

DRAKE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

"Celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day"



MISSION STATEMENT

The Drake University Theatre Department Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee includes faculty and student representatives. This committee aims to promote and develop a culture of collaboration and inclusion in the department, college and university. The committee interprets diversity as embracing and respecting all races, nationalities, colors, creeds, religions, ages, disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preference. The committee works towards greater representation of those currently underrepresented in the department and in the theatre community.

VISION

We strive to cultivate a safe and supportive environment that celebrates the diverse, unique and multifaceted group of students and faculty in our department. We actively work to understand the complex and rich identities of self and those around us, and lean into difficult conversations related to equity, diversity and inclusion. We envision a department and university where equity, diversity and inclusion are recognized as core values that drive the development of all policies and practices. We believe in creating learning environments where hate, discrimination and microaggressions are not tolerated.

CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY!

October 12th, 2020

Indigenous Peoples' Day is a holiday that celebrates and honors Native American people and acknowledges their histories and culture. This day is celebrated in states across the country and began as a counter-celebration to Columbus Day. Many people reject celebrating Christopher Columbus, and believe he "represents the violent history of the colonization in the Western Hemisphere." The holiday was first adopted in Berkeley, California in 1992, to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. The state of Iowa adopted the holiday officially in 2018.

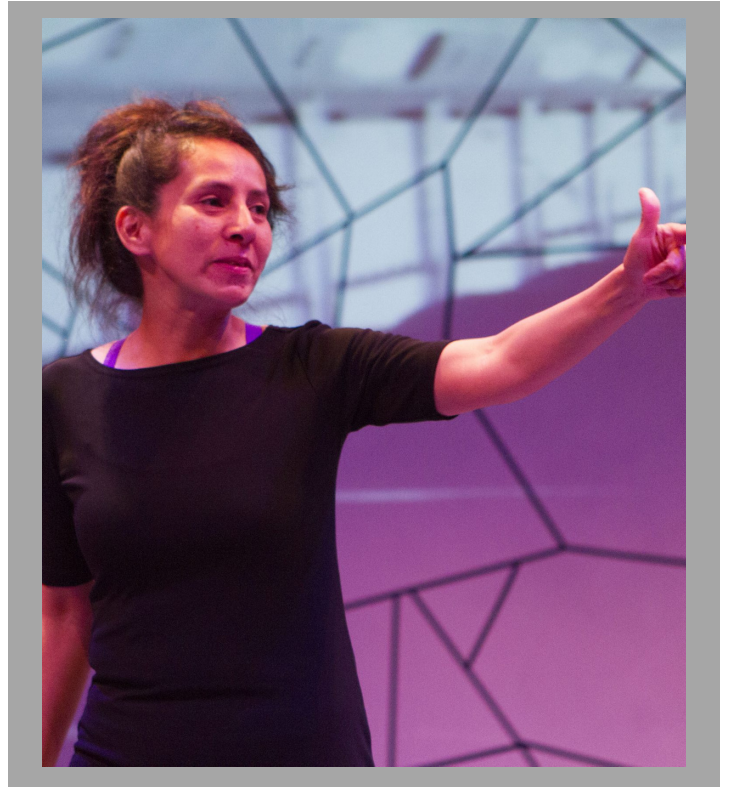


INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES'
DAY

NOTABLE NATIVE THEATRE IN THE TWIN CITIES

Based in the Twin Cities, **New Native Theatre** is a new way of looking at, thinking about, and staging Native American stories. Created in 2009 by playwright, Rhiana Yazzie, NNT produces, commissions, and devises authentic Native American stories for the stage which means NNT's artists are intricately connected to the concerns and voices of their communities. NNT's plays are shorthand meant to be played for its most vital audiences, Native people, because when specific stories are made for Native community itself, they become undeniably powerful for the broader community too, no translations required. New Native Theatre

has an open door policy, which means that any Native community member at any level can come learn and work with our company. Our company ages have ranged from three years old to 76. But the majority of the people we've worked with have been late 20s to mid 50s. It's clear that the folks we meet are not coming right out of high school looking to be actors and playwrights. Most have taken a circuitous path to theatre and our door is often the first they've knocked on. Our main focus is on Native adults because of the long history of determent from pursuing a career in theatre. We relish in giving opportunities to people that no one else considers due to age and ethnicity. We are proud of our unique position because now our artists are regularly found on Twin Cities stages and in film/television and even producing plays. No other company in the Twin Cities, currently or in the past, has consistently provided training and opportunities for Native artists in the frequency, cultural sensitivity, and success that NNT has done in only nine years.



