

The Mush Hole

Truth, Acknowledgement, Resilience



Shé:kon-sewakwékon. Greetings Everyone, Kaha:wi Dance Theatre is grateful to be performing The Mush Hole on the ancestral territory of the Anishinaabeg Nations and the Haudenosaunee. Skén:nen kowa, to our Kahnyen'kehàka family from Tyendinaga, Bay of Quinte.

We acknowledge our kinship and Dish with One Spoon treaty relationship. We honour and acknowledge the waters and lands on which The Grand Theatre thrives today.

Nia:wen to the Survivors of the Mohawk Institute Residential School for sharing their truth and resilience with us, in the creation of this performance.

Nia:wen for the generous support for The Mush Hole tour from Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council.



The Mush Hole reflects the realities of the Mohawk Institute Residential School experience and offers a way to open dialogue and to heal, through acknowledging and honouring the spirit of Survivors and families impacted.

of Survivors and families that were impacted. The Mush Hole moves through the devastation of residential school with grace and hope for transformation and release. Opening a small window into the atrocities inflicted on 1000's of Indigenous children, it attempts to close the door on historical amnesia. A haunting portrayal, weaves through memories of Survivors, reliving traumas, school life, loss of culture, remembrance, returning to find each other. The residential school legacy and ongoing institutionalized erasure of Indigenous lives and culture is an issue that effects all Canadians.

Through specificity we find universality, The Mush Hole is a story about hope and finding light in dark places. As much as it speaks to intergenerational trauma it screams resilience. Every single element that is represented on stage came from Survivors sharing their experiences with us. After years of silence Mohawk Institute Survivors are courageously moving past shame and sharing their story. The Mush Hole is their Truth on stage.

- Santee Smith

The Mohawk Institute

a.k.a. The Mush Hole

The Mohawk Institute is the oldest residential school in Canada. after which all others were modelled. Operated in Brantford, Ontario from 1828 to 1970, it served as an industrial boarding school for First Nations children from Six Nations, as well as other communities throughout Ontario and Quebec. For 142 years, the modus operandi of the school was to forcefully assimilate children into Euro-Christian society and sever the continuity of culture from parent to child. Canada's first Prime Minister John A. MacDonald and Superintendant Duncan Campbell Scott were the main perpetrators of the residential school system. Quoting Scott, schools were designed "to get rid of the Indian problem". Run in military style, children learned very little in the way of schooling rather serving as labourers. They experienced a range of abuses from sexual, food deprivation experiments, and corporeal punishment at the hands of faculty and staff.

After closing in 1970, it reopened in 1972 as the Woodland Cultural Centre. In 2013, results of a Six Nations of the Grand River community referendum, 98% voted in favour of restoring the residential school as opposed to its demolition. The reasons for restoration of the site are: to transform it into an educational site, to continue to expose and reflect on the truths of the Canadian Government/Church assimilation policies, to remember and support Survivors and their legacies, to uphold the spirit of children that "served time" in the schools to heal. In 2014, the Mohawk Institute "Save the Evidence" campaign began and continues until such time as the building is restored. The Mush Hole performance is also an effort in commemorating and healing through the sharing of truth.



When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself, as head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.

John A. MacDonald, Prime Minister of Canada

The Mush Hole was created in connection with Survivors through their writings and interviews and the Survivor Series Talks at the Woodland Cultural Centre.

Creation began within the building and on the grounds of the Mohawk Institute. Survivors, such as Robert Hill, had a chance to witness and offer feedback to the performance along the way. She said, "The Mush Hole performance brought back memories and was very validating emotionally. I was able to relate to the chaos and turmoil in a relationship that was so similar to my own. I lived that life I was seeing on stage. The impacts of residential school are deep and left me with emotional and psychological scars."

