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Good Beginnings: Decolonizing Protocols and Agreements or Mouse Crosses River

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Article abstract

Mouse tries to cross River. Philip attempts to create theatre in an institutional context. What could go wrong? What could go right? A decolonizing offering in how we enter artistic and collaborative relations. What protocols, practices, and understanding are required to have a good beginning?

Dossier

Good Beginnings: Decolonizing Protocols and Agreements or Mouse Crosses River

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Abstract

Mouse tries to cross River. Philip attempts to create theatre in an institutional context. What could go wrong? What could go right? A decolonizing offering in how we enter artistic and collaborative relations. What protocols, practices, and understanding are required to have a good beginning?

Keywords: decolonizing; performance; theatre; Indigenous; protocols

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If I Only Could. Abbotsford, British Columbia, 2021.

Beadwork by author's mother, Pam Logan.

we understand the story in the context of the teller

My name is Philip Jonah Logan Geller, I want to take a moment to introduce myself in a good way. My mom is Pamela Annie Louise Logan, daughter of Mary Coxhead and John Logan. On this side, Mary's family is from England; they arrived on Turtle Island in the early 1900s. John is a Michif-Half-Breed with ties to Rooster Town, from the Logan, Dupuise, and Dolorme families, a direct descendant of Robert Logan and "Marie, a Saulteaux Indian," one of the first families to arrive and establish the Red River Settlement. Here, I am a fighter and worker. My dad is Peter Geoffrey Geller, son of Maxine Doctoroff and Manly Geller. On this side, we're Ashkenazi Jews, having arrived on Turtle Island, in what is now Winnipeg, Manitoba, in the early 1900s, escaping the pogroms of Russia. Here, I am an artist and dreamer.

I grew up with a lot of unknowing about my mom's side of the family, for a myriad of reasons, all rooted in the deep effects of colonization. I grew up, and people would ask me where I'm from: "Here," I'd say. "But really, where are you from?" "Oh, I'm Jewish… I guess." "Huh," they'd say. "Born in Winnipeg." My mom doesn't really look "white." We both get a pretty wicked tan in the summer, my brother, not so much. My family has begun a journey of reconnection, reclamation, and remembering, and through that, I have worked diligently, respectfully, and consciously to understand and assert a Métis, Michif, Half-Breed identity.

With all that said, I would like to acknowledge the current climate of identity conversation in Indigenous circles, especially in academia where many white-presenting or white-passing scholars are being offered abundant resources. I do not wish to claim space that isn't mine to claim throughout this paper or speak these ideas as if I am the only one to have thought them – I am not an authority on Métis culture and community, I do not speak for Indigenous issues or kin. I am a reconnecting member of the Otipemisiwak[1] and have heard what Métis scholar Chantal Fiola articulates as the "call to pick up our sacred bundles and do our work to ensure that *mino-*

bimaadiziwin[2] will continue at least seven generations into the future" (Fiola, 2015: 16). I believe it is my duty to leave a strong path forward for my communities – this article is one of those paths.

I say all of this and share with you my intersections and the perspective that I bring to this conversation of working within and around institutions – because we understand the story in the context of the teller. I also share this to begin in a good way, as a way to welcome you and invite you to think about your communities, ancestors, intersections, and stories as we begin this conversation. And I do hope it is a conversation.

As I write this, I am on the last legs of a journey to complete a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Directing at York University in Tkaronto (Toronto), Ontario. There was a lot of cost – emotional and spiritual – to going through this institution, but there was also a lot of learning. One of the larger learnings (and there were many) is the articulation of what I call good beginnings. This is the way in which, I understand, we set out clear protocols, responsibilities, roles, and relations. It is the way we can, with clarity, enter and move forward in a project with respect, reciprocity, and accountability. Good beginnings become especially valuable when two parties with different worldviews and perspectives are coming together. This writing will explore my relationship to how a theatrical process is begun, again and again, interwoven with a story about Mouse and River. The writing starts with a process of contract and agreement creation in relationship to an organization, moves to agreements within a larger community context, and then into agreements within a smaller collaborative circle, all while unpacking the journey of an Indigenous artist working within a colonial academic institution.

