

fatty legs

EDUCATOR'S PACKAGE





Fatty Legs is a choral theatre adaptation of the book *Fatty Legs* by Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and Christy Jordan-Fenton. Check your school library for it or its early readers partner story, *When I Was Eight*. You may also wish to read *A Stranger At Home*, the sequel to *Fatty Legs* or *Not My Girl*, the sequel to *When I Was Eight*. These books tell the story of Margaret's struggle to reintegrate into her family once she returned from Residential School.

You can purchase any of these books from your local independent bookstore or online at:
<http://www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/home/search/?keywords=christy%20jordan%20fenton>

A Note to Teachers

Talking about Canada's history with Residential Schools can be intimidating and difficult. Especially when dealing with younger children who have likely never heard about this part of our country's story, it can be challenging to introduce topics that are linked to issues like systemic racism, abuse from care-givers, and a loss of culture. Further, we teachers are people too and we may also be grappling with what it means to be part of the Truth & Reconciliation process in our country. If we are of non-Indigenous heritage or are new(er) Canadians, we may be struggling to know how to understand the difference between cultural accountability and personal accountability for wrongs that have been done (and are still being done) to Indigenous peoples.

This production of Fatty Legs was created collaboratively by a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists who began work on the project in 2011. Over the past six years we have performed for thousands of school children and teens as well as for many public audiences. We have been amazed at how both elementary school-aged kids and adults feel like this show was written for them and the unique way the performance opens a safe space for dialogue about a very difficult issue.

Preparing students to see this show is a very different task than debriefing them. Based on our experience with previous tours of this show and interaction with many teachers who have brought their students to see it, this guide is split into two sections - one aimed at younger students and one at older pupils. If you teach middle school, you may want to read both and take a blended approach based on your sense of your students' level and readiness for more in-depth information. Each of these sections offers a way to introduce the shows and its topics as well as ways to debrief your students. The bulk of the material is aimed at debriefing since, for most students, this story really comes to life and feels "personal" only once they've seen the show.

Finally, the book upon which this show is based (Fatty Legs by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton with illustrations by Liz Amini-Holmes, published by Annick Press) also offers a complete book study guide aimed at students in grades 4-7 available for free download on the publisher's website. Certainly, a great way to prepare to attend this show is to do a class-based reading of the book and use the excellent materials designed to accompany it.

Guide Authors

A team of educators (one elementary, one middle school, one high school) worked with Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton (authors of the book, Fatty Legs) as well as Anishinaabe dancer and activist Sarain Carson-Fox to create/curate the material used in this guide. The cast of the show also has several educators and community workers among its ranks, including a Restorative Justice caseworker, a social work student, two school teachers, and a university professor. All are professional or semi-professional performers, some full time and some part-time, alongside their "day jobs."

Who the Show is for & How to Use this Guide

Although children as young as four have seen the show, we recommend it for grades 2 and up. The story and the art forms through which it is told are accessible to young viewers but are rich with meaning and nuance to older audiences. This guide is intended for teachers of all age-groups and, therefore, contains content appropriate for young children all the way up to high school seniors. Each page or section has been labeled, indicating whether it's geared at younger children (K-8) or older children (grades 6-12). The overlap is intentional; teachers are invited to review all the material and choose what they think is best suited to the needs and learning preferences of your students.