Incorporating the bricks and mortar and the grounds of the Mohawk Institute, The Mush Hole travels into the environment and specific rooms where experiences took place. The Boy's Playroom is represented, once a small jail cell that had zero toys. It was a basement room where boys were made to fight and where they hugged the hot water pipes for warmth and stared out the window down the long driveway in wait of parents and family that

might take them home or not. Hardly a room, under the staircase cubby hole, was solitary confinement. The loudness of the boiler room concealed Survivors cries from abuse - sexual assaults there were perpetrated mostly on the boys. The laundry room, where the girls toiled, was also a loud room which hid abuse. The visitation room - where parents had supervised visits, so stress ridden that time was spent crying - where family gifts and packages were taken away. The school was a child labour camp with prison mentality, devoid of positive and nurturing touch.

Two generations of Survivors are represented in The Mush Hole, demonstrating the intergenerational effects, and the long history of residential school. Survivors speak about their inability to show and receive love, struggle with addictions and PTSD fallouts. Stripped of their humanity, students were identified only by their institutional #'s and not their names. Survivor brick scratchings, children's hidden chalk and pencil scribbles are still present at the Mohawk Institute.

The Mush Hole characters are as follows:

#48 / Ernest: a son,father, husband#29 / Mabel: a daughter,mother, wife

Ernest and Mabel met at residential school and had family: a son and a daughter. #34 / Walter: a son, brother, student #17 / Grace: a daughter, sister, student #11: the one who got away - a girl with no name or family; the runaway

The scenes are titled:

Under Lock & Key,

T'will be Glory,

Smashing Brick Crosses, What's Your Name?

Roll Call.

Serving Time,

Labour Camp,

Running the Gauntlet,

I'm So Lonely I Could Cry, The Boiler Man,

I Saw the Light,

Solitary Confinement,

Just A Closer Walk With Thee.

The One That Got Away, Remembrance,

Find My Way,

We Are in This Together.

Scenes depict Survivor experience's in specific locations. Site becomes an important concept in The Mush Hole, as it reflects the fact that the schools were also designed to more easily remove Indigenous people from their land and their sites.

The Mush Hole is the nickname Survivors and Six Nations community gave to the school due to the fact that mush was the staple food. Servings of mush were often 3 times a day and wormy. Withholding of food and hunger was an across-the-board ingredient to the Indian Residential School experience. Children were not nourished physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

The appearance of apples in The Mush Hole performance is significant. Being surrounded by an apple orchard, the starved and growing children were strictly forbidden to eat the apples and were severely punished if they picked any for themselves. Corporal punishment of strappings most often escalated into beatings, on the body's most sensitive parts. If students showed strengthen by not crying or reacting, the beating intensifies in effect of breaking them down.

Initiation into the school was done through violence. To fight and harden the spirit was a part of the school life for both boys and girls. The scene, "Serving time" the performance reflects the way Survivor's qualify their time at the school, as paralleled to a prison experience. It's not a stretch to know that many Indian Residential School Survivors later found comfort and security from within the prison system. This also reflects the disproportionate numbers of Indigenous people in prison today.

Background on The Mush Hole creation

Santee Smith began the initial concept during the University of Waterloo's Mush Hole Project 2016. Her vision for The Mush Hole began as a short performance installation created inside the Boy's Playroom. In January 2017, the Woodland Cultural Centre offered a creation residency. In February 2017, The Mush Hole closed the Art Gallery of Guelph's Exhibition 150 Acts: Art, Activism, Impact. In August 2018, The Mush Hole received a production residency at the Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity. The premiere was supported by the Prismatic Arts Festival in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Mush Hole was selected as a featured presentation at the Socrates Project McMaster University. Kaha:wi Dance Theatre is thrilled to be able to produce the 2022 tour, after 2 years of shut down by the pandemic.

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I want to get rid of the Indian problem...our objective is to continue until there is not an Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department...

Duncan Campbell Scott Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs

Production Credits

Creator/Producer/Director/Performer:

Santee Smith

Tour remount: Kaha:wi Dance Theatre

Advisors: Geronimo Henry, Thohahoken

Michael Doxtater, Roberta Hill

Performers: Jonathan Fisher, Julianne Blackbird, Montana Summers, Raelyn

Metcalfe

Composition/Arrangement: Jesse Zubot

Additional Composition: Adrian Dion Harjo

Songs: "Find My May", commissioned remix by Nick Sherman; "The Storm" by Iskwe; "I Saw The Light" by Hank Williams; "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" by Hank Williams; "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" by Patsy Cline; "T'will be Glory", Martin Family Singers from the album "Kaha:wi".

Video Tech/Director: Ryan Webber

Set/Original Lighting Designer: Andy Moro

Costume Designer: Adriana Fulop, Leigh

Smith, Elaine Redding

Production Support/Videographer:

Shane Powless

Production Tour Manager/Tour Lighting

Designer: Evan Sandham

Tour Stage Manager: Senjuti Sarker

Voice-over: Rob Lamothe

Production Support: Woodland Cultural Centre, Thru The Red Door, Art Gallery of

Guelph

Banff Centre for the Arts & Creativity:

- Production Manager Karin Stubenvoll
- Production Coordinator- Pia Ferrari
- Lead Video Technician -Jennifer Chiasson
- Video Practicum Participants -Kevin Oliver, Christopher Bussey, James MacKinnon
- Studio Technician, Cameraman, Video Actor - Aubrey Fernandez
- Audio Post Engineer Edward Renzi
- Lead Animator Sasha Stanojevic
- Animation and Design Practicum
 Participants Rimsha Nadeem, Frank
 Seager
- Video Actor Carver Kirby, Kevin Oliver

Company Support: Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council

Nia:wen Kowa / Acknowledgements:

Nia:wen to the people who have offered insight into the work: Katsi Cook, Louise McDonald, Jan Longboat, Amos Key Jr., Steven and Leigh Smith, Doug George-Kanentiio and through the Woodland Cultural Centre's Survivor Series Talks: John Elliot, Bud Whiteye, Sherlene Bomberry, as well as staff. In premiering The Mush Hole, Santee Smith acknowledges the generous support of Canada Council for the Arts; Ontario Arts Council; Hnatyshyn Foundation - REVEAL Indigenous Arts Award 2017; The Mush Hole Project 2016 - University of Waterloo; Art Gallery of Guelph - Exhibition 150 Acts: Art, Activism, Impact 2018; Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity - production residency; Prismatic Arts Festival – premiere; and The Socrates Project - McMaster University. Kaha:wi Dance Theatre acknowledges the support and hard work of tour presenters and their team.

The Collaborators

Santee Smith / Tekaronhiahkwa / Picking up the sky

Performing as #29 / Mabel

Santee is a multidisciplinary artist from the Kahnyen'kehàka Nation, Turtle Clan, Six Nations of the Grand River.

Santee trained at Canada's National Ballet School and completed Physical Education and Psychology degrees from McMaster University and a M.A. in Dance from York University. Santee premiered her debut work Kaha:wi - a family creation story, in 2004 and one year later founded Kaha:wi Dance Theatre which has grown into an internationally renowned company.

Santee's artistic work speaks about identity and Indigenous narratives. Her body of work includes 14 productions and numerous short works which tour nationally and internationally.



She is the recipient of numerous awards most recently the inaugural Johanna Metcalf Prize for the Performing Arts; Outstanding Production and Outstanding Performance Ensemble in Dance at the 2019 for Blood Tides; and her production The Mush Hole production received 5 Dora Mavor Moore awards in 2020. Santee is a sought-after teacher and speaker on the performing arts and Indigenous performance and culture. Smith is the 19th Chancellor of McMaster University.





Performing as #17 / Grace

Raised in Vancouver and based in Toronto,
Raelyn is from Plains Cree descent from
Saskatchewan. She is a graduate of The
Conteur Dance Academy. Her love of
performing began with ballet and transitioned
her into other styles, including musical
theatre.

