-2021	Larrikin is a non-profit, independent, professional production company dedicated to production, presentation, support, mentorship and relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing and presenting professional entertainment of the highest quality in a variety of mediums. • Supporting the employment and career development of entertainment professionals from within Yukon, throughout Canada, and internationally. • Providing mentorship for new and emerging artists, writers and technicians. • Creating and building strong relationships with local, territorial, national and international sponsors, communities, government and private enterprises.
From Today and future 2021-2024	Larrikin Entertainment actively defies mediocrity and defines professional theatre by producing bold, audacious, inspirational work for artists and audiences who believe in live performance magic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have strong awareness both in the market and to audience responses/desires • Have funding to sustain operational costs, specifically wages for the AEP and professional compensation for all involved in production • Strong perceived and known-value in the community we live, operate and perform in – in Whitehorse, Yukon and Canada • To participate actively and with conviction in the sector we hold space in – to be included and contribute to the growth and development of the sector • Inspire the Board and AEP to continue delivering bold, audacious, professional theatre.
Larrikin’s vision, mandate will be advanced through this 3-year Strategic Plan with a focus on funding, organizational development and sectoral collaboration.		

Vision and Mandate Summary:

Working Vision and Mandate of Larrikin Ent. Ensemble: to be approved before year-end 2021:

VISION: With a focus on creating magical, immersive experiences, Larrikin creates truly professional theatre.

MANDATE: To actively defy mediocrity and define professional theatre by producing bold, audacious, inspirational work for artists and audiences who believe in live performance magic.

Marketing Food for Thought:

Tagline ideas arose from this brainstorm including:

- Creating. Truly. Professional. Theatre
- Awesome Yukon Theatre
- From Page to Stage
- Good Shit with Great People
- The Best in Yukon Theatre
- Larrikin gives good theatre

Larrikin is:

- Sought-after;
- There is international recognition and awareness of our work;
- We are Yukon actors and Yukon talent;
- We collaborate with outside artists and professionals to push, raise the bar and grow exposure, reputation and market;
- We bring humor;
- We are colorful, sassy, cheeky, off-Broadway equivalent (<500 people), sexy;
- A northern Canadian regional theatre company that represents Yukon theatre creation locally, nationally and internationally

Language and concepts captured during brainstorming included:

- Creating – truly – professional – theatre;
- To be an employment creator, to inspire new professionals, to create opportunities for internships and mentorship, to compensate equitably;
- Larrikin produces theatre magic;
- We are bold, brilliant and believe in magic;
- We Play (pun intended)outside the lines; and
- The Yukon is important in Larrikin work and as we elevate our market to Canada and internationally

Aspirational Reputation of Larrikin.

Because of our work...

- Yukon theatre goers seek Larrikin productions and experiences;
- Yukon talent has notoriety – nationally and internationally – through Larrikin;
- Larrikin is a pre-eminent company defined with strength and consistent in their vision and production;
- Larrikin leads with professional production excellence; and
- Larrikin has the money to do their work, they have space in the community to deliver professional excellence in theatre, they have the talent to showcase production and impact, they have a strong and growing audience.