Residential Schools: Basic Timeline & Statistics

for Teachers or older students

1620	First attempt at residential school for indigenous children attempted near Quebec (open for 9 years)
1831	First contemporary residential school opens - Mohawk Institute in Brantford, ON
1842	Government commission recommends children are placed in schools that are far from parental influence
1850s	Assimilation of Indigenous people into Canadian society becomes government policy
1869	Gradual Civilization Act was passed, making it mandatory that all Indian men are "enfranchised" which meant they must renounce their Indian status so they could be absorbed into "regular" Canadian society. In order to become enfranchised, they must be "able to speak, read and write either English or the French language ... and [be] sufficiently advanced in the elementary branches of [Western] education ... [and be] of sober and industrious habits, free from debt, and sufficiently intelligent to be capable of managing his own affairs."
1867	The first Indian Act is passed claiming, "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change."
1907	Indian Affairs Chief Medical Inspector P. H. Bryce reports extremely high rates of tuberculosis and death of children in residential schools and that the Department of Indian Affairs was doing very little to address the problem.
1920	Attendance at residential school is made mandatory for all indigenous children.
1944	Senior Indian Affairs officers recommend that residential schools become day schools
1958	Indian Affairs Regional Inspectors recommend abolition of residential schools
1970	First residential school is transferred to band control (Blue Quills school in Alberta)
1970s & 80s	Most residential schools are slowly transferred to band control
1989-94	Churches issue apologies for their role in residential schools
1991	Testimonies of abuse suffered at residential schools start to come forward more publicly
1996	Last residential school closes (Gordon Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan)
2002	Government announces that residential school survivors will receive compensation
2006	Government signs Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement
2008	Government issues full apology to residential school survivors
2008	Truth & Reconciliation Commission launched

Statistics

- At the system's peak (in the 1930s) there were more than 80 residential schools functioning in Canada with 17,000 students registered.
- Approximately 1 in every 25 students died in residential school in the early 1900s (greater than the chances of a soldier dying in WWI)

Introducing Residential Schools

One way to share the history with younger students

Today we are going to talk about something from Canada's history. It was a type of school that we used to have in all the different areas of our country - these places were called Indian Residential Schools. Has anyone heard of this kind of school before?

Indian Residential Schools were set up by the government and churches. They were only for Indigenous children (see text box for a way to help students understand the term indigenous and other related terms if needed) and the schools were very spread out all over the country. They were called "residential" because the students had to live there, away from their families all year long, and sometimes for many years at a time.

Our country ran these schools for about 150 years - a very long time! Many, many indigenous children lived at these schools during this time.

Some of the things that children did and learned at Indian Residential Schools were similar to the kinds of things that you do and learn in school today (they learned to read and learned math, for example). All of the students that came to these schools were expected to leave their language, their cultural traditions, and their families behind forever. In many schools, teachers would give students a new name and would punish them if they spoke in their own language or sang songs they had learned with their families. As well, students had to do lots of chores, farm work, cleaning, and other really difficult tasks.

After the schools had existed for a while, our government said that all Indigenous students had to attend them whether they wanted to or not. Some children were picked up and taken far away to the schools when they were as young as 3 years old. The government said their goal for these students was that they would forget that they were indigenous so indigenous cultures would disappear in our country.

Who Are Indigenous People?

Many words have been used to describe Indigenous people over the years. Some of them include Aboriginal, Native, Indian, Métis, Inuit, Eskimo, Innu, and more. Some of these words have been used to insult indigenous people so it's important to understand that, if we are referring to all bands, groups, and communities in our country, the word that is now considered most appropriate is Indigenous.

Indigenous means the first people who ever lived on the land that we now call Canada. Indigenous people lived here for THOUSANDS of years before people with white skin or from any other cultural background came to Canada. Just like Canada has towns and provinces, Indigenous people had (have) territories and there are many different bands, groups, or nations. Does anyone know the names of any of the bands, groups, or nations that are from our area right here?

Today, many Indigenous people live in cities and towns along with people from many other backgrounds. Indigenous people also live in communities called Reserves.

Lesson Plan Options & Elements

Younger Students (grades 2-8)