She has trained with The Richmond Academy of Dance, MOVE: the company, and The Conteur Academy. In 2015, Raelyn had the pleasure of working with Conteur Dance Company, a preview development show under the direction of artistic director Eryn Waltman. Raelyn has also worked with Aria Evans who is the artistic director of Political Movement. In 2017 Raelyn performed Aria's work Voice of A Nation, commissioned by the Toronto Concert Orchestra. Revisiting her identity and background, Raelyn had the opportunity performing as a dancer at the 2018 Indspire Awards along with Santee Smith, the founding artistic director of Kaha:wi Dance Theatre.

Following her passion of performing both on stage and on film, Raelyn is a dedicated dance artist who wishes to continue her inspiration for others.

Montana Sumers

Performing as #34 / Walter, a.k.a. Wall Eye

Montana Summers is from the Oneida First Nation of the Thames. Montana began training in the exploration of Indigenous and contemporary dance when he was accepted into theIndigenous Dance Residency (2015) and Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's Summer Intensive (2016). Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's Artistic Director, Santee Smith, brought Montana onto projects including The Mush Hole (2016-20), I Lost My Talk - National Arts Centre Orchestra (2016) and for the Grand Act of Theatre - Continuance: Yonkwa'nikonhrakontàhkwen – Our Consciousness Continues Unchanged (2020), and The Honouring. Additionally, Montana previously acted for Backyard Theatre's one-time new production called The Other Side Of The River (2019).

Montana continues to work on his abilities in the performing arts with other small projects from Kaha:wi Dance Theatre, multiple collectives he is a part of, and other colleagues. Montana hopes to inspire youth among his community to chase their dreams.



Julieanne Blackbird

Performing as #11 / The One Who Got Away

Julianne is from the Mohawk Nation, Turtle clan and resides at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Julianne attends McKinnon Park Secondary School in grade 12. Julianne has been dancing since age 3, in all genres including Ballet, Pointe, Contemporary, Hip hop, Jazz, Lyrical, and Tap. Julianne danced in The Gift, in Toronto, in 2014 for Mercedes Bernardez. She danced with Santee Smith at the opening ceremonies of the North American Indigenous Games, World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education closing ceremonies 2017, Indspire Awards 2018 and is a core member of The Mush Hole. Julianne appeared as an extra in the documentary Desert Between Us & Them: Raiders, Traitors, and Refugees in the War of 1812 in 2013.

Jonathan FisherPerforming as #48 / Ernest

Jonathan is Anishinaabe from the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Ontario.

He has performed as an actor professionally for the past 26 years. Selected credits include: 20th Century Indian Boy (De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group), The Indolent Boys (Syracuse Stage), Toronto At Dreamer's Rock (Theatre Direct), The Bootlegger Blues (Arbour Theatre), The Rememberer (Manitoba Theatre for Young People), Almighty Voice & His Wife (Native Earth Performing Arts), The Rez Sisters (Magnus Theatre), Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing (Red Roots Theatre), fareWel (Prairie Theatre Exchange), Tribe (Ordway Music Theatre), A Trickster's Tale (Theatre Direct), Time Stands Still (Native Earth Performing Arts), New France (VideoCabaret), Raven Stole The Sun (Red Sky Performance), Copper Thunderbird (National Arts Centre), Stretching Hide (Theatre Projects Manitoba), Tales of an Urban Indian (Talk Is Free Theatre), 400 Kilometers (Lighthouse Theatre), Medicine Boy (Anishinaabe Theatre Performance), Night (Human Cargo), The Hours That Remain (Magnus Theatre), Elle (Theatre Passe Muraille), The Berlin Blues and Ipperwash (Blyth Festival), Reckoning (Article 11), Home Is A Beautiful Word (Persephone Theatre) and Weaving Reconciliation: Our Way (Vancouver Moving Theatre Company).