[CLICK HERE](#) FOR A VIDEO SHOWCASE OF THEIR WORK.

COSTUME DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT

Asa Benally was raised on the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona. His grandmother, a traditional Navajo weaver and his father, a silversmith, fostered his love and appreciation for art and design. He went to on to study at the prestigious Parsons School of Design in New York City. In 2016 he completed his M.F.A. in costume design at Yale University. His design aesthetic is derived from an interest in history and strong individuals. He lives and works in New York City.



"Theater has a place for the native voice. We have been defined so long by others perceptions of us as a race that it's time for Native storytellers to create a voice. Through art our communities can experience healing."

ASA BENALLY

Read the entire article written by Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program Executive Director, Mary Kathryn Nagle [here](#).

Visit Asa's website [here](#).

DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

Kevin Loring is an accomplished Canadian playwright, actor and director and was the winner of the Governor General's Award for English Language Drama for his outstanding play, *Where the Blood Mixes* in 2009. The play explores the intergenerational effects of the residential school system. It toured nationally and was presented at the National Arts Centre in 2010, when Loring was serving as the NAC's Playwright in

Residence. A Nlaka'pamux from the Lytton First Nation in British Columbia, Loring created the Songs of the Land project in 2012 in partnership with five separate organizations in his home community. The project explores 100-year-old audio recordings of songs and stories of the N'lakap'amux People. Loring has written two new plays based on his work with the community including Battle of the Birds, about domestic violence and power abuse, and The Boy Who Was Abandoned, about youth and elder neglect. A versatile artist and leader Loring has served as the co-curator of the Talking Stick Festival, as Artist in Residence at the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre, as Artistic Director of the Savage Society in Vancouver, as a Documentary Producer of Canyon War: The Untold Story, and as the Project Leader/Creator, and Director of the Songs of the Land project in his home community of Lytton First Nation.

VISIT KEVIN'S WEBSITE [HERE](#).

CLICK THIS [LINK](#) FOR A VIDEO OF KEVIN LORING, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF NAC INDIGENOUS THEATRE.



PERFORMER SPOTLIGHT

Kimberly Guerrero Originally from Oklahoma, Kimberly is an enrolled Colville from Washington state, and also part Salish-Kootenai and Cherokee. Since she was a young girl in Oklahoma, Kimberly was a natural storyteller. She is a graduate of UCLA, and enjoys a career in entertainment as an actor, screenwriter and director, and also works with tribal communities throughout North America as an advocate for personal and community wellness.