Before the Show

- Introduction:
 - The show we are going to see is someone's TRUE story but it was turned into a book and then into this show. The performance has 14 singers, a dancer, a narrator, a conductor, a choreographer, plus lights and costumes.
 - The story is called Fatty Legs - a very unusual title! It's about a little girl named Olemaun (oo-leh-mon)
- Explain the history of residential schools (see page 5 of this guide for something you can read to your students if you are unsure about how to begin sharing this part of Canada's history)
- Show your class this short video about the book Fatty Legs (feel free to read the subtitles aloud if your students need support to read as quickly as the subtitles require): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rJ9awMQ1w8>
- Read the book Fatty Legs or excerpts from it aloud as a class
- Facilitate a debrief/discussion on the story, helping the students draw out:
 - Details about Margaret's home, customs, dances, dress, food, etc. to appreciate the unique aspects of her culture (p. 11 of this guide has a few photos of Margaret, her home area, and the residential school she attended)
 - Their observations and feelings about her school
 - The differences between her school experience and their school experience
 - The role of bullying in the story - there's more than one type of bullying in Fatty Legs. Who are the bullies? How is the bullying different between the kinds of people who bully Margaret?
- Use the Fatty Legs Book Talk section of the book. Recommended sections:
 - Just Imagine
 - What's the Setting
 - Who are the Characters
 - What's the Story About
 - Who Wrote the Book

After the Show

- Ask the students what they liked or didn't like about the show
- Ask the children how they felt about Margaret and what happened to her
- Create thought bubbles for Margaret as a class
- Reinforce the following:
 - Residential Schools do not exist anymore but many, many people who went to residential school live in our community and country
 - Not every Residential School was the same as this one but former students from every school have come forward to tell about experiences of mistreatment and abuse.
 - Many children were forced to go to Residential School even if they or their parents didn't want them to
 - The children who went to Residential School were very strong but being away from their families made many of them very sad and caused them to have many struggles when they grew up.
- Photocopy and distribute some or all of pp.12-14 this guide: Feedback Sheet, colouring sheet (lower elementary), Write to a Performer and invite your students to complete them.

Residential Schools | Preparatory Info

For Middle & High School Students

Canadian Residential schools for Indigenous children were called Indian Residential Schools and date back to the 1830s. However, groups of people from Europe who came to this land had been trying to take Indigenous children for the purpose of assimilating them into white culture since the 1600s. Over 130 Residential Schools existed across the country and the last school only closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Indigenous children and to try to "kill the Indian in the child."

During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools often against their parents' wishes. Most were forbidden to speak their language, use their given names, and practice their own culture. In many cases, children suffered terrible physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Thousands of children also died. While there is an estimated 80,000 former students still living today, the ongoing impact of Residential Schools has been felt throughout generations and has contributed to social struggles that continue to exist in Indigenous communities.

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada delivered a formal apology in the House of Commons to former students, their families, and communities for Canada's role in the operation of the residential schools. Although this was a landmark event, there are still large-scale systemic injustices in the relationship between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples. Also in 2008, the government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which spent seven years travelling the country listening to the stories of Residential School survivors. The commission ended their work by issuing 94 Calls to Action to the Canada government and people. These calls to action are meant to help non-Indigenous Canadians rebuild trust and positive relationships with Indigenous people.

TERMINOLOGY EXERCISE

Make sure you know the definition of the words/phrases underlined in the paragraphs above as well as the terms listed below. In addition to defining these terms, write a sentence about why each term is significant to understanding the history of residential schools in Canada.

Residential School
Indigenous
Assimilation
Culture
Childhood Development
Era
First Nations
Métis
Inuit
Practicing culture
Survivor
Systemic Injustice
Settler
Dominant Culture
Privilege
Power

Lesson Plan Options & Elements

For Middle & High School Students

Introduction

- The show we are going to see is called Fatty Legs (strange name! Let's find out why it's called this). It's a *choral theatre* production, which means it has vocal music (14 singers plus a conductor), a dancer, and an actor. The show tells a story.
- The story is based on TRUE events and it was made into a book. After the book was written it was adapted into a show for the stage.
- It's about an Inuit girl who goes to Residential School. That little girl is now an Elder in her 80s but her daughter-in-law, a children's book author, recorded her story for this book.
- Give an historical overview of the history of Residential Schools (a narrative option for this is provided on p.5) and show or read the timeline and statistics provided on p. 2. Discuss their impressions of the Residential School system based on these dates and stats.

Pre- or Post-Show Multimedia Options (click on underlined text for web link)

- Shi-Shi-Etko (6 minutes). Suitable for Middle & High School students. An illustrated reading of a book describing the Residential School experience.
- Residential School Apology (11 minutes). Best suited for High School Students (uses fairly advanced vocabulary and concepts).
- Podcast - Discussion with the Authors (second link from the bottom on this webpage - approx 5 minutes). Audio only.
- Where Are the Children (interactive website). Suitable for Middle & High School students. Many resources, including video testimonials from survivors, timeline, photos, list of further resources. Available in French and English. There is a great deal of in-depth information here and it would be a good platform for independent research with a reflection type assignment.
- TRC 94 Calls to Action (PDF). Best suited to High School students. This is a large document but it would be very worthwhile to have students read all 94 statements and write a report on the five they feel are the most urgent.
- Fatty Legs Book Talk (found at the back of the book). Recommended sections:
 - Just Imagine
 - What's the Setting
 - Who are the Characters
 - What's the Story About
 - Who Wrote the Book
- Class Discussion about the themes of the show and about privilege using the Privilege Calculator sheet on p. 9 of this Guide. Having a discussion about the role of privilege in culture helps students parse the power dynamics that are at play between the government (formed mostly of representatives of the dominant culture and by people with a lot of personal privilege) and Indigenous people. It also helps to highlight what the role of non-Indigenous Canadians can be in bringing about justice and reconciliation.
 - Questions that may help provoke discussion:
 - Why do you go to school? Compare this to how you think Residential School students felt.
 - What does the word institution mean to you? What do you think that word came to mean for Residential School survivors and how might it impact their experience and feelings about schools or other institutions (hospitals, governments, etc)?
 - What does it mean to be an outsider?
 - What was the role of bullying in this book? Who were the bullies? What was the role of power in the bullying relationships?
 - What would you give up in order to get an education (eg. Your family, your home, your favourite foods, your identity, the hair on your head, your name). What do you feel is *right* or *fair* to expect people to give up for an education?

- Based on what you have learned about Residential Schools, what do you think the lasting effects of these experiences might be on the former students/survivors.
- What about lasting effects of these experiences on the children or grandchildren of survivors?
- What is privilege? How much do you think you have? (See the privilege calculator sheet on p. 9)
- What are ways privilege was used to harm others in Fatty Legs?
- What are ways people can use privilege for good?
- How is privilege at work today when it comes to the way Indigenous people interact with or are served by the Canadian government?
- What questions do you have now about the show, the theme, the performers? Can we find the answers?
- Write a review or critique of the show similar to the way a newspaper or blog might
- Musical Investigation of Snowforms by R. Murray Schafer (second piece of music in the show) for music students: This composer used graphic notation. Compare it to traditional Western notation (what are the similarities and differences). An excellent recording with a video of the score in real time can be found here: [Snowforms on Youtube](#). Try converting a simple song (a nursery rhyme?) into graphic notation and see what you can come up with!
- Look at the provided map (p. 10) of Indigenous territories in Canada and explore the concept of land ownership.
- Have the students research the different land treaties that exist(ed) between the Canadian government and Indigenous people over time. Evaluate whether the treaties have been honoured. Some suggested websites:
 - [CBC Summary of the Two-Sided Story](#)
 - [Modern Land Claim Treaty Issues](#)
 - [Canadian Government summary of treaties](#)
 - [Indigenous VS Government view of treaties](#)

CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE

circle the options that best match you

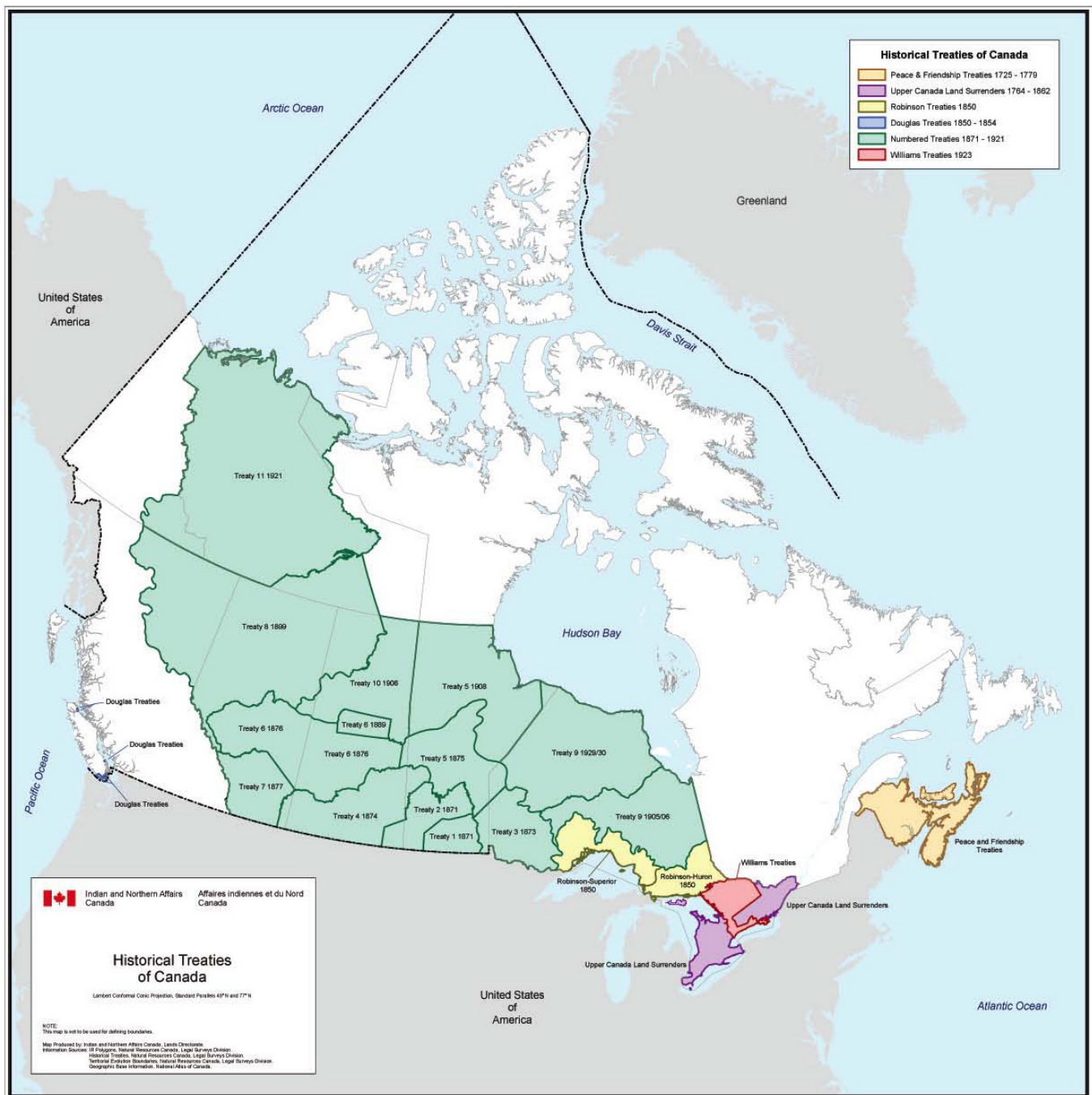
RACE		SEX		ORIENTATION		GENDER	
White	+100	Male	+50	Straight	+50	CIS	+50
Asian	-25	Female	0	Bisexual	+10	Trans (passable)	0
Other	-25	Non-binary	-50	Asexual	0	Gender Queer	-25
Black	-100			Gay	-50	Trans	-100
Arabic	-250						
Indigenous	-500						