Mouse was a small but important creature. *Wiya*[3] was always looking for ways to help family and community. Mouse also happened to not always think things through. In fact, in the animal village Mouse was known as a bit of a village fool, though *wiya* was still loved and respected. But Mouse was always looking for ways to help.[4] Mouse once tried to help Beaver build a new lodge, but Mouse's teeth got damaged so bad, Mouse spent fourteen days at the dentist, and Beaver ended up paying the bill. But that didn't stop Mouse. No, it just made *wiya* stronger.[5] So, one day Mouse was looking for ways to help, wandering around the village getting into everyone's business.

"I don't need any help," said Buffalo. Who was spending the day eating 25 pounds of grass.

"Why don't you just go have fun today," pleaded Wolf. Who was preparing the den for winter.

"Piss off," hollered Beaver. Who was building a new dam.

Defeated Mouse wandered down to River. As *wiya* sat by River, an idea popped into Mouse's head.[6] What if I crossed River and found new knowledge, new communities, and new ways to help my village!

Mouse asked River, "What is on the other side?"

River replied, "It's beautiful. There are rolling hills, so much moss, and many other communities to connect and learn from. But –"

Mouse was already running home.

"Holy shit," *wiya* said, "I am going to cross River."

River thought, "I should really start with the warning first, eh?"

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we begin

In my experience and understanding, it is necessary to begin a creative process in a good way. That is to say, before we embark on a journey, whatever that journey may be, we must start with good thoughts, good intentions, and good relationships. This is especially important if the journey is ceremony, and many artists, scholars, and creators offer that theatre within an Indigenous context is ceremony. Yvette Nolan explores this in detail through her book *Medicine Shows: Indigenous Performance Culture* (2015). In speaking about ceremony, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson offers:

> A ceremony, according to Minnecunju Elder Lionel Kinunwa, is not just the period at the end of the sentence. It is the required process and preparation that happens long before the event. It is, in Atkinson's (2003) translation, *dadirri*, the many ways and forms and levels of listening. It is, in Martin's (2003) terminology, Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. It is knowing and respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voice from our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not
>
> (2008: 61).

Wilson's offering enforces the need for respectful relations and the value of listening and exchange, while emphasizing that ceremony extends far beyond a single act and includes all that comes before.

That is why I bring specific attention to agreements and contracts, whether oral or written. I have received many contracts that seem to separate the contracted and the contractor, severing the very relationship that is trying to be established. This is done through inaccessible language, terms and conditions that separate the creator from the creation, or lack of clarity on roles, responsibility, or accountability. Below, I discuss a few sources that I dialogue with when I imagine how to create agreements, contracts, protocols, or ways of working.

In the beginning, I turn to Indigenous-led Signal Theatre,[7] where their mandate speaks about placing "the human at the centre" (Signal Theatre, n.d.) of their theatrical practice. This human-centred approach allows us as artists to divest from a product and focus on the process and the collaborators within. I extend my human-centred understanding to indicate the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities we have as two-legged to our more than human relatives and the land.

Next, Robin Wall Kimmerer's teachings about reciprocity and gift economy in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2016 [2013]) bring about an integral perspective around the exchange of services, resources, time, and energy. Within an agreement I reframe my understanding of services, roles, and responsibilities as forms of gifts offered. And through those gifts, a set of relationships and reciprocity is created (Kimmerer, 2016 [2013]). Our agreements then become acts of relationship and reciprocity. Rather than, you as an artist must do this, it becomes as an artist I offer my services as a gift in reciprocity to the organization or institution. Likewise, the organization or institution offers resources and other support as a gift, always in reciprocity. Always remembering that "a gift economy… has a 'bundle of responsibilities' attached" (*idem*). An understanding of responsibility calls out for accountability from both parties.

Finally, I look to the "Treaty"[8] (2018) that Syilx storyteller, Indigenous theorist, