

**Carleton University\***  
**Winter 2025 Preliminary Course Outline**  
**Department of English**

**ENGL/INDG 2709**  
**Indigenous Theatre**

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\*On the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabe Peoples

**\*\*\* This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

**Indigenous Theatre from Northern Turtle Island**

This course will explore the stories, priorities, and cultural contexts of contemporary Indigenous theatre practitioners, from the early 1980s Indigenous theatre renaissance led by Thompson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* to plays that take up social, political, and community issues around residential schools redress, MMIWG, cultural resurgence, land restitution, resource extractivism, climate apocalypse, and holistic wellness. We will consider how the emergence of Indigenous Theatre from Native Earth Performing Arts Centre in the 1980s to the establishment of an Indigenous Theatre stream at the National Arts Centre in 2019 contributes to resurgence and sovereignty movements across Northern Turtle Island. Throughout the term, we will investigate how Indigenous ways of being and knowing—that centre kinship relations with community, ancestors, and lands—are manifested in the practices of play creation and performance. This approach will require careful attention to the knowledge, cultural, ceremonial, and political contexts for plays. Course work will involve play readings, in-class writing, class discussion, a live theatre review, scene study or final project. We will have an opportunity for experiential learning by going to the National Arts Centre on Thursday January 16<sup>th</sup>, 8 p.m. to witness an Inuit theatre production, *Qaamma (Light)* by Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. (Please reserve this time in your Thursday night schedule.)

**Assignments:**

“Situating Oneself” Narrative	10 %
Participation/Attendance	10 %
Three Reading Responses/In-Class Writing (5 marks each)	15%
Play Review	25%
Scene Study or Creative Project	30%
Learning Journey Reflection	10%

**To pass this course, you must complete ALL assignments and submit them on time (with exceptions for illness). A student missing 50% (12) or more classes will not be**

**able to pass the course (unless there are extenuating health or other circumstances discussed with the professor in advance).**

**List of Plays:**

**For Purchase:** Available at Black Squirrel Books & Cafe (Bank near Sunnyside)

- Kevin Loring (N'lakap'mux). *Where the Blood Mixes* (Talonbooks, 2009).
- Drew Hayden Taylor (Michi Saagiig Anishnaabe). *Cottagers and Indians* (Talonbooks, 2006).
- Yolanda Bonnell (Anishinaabe/South Asian). *Bug/Manidoons* (J. Gordon Shillingworth, 2020).
- Yvette Nolan (mixed heritage Algonquin). *The UnPlugging*.

**Additional Plays from podcast, video, e-book sources:**

- Thompson Highway (Cree). *The Rez Sisters* (published in Helen Gilbert, ed. *Postcolonial Plays*, 2001. On ARES).
- Marie Clements (Dene Métis). *UnNatural and Accidental Women*. (Available as an e-book, from Carleton library).
- Kevin Wong with the Gray siblings of Aamjiwnaang First Nation. *The Chemical Valley Project* (documentary theatre, film version).
- Kevin Loring (Nlapamux) et al. *The Pipeline Project*. In *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 2020). (Available from Carl. Library OMNI search bar.)

**Learning Objectives:**

- introduce students to Indigenous resistance and resurgence through various forms of theatre and performance practice.
- recognize major themes, issues, and cultural attributes specific to Indigenous, Inuit, and Metis communities, as contexts for their theatrical production and reception.
- understand and apply critical terms in theatre, and more specifically, Indigenous theatre and culture (oral tradition, trickster figures, storywork, Indigenous time, Indigenous futurisms, Indigenous refusal)
- understand key interventions and critical debates relating to Indigenous plays as vehicles for decolonization, unsettlement, and resurgence
- understand how experiences of community, gender, sexuality, and cultural agency are enacted in contemporary Indigenous drama
- develop skills that enable informed, respectful responses to Indigenous theatre in Northern Turtle Island