RELIGION		COUNTRY		STATUS	
Jewish	+25	Europe: top - Scandinavia, UK ...	+100	Plutocrat: (> \$1 Trillion/y)	+1000
Christian	+25	Canada, Australia/NZ	+75	Rich: (\$500K - \$1 Million/y)	+500
Non-religious	+25	United States	+50	Affluent: (\$150K - \$500K/y)	+100
Buddhist	0	Asia: top - Singapore, Japan	+25	Upper Middle: (\$65K - \$150K/y)	+50
Hindu	-10	Europe: mid - Spain, Italy Poland ...	0	Middle Class: (\$45K - \$65K/y)	0
Sikh	-25	Middle East: top - UAE, Saudi Arabia ...	0	Lower Middle: (\$30K - \$45K/y)	-50
Muslim	-50	Europe: low - Greece, Latvia ...	-25	Poor: (> \$30K/y)	-100
Jewish & Black	-50	Asia: mid - India, South Korea ...	-25	Homeless: (> \$5K/y)	-500
Other: choose closest		Central & South America	-25	Permanently Institutionalized	-500
		Russia	-25		
		West Indies	-50		
		Asia: low - Myanmar, North Korea ...	-100		
		Africa: top - South Africa, Ghana	-100		
		Middle East: low - Afghanistan ...	-200		
		Africa: low - Tanzania	-200		
		Other: choose closest			

ATTRACTIVENESS		ABILITY		HEIGHT	
10/10	+50	Able-bodied	+50	Tall	+25
Attractive face	+10	Physically Healthy	+50	Average	+10
Overweight	-10	Mental Illness	-50	Short	0
Unattractive face	-10	Physical Disability	-50	Extremely Tall	-10
Disfigured	-100	Deaf/Blind	-50	Extremely Short	-25
		Social Disability	-100		
		Cognitive Disability	-100		



Historical Treaties Map



Modern Treaties Map



For an interactive map that indicates original territories, language groups, and treaties by postal code or visual selection, visit <https://Native-Land.ca>

This website has an excellent teacher resource section as well.



The landscape of Banks Island - Margaret's home. There are no trees there because it is so far North that they do not grow. Margaret found trees really scary when she first arrived at Residential School.

Margaret and her sisters when she was a little girl. This is an example of the traditional clothes she and her family wore to keep warm. Compare these clothes to a blouse, a tunic, and some knee-socks.



This is the Residential School that Margaret attended. The nun in the picture was much nicer than the Raven. Here you can see the clothes that the children wore.

fatty legs

Name: _____

School: _____

Feedback Sheet for Younger Students

Class: _____

What do you remember most about the story of Fatty Legs? If you could change something about Margaret's story, what would it be?

Sheets can be mailed to:
Xara Choral Theatre: 5675 Spring Garden Rd, PO Box 36144, Halifax, NS B3J 3S9
or scanned and emailed to conductor@xara.ca



Margaret plays with two traditional toys in her igloo.