Jesse Zubot

Composition/Arrangement

Jesse is one of those unique composers/ producers whose praxis spans multiple genres and transcends contextualization. Known mainly as a violinist, he is also a multi-instrumentalist and tends to incorporate electronic manipulation and studio gadgetry within his work. Jesse is a 3-time Juno Award winning musician with his own projects, and has become an in demand producer having produced the Polaris Music Prize album 'ANIMISM' and the recent Polaris Music Prize Shortlisted album 'RETRIBUTION' by Tanya Tagaq. The Tagaq album, 'ANIMISM', garnered Zubot the award for 'Producer of the Year' at 2015's Western Canadian Music Awards and a nomination for 'Producer of the Year' at the 2015 Juno Awards. Zubot has recently delved heavily into the world of film scoring completing the score to the acclaimed Canadian film, Indian Horse based on the novel by the late Richard Wagamese. He was nominated for a 2018 Leo Award for 'Best Musical Score in a Motion Picture' for Indian Horse. He has been commissioned by CBC to write symphonies & arrangements for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Nova Scotia. Jesse has done work in the world of dance with choreographers such as Benoit Lachambre, Su-Feh Lee and Santee Smith.

Adrian Dion Harjo

Music Composition

Adrian is a multi-award winning "Jack of All Trades" when it comes to performing arts. He started singing Powwow style at 7, Fancy Dancing at 10, and then began Hoop Dancing at 12 years of age. His performances have taken him around the world numerous times to share his culture with global audiences. Currently, Adrian now owns his own production company, OvenBakedBeatz LLC where he produces music for TV, radio and live theatre. Adrian stands evenly in both worlds of Traditional Culture and Modern Music with credits including a NAMMY (Native American Music Award), CANAB (Canadian Aboriginal Music Award), Grammy (2001) and RIAA GOLD Certification. He has created compositions for Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's TransMigration, The Honouring and NeolndigenA.





Set / Original Lighting Designer

Andy is a mixed Euro/Omushkego Cree multi-disciplinary artist. His work includes performance installation, set, projection lighting and audio design with companies across the country. He is a cofounder/ director with Tara Beagan of ARTICLE 11, named for the article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, stating: Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize, maintain, protect and develop past, present and future manifestations of their cultures. such as historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature. ARTICLE 11 is currently touring Reckoning – a triptych tackling the fallout from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their installation DECLARATION has been featured at the Royal Ontario Museum, the National Arts Centre and Calgary City Hall and DECLARATION: ReMatriation - an international Indigenous collaboration at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. ARTICLE 11's Deer Woman has toured to Kia Mau Festival, Aotearoa, Edinburgh Fringe Festival @CanadaHub as a part of the Indigenous Contemporary Scene.

Tour Production Manager /

Tour Lighting Designer

Evan is a Health & Safety consultant specializing in the Entertainment Industry with his company Production Health & Damp; Safety. When not inspecting theatres and concert venues, he does a show every now and again to keep it real. For Kaha:wi Dance Theatre: Lighting Designer, SKéN:NEN (Premiere 2021); Production Manager, The Mush Hole (Premiere, 2018, National Tour 2019/20); Production Stage Manager, Blood, Water, Earth, (New Zealand Premiere, 2019); Production Manager, Blood Tides (Premiere 2018, Remount 2019); Tour Manager, Re-Quickening, (Atlantic Tour, 2017); Lighting Designer, The Honouring (National Tour, 2017); Lighting Director, NeoIndigenA (North American Tour, 2017). Select Credits: Safety Supervisor, UTAP, Netflix; Safety Supervisor, Reacher, Amazon Prime (2021) Health & amp; Safety Manager, WayHome/ Boots & Damp; Hearts, Republic Live (2016-19); Audio Lead, Maple Leaf Gardens (Basketball), Toronto 2015 PanAm Games; Course Operations, Tough Mudder Canada (2015-19); Scenic Designer, Les Misérables, Hometown Acting Company

(2013); Field Technician, 100th Grey Cup

Halftime Show, PRP (2012).