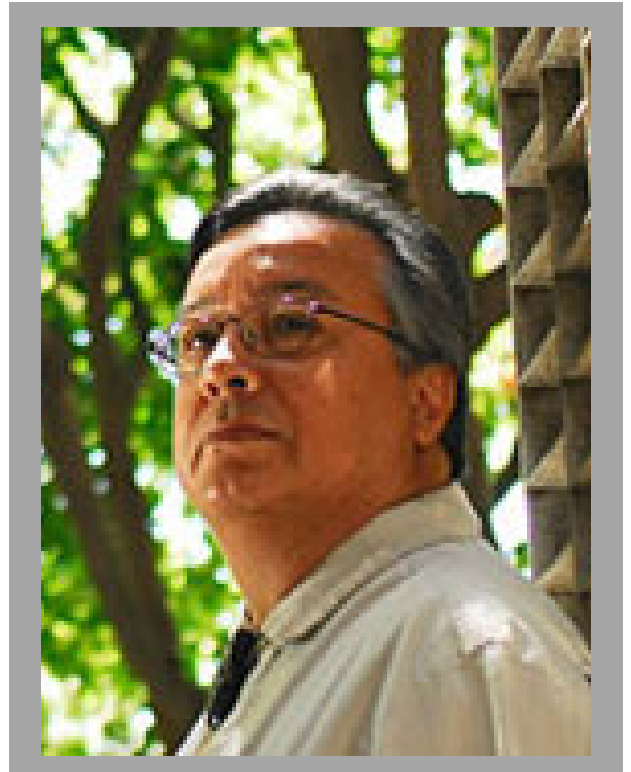


Though she has several film and television credits to her name, Kimberly is most often recognized as Winona, Jerry's Native American girlfriend on "Seinfeld." She also originated the role of Johnna Monevata in Tracy Lett's Tony Award-winning play "August: Osage County" and performed with the Steppenwolf ensemble in the Chicago, Broadway, London and Sydney productions. Kimberly is married to composer Johnny Guerrero and lives in Southern California where she serves as an Assistant Professor at the University of California, Riverside.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON KIMBERLY PLEASE READ THIS ARTICLE ENTITLED, "[KIMBERLY NORRIS GUERRERO: THE NATIVE AMERICAN ACTRESS YOU NEED TO KNOW](#)"

PLAYWRIGHT SPOTLIGHT

Hanay Geiogamah is a widely known Native American playwright and one of the few Native American producers in Hollywood. He was born in Oklahoma and is a Kiowa and Delaware Indian. He serves as a Professor in the School of Theater, Film, and Television at the University of California, Los Angeles. His plays *Body Indian*, *Foghorn*, *49*, *Coon Cons Coyote* and *Land Sale* have been performed throughout the United States and Europe.



On March 1, 1972, in New York City, Geiogamah founded the American Indian Theater Ensemble (later renamed the Native American Theater Ensemble) at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club with the help of Ellen Stewart. With the dual goals of establishing a resident company in Indian Country and helping develop Native performing arts within interested tribal communities, Geiogamah began the theater as a collaborative endeavor by recruiting a group of Native American artists from a range of communities, who formed the creative core of the new theater company. Recognizing the potential of performance as a means to revitalize cultural continuity after centuries of European American disruptions, Geiogamah described contemporary American Indian theater as “a logical development because in the tribal past, before the breakdown of the classic modes, communication had been person-to-person, group-to-group, through storytelling and dance and the symbolic communication provided by ceremony in a familial situation.” For Geiogamah, “The stage therefore seemed to offer Indians— provided only that they could control it—a means of self-realization and of presenting culturally authentic images of themselves.”

WILMER, S. E., editor. *Native American Performance and Representation*. University of Arizona Press, 2009.

“Drama has always been an integral part of Native American life. Those who have observed members of Indian tribes engaged in rituals are keenly aware of the intensity with which the oral tradition has been merged with various art forms. The spoken word commands respect. The history of the ages is known to all those who would receive it from the elders. At the same time, the appropriate ritual of song and dance becomes a synthesized oneness in the attempt to achieve the desired outcome.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HANAY, VISIT THIS [WEBSITE](#).

COMPOSER SPOTLIGHT

Deborah Cheetham is a queer, Aboriginal composer, soprano, actor, and playwright. She is part of Australia's "Stolen Generations" - an entire generation of Aboriginal children who were stolen from their families and raised by church missionaries. Cheetham graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with a Bachelor of Music Education and has spent her career advocating for Aboriginal rights. She composed Australia's first Indigenous opera, Pecan Summer, which tells the story of Aboriginal Australian protests in the 1930s, as well as Australia's first Aboriginal requiem, "Eumeralla, a war requiem for peace", which is sung entirely in the Guditjmarra language. Her second opera, Parrwang Lifts the Sky, which will be sung entirely in the Wadawurrung language, is set to premiere at the Victorian Opera in 2021. Awards include being appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2014 for her work as an opera singer, composer, and Indigenous advocate, induction to the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2015, and the Sir Bernard Heinze Memorial Award in 2019. Cheetham is currently a non-tenured professor at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music at Monash University, as well as the Composer in Residence for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.



DRAKE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"We begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the traditional, ancestral, unceded land of the Báxoje (Bah Kho-je) or Ioway, Sauk (Sac), and Meskwaki (Fox) peoples. We offer our respect to their elders both past and present, as well as future generations. We recognize that our presence here today is the result of the on-going exclusions and erasure of Indigenous peoples, who were the original stewards of this land. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, let the ties these Nations have to their traditional homelands be renewed and reaffirmed."

VISIT THE [DRAKE UNIVERSITY DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION WEBSITE](#) [HERE](#) TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.



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