fatty legs

Name: _____

School: _____

Younger Students Write to Performers

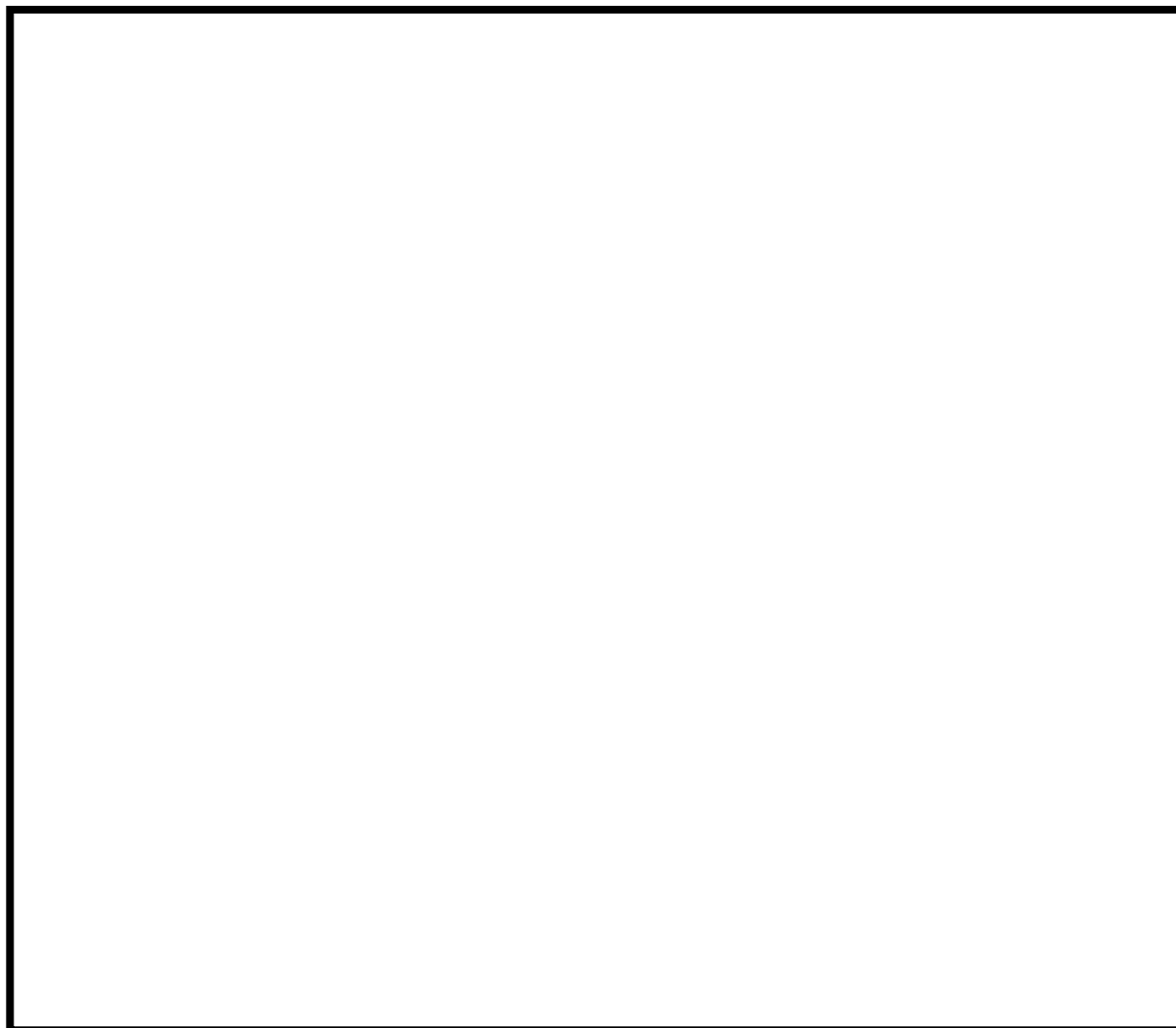
Class: _____

The performer I am writing to is (circle one):

Sarain (the dancer) Rebecca (the narrator) Xara Choral Theatre (the singers)

Christina (the conductor)

Claire (the choreographer)



Sheets can be mailed to:
Xara Choral Theatre: 5675 Spring Garden Rd, PO Box 36144, Halifax, NS B3J 3S9
or scanned and emailed to conductor@xara.ca

Fatty Legs - Performer Bios

SARAIN CARSON-FOX

Sarain Carson-Fox has a longstanding career as a professional dancer and also works in film, clothing design, and modeling. This flight-footed fashionista is no stranger to the spotlight but she also has a steadfast conscience and sense of direction.



Of Anishinaabe lineage, Carson-Fox is a passionate spokesperson for her aboriginal community north of Toronto and wears the beauty of her heritage with pride. She has been studying, practicing and performing as a professional dancer for the past 15 years, having attended the Canadian Children's Dance Theatre, the Quinte Ballet School and the Alvin Ailey Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in New York City. She has performed at The Canada Dance Festival 2008, The

Barrie Jazz And Blues Festival VIII, the 2002, 2007 and 2012 Aboriginal Achievement Awards, and for two summers with the Ajkun Ballet Theatre Company in New York City. She is a member of Kahawaii Dance theatre and has attended three indigenous dance residencies at The Banff Centre, allowing her to work with Neil Iremia of Black Grace and Javier Dezule of Dezule dance. Sarain is a past member of Untitled Collective; a NYC based Australian aboriginal modern dance collective.