Ryan Webber

Video Design / Video Technical Manager

Ryan is a video and projection artist who develops projects for stage and installation. His love of real-time video art emerged through his regular VJ engagements at a number of Toronto electronic music events. He is also a designer and co-owner of future-forward thinking fashion label Plastik Wrap. For the last few years, he has been a core member of the Troikatronix Team, where he has worked extensively in Isadora, both as a platform for live video performance and, as a framework for creating rich interactive and data-driven installations. While he works and lives in Hamilton Ontario. his work has been shown across North America and Europe. Ryan strives to enrich the story being told, perhaps to give additional depth to drama or to increase the energy and movement of a scene. The ultimate goal is to have his work blend into the show seamlessly.



Adriana is a Slovakian born fashion and costume designer. In 1999 she moved to Toronto to pursue a career in fashion and costuming. In 2001, she started her own fashion label Plastik Wrap which led her into the costume design profession. In the last decade, Adriana has created costumes for many video and film productions, dancers, musicians, as well as; independent Her client list includes Space Channel, APTN, Kaha:wi Dance Theatre, Bralen Dance Theatre, Indspire

Awards and many others. Adriana's main passion

designing any style required for the job at hand.

is creating. She embraces the challenge of

Shane Powless

Videography/Production support

Shane is from the Mohawk Nation from Six Nations of the Grand River. He works as a videographer/photographer/editor/graphic designer/lighting technician/audio technician. Over the years, Shane has travelled extensively with various dance, theatre productions and musical groups providing the above services. His focus has been working within my Six Nations community, supporting our artists and cultural projects with organizations and artists such as: Woodland Cultural Centre, Kaha:wi Dance Theatre, Thru the Red Door, Six Nations Polytechnic Institute, Six Nations Council, Derek Miller Band, Logan Staats, Rochester Knighthawks, Lacey Hill and more.



Nick Sherman

Singer/Songwriter

Nick Sherman sings about life in Northwestern Ontario with a focus on finding strength and hope, even if the themes or topics can be heavy. "You have to go through these hardships to know what you're made of," Sherman says. But the Thunder Bay-based artist isn't afraid to confront issues that affect Indigenous youth in isolated communities, because they mirror those he faced growing up. "Winterdark"—a song about young Indigenous people facing insecurity, and even death, after being forced to relocate to larger urban centres for high school — was rerecorded for the new album because it's sadly still relevant today: "There were a lot of issues with young Indigenous people dying in Thunder Bay, being found in the river here. It's nine years later and that's still happening," Sherman says. "Every fall, plane loads of kids get flown into this city and they still come here with this threat, worrying about what could happen to them." While he still calls his rural birthplace of Sioux Lookout home, Sherman spent much of his youth out on the land, moving between his hometown, the small First Nation community of Weagamow Lake, and his family's trapline on North Caribou Lake. It was here in the depths of the Northern Ontario forest that his family members would play guitar as they tended their trapline, and Nick found himself soaking in songs and lyrics.

Senjuti is a South-Asian Hamilton-Toronto based multidisciplinary artist, designer and a manager. Some of her previous involvements include working with The AMY Project, The RISER Project, INDUSTRY, The Toronto Fringe and Hamilton Fringe.

Semiah Smith

Singer

Semiah is a Kanyen'kehá:ka (Mohawk) singer/songwriter from Six Nations, Ontario. She began professionally singing traditional music from her Haudenosaunee heritage in her late teens in solo performances and as a member of the singing trio, Hatiyo (the good voice). At the same time, she also began writing songs in English, however had never published any of her contemporary works until her first single, 'Nothing Can Kill My Love for You' debuted on May 14, 2021. Semiah continues to challenge herself in her songwriting to explore the nuances of identity, love, and the growing pains of her twenties.

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The Mush Hole

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