Carleton University*
Winter 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL/INDG 2709A
Indigenous Theatre

Prerequisites: second year standing

Wednesdays and Fridays 2:35-3:55pm
In-person, not suitable for online students

Prof. Brenda Vellino
Email: Brenda.Vellino@carleton.ca

***On the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe 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, holistic wellness, land restitution, resource extractivism, and climate apocalypse. 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 that may open up understanding of the ways Indigenous theatre practitioners claim space for cultural resurgence and sovereignty. Course work will involve play readings, scene studies, discussion forum responses, class discussions, and a live theatre review.

On Indigenous Resurgence: Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Anishnaabe): "In building a radical resurgent movement--and by radical I mean one that addresses the root--I think we need to be centering our attachment to each other, the land, and our intelligence systems. We need to be creating a present that will inspire a radically different future than the one settler colonialism sets out for us. This means taking on heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and antiblackness, and actualizing Indigenous alternatives on the

ground, not in the future but in the present. Indigenous alternatives that are rooted in Indigenous intelligence, or to again use Coulthard's term, `grounded normativity.' This means a land base, and nations that are physical, emotional, spiritual, artistic, and creative spaces where Indigenous peoples can be Indigenous." "Indigenous Resurgence and Co-Resistance." *Critical Ethnic Studies* (2016)

Assignments:

"Situating Ourselves" in family, land, territory Narrative:	10 %
Participation: in-class, discussion forum	10 %
2 Play Responses: Discussion Forum (alternating weeks, starting in week 3):	20%
Scene Study I:	25%
1 Learning Journey Reflection:	10%
Scene Study II or Creative Project:	25%

To pass this course, you must complete ALL assignments and submit them on time (with exceptions for illness). A student missing 50% (6) 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.

**Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Climate Statement: We are witnessing the effects of climate change escalate rapidly, changing the character of the world around us. We recognize that climate change disruptions impact peoples and multi-species worlds unevenly across many planetary regions, territories, and communities due to racialized capitalism and extractive settler colonialism. In this class, selected plays will help us consider and discuss these impacts as part of the larger project of sharing and creating knowledge from an Indigenous informed and decolonial perspective.

List of Plays:

For Purchase:

- 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 sources:

- Kevin Loring. *Where the Blood Mixes*, "Play Me" audio podcast, CBC Radio.
- 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**.**)

Resources:

- Jesse Archibald-Barber (Cree) et al, edited. *Performing Turtle Island: Indigenous Theatre on the World Stage* (2019: ebook in Carl library
- Lindsay Lachance (Algonquin). *The Embodied Politics of Relational Indigenous Dramaturgies* (2018): https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0363947

Learning Objectives:

- introduce students to a variety of contemporary examples of 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 well as the contexts of 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)
- engage required historical background and theoretical tools for introductory understanding of Indigenous Theatre
- understand key interventions and critical/theoretical 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