

## *Dancing the Land: embodied stories from Haida Gwaii*

Project Coordinator: Julia Weder

Project facilitator/story weaver: Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde

Creative Team/cultural support: Jenny Cross, Nika, Gwaii

Location: Haida Gwaii

Timeline: September 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

Participants: TBA

Materials: journal and a pen

Project description: *Dancing the Land* is a 3-day series of land and community-based workshops created through an Indigenous methodologies and applied theatre process. *Dancing the Land* hopes to reflect the participants embodied teachings of the land, body and personal story for the purpose of establishing and discovering a deeper sense of place and belonging within their own bodies and territories. Participants will be engaging in embodiment training on the land, movement, and sound exercises to support the creation of original performances on the land with a focus of celebrating and connecting authentically to their bodies and territories through dance, performance, and story-telling.

*Dancing the Land* was developed in consultation with local knowledge keepers, and traditional dance teachers from Haida Gwaii. Establishing relationships to the local nation was the basis of creating the project vision and structure. Proper protocols and consultation were established through community connections to ensure, cultural competency and safety. The participants for this project will be recruited by this circle of knowledge keepers and be asked to create new stories rather than create performances based on traditional Haida origin or mythologies. This is for the purpose to ensure the protection of sacred knowledge.

The 3-day workshops will focus on engaging the participants holistically through experiential exercises that honour the whole human experience. The emotional, physical, spiritual and mental aspects of the human being will become sites of knowledge and contribute to building choreographic and gestural dance material. The stories of the participants will immerse through their own intrinsic wisdom, thereby creating new pathways of inner knowing. The land will also support their creation processes and pathway of self-learning that is deeply grounded in Indigenous land-based knowledge and recognize that cultural identity is interwoven with and always been connected to 'land.'

My role as an Indigenous maker/storyweaver is to create a safe working artistic environment that supports group cohesion, trust, vulnerability, and empowerment through incorporating ceremonial circles, mindfulness practices, and social/political discussions to prepare participants to be able to fully immerse themselves into this quest of healing and transformation while embodying the earths knowledge and wisdom. I offer improvisation, impulse movement and sound exercises for the purpose of connecting participants to their own understanding of life, the universe and, most importantly, themselves. My role is upholding and witnessing the body

wisdom and knowledge of the participants and to support the development of co-weaving their individual and collective stories together to create embodied performances on the land.

*Dancing the Land* will be archived and documented throughout the 3-days. The film documentation will also support the participants by: providing a record of physical exploration in studio and on the land, capturing cultural knowledge sharing, and oral story-telling, capturing cultivated movement vocabulary, providing feedback during the creative process, creating a short documentary- film for the purpose of community sharing.

## Day 1: Introductions, Protocols & Guidelines

### Activity 1- Sacred Body: The First Territory- Emotional

Location: Beach

Goals: to process creating body-maps to visually represent people's stories, feelings, and experiences of their lives. The goal is to enter into the internal landscape for the purpose of connecting to their inner knowing and being. The participants will create line drawings of their bodies in the sand and create narratives using natural materials on the beach.

Outcome: connecting to the inner landscape supports alignment, balance, release and validation of one's life's experience, and opportunity to share their truth. Centering their own internal experience as a site of generating self-awareness.

Debrief: journal reflections

### Activity 2- In Conversation with the Land- Physical

Goals: to engage our physical bodies on the land to deepen our reception to nature's sound, movement, and expression. Engaging one's body on the land supports grounding and re-centers the central nervous system. Explore the body's connection and reconnection back to land, embracing the healing of Indigenous bodies and the healing of the Mother Earth. Through this process of land- based dramaturgy the artists involved will bravely engage their bodies, minds, and spirits in many landscapes, bodies of water, flora, and fauna, and to be in conversation with the land.

Outcome: listening to land through our physical connection activates our senses and expands our reception to our external world. Resurgence of Indigenous epistemologies and stories are activated through the physical connection back to the land and bodies of participants.

Debrief: journal reflections

Closing circle

## Day 2: Opening prayer/meditation, sound bath, warm- up

### Activity 3- Unearthing the Spirit Dance- Spiritual

Goals: using improvisational skills to build an intrinsic song and dance to represent your spirit/ connection to your ancestors. Developing theatre/movement skills such as: impulse, dynamics,

levels, pace, voice, text, directions/points and experimenting with creating individual sound scapes.

Outcome: to support the creation of the participants individual sound and dance score.

Journal reflections: What is your story? What is our story? Playing with the I and the We.

#### Activity 4- Image Theatre- Mental

Goals: to use the image theatre technique created by Augusto Boal to create, shape and sculpt participants concepts, ideas, and emotions into tableaux's that are devised and come to life in various ways.

Outcome: to use this process as way means of communication without words or mirroring ideas, to fully express the stories of the participants through the body. This allows the participants to learn and work together to come to clarity of perspectives.

Debrief: journal reflections

Closing circle

#### Day 3: Story Weaving & Integration

Activity: Studio day. We will focus on bringing all of the conjured material from all the activities, rehearse the score (individually and collectively) and choreograph a co-created dance piece representing participants embodied stories.

Goals: creating shape, structure, patterns, and sequence of movement and sound.

Outcome: to rehearse and finalize a complete performance of embodied story work from the land and bodies of the participants.

#### Day 4: Filming the completed created performances on the land

Activity: filming on the land

Goals: to create a short dance film on the land

Outcome: to share with and for community, to support participants with an archive document of their process to have for their portfolios.