Sarain is focused on the idea of saying yes, and is passionate about passing that mantra onto the youth that she works with in workshops and residencies. She endeavours to young people them to express themselves without any social barriers - to dive deeply into the idea of dance not only as a technique, but to explore social dances and how humans communicate through their bodies. She incorporates all kinds of modern and traditional dance forms, especially the traditional Anishinaabe form of, "Round Dancing" which only recently has become known outside of Indigenous circles as a protest dance (Idle No More).

sarainfox.com



REBECCA THOMAS

Rebecca Thomas is the Halifax Regional Municipality's sixth and current poet laureate. A spoken word artist and the current Halifax Slam Master, Thomas also holds the position of Coordinator of Aboriginal Student Services at the Nova Scotia Community College. Coming



from an indigenous background and with a family that has been greatly impacted by residential schools, she has come to recognize the lack of prominence given to First Nations perspectives within the history of Canada. As a Mi'kmaw woman, she embraces the opportunity to bring her voice to the public discussion about truth, justice, and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. She believes that the arts and poetry can help people heal in ways beyond traditional therapies.

Rebecca is also an active supporter of youth engagement through poetry and the arts and has volunteered the past two years with the Halifax Youth Slam Team. Over the last several years she has organized a variety of workshops and poetry series' with a focus on youth empowerment and diversity education.

XARA CHORAL THEATRE

Xara Choral Theatre provides a professional artistic environment for women and an innovative approach to choral performance that is remaking the idea of the "choir." Led by Artistic Director Christina Murray and choreographer Claire Leger, the group weaves together contemporary choral singing, expressive movement, and spoken text in breakthrough



performances that are transformative for audiences and performers alike. In July 2013, Canada's national choral competition proclaimed Xara Choral Theatre Ensemble the top women's choir in the country. In 2015, the group released their first full-length album, *Here on these Branches* which was nominated for both an East Coast Music Award and a Nova Scotia Music Award. Recent highlights include an extensive tour of the Maritime provinces with their acclaimed show *Fatty Legs*, and a collaboration with internationally renowned author Ami McKay in *The Hours Turn to Nothing*.

Xara was formed in 2007 when conductor Christina Murray and a team of four young women began a year-long process to create an ensemble that embodied their passion for music making, integrative arts, and community building. From 2008-2012, Xara operated as a second ensemble and outreach project of the award-winning Halifax Camerata Singers. Now fully established in their own right and recognized both nationally and internationally, Xara operates under the auspices of its own non-profit society and offers several education and outreach initiatives aimed at youth. Their work is supported by strong ticket sales, project grants from the Province of Nova Scotia and the Canada Council for the Arts, operating funding from the city of Halifax, several corporate partnerships, and the generosity of private donors.

Recent Recognition & Awards

July, 2011: Mainstage feature performance at International choral event, *Festival 500*

October, 2011: Commissioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to create a work of choral theatre in partnership with Indigenous artists

April, 2012: Featured in Titanic 100 international broadcast

July, 2013: 1st place in women's choir category of the National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs

June, 2014: Provincial Tour (Liverpool, Annapolis Royal, Middle Musquodoboit)

May, 2015: Album Release - Here On These Branches

May, 2015: Radio documentary feature: CBC Yellowknife

May, 2015: Atlantic Canada Tour (19 shows)

Fall, 2015: East Coast Music Award Nomination - Here On These Branches

Winter, 2016: Nova Scotia Music Award Nomination - Here On These Branches

Summer/Fall, 2017: "150 Forward" Tour of Maritimes (6-10 shows) - *The Hours Turn to Nothing*

October/November, 2017: Tour of Southern Ontario (13 shows) - *Fatty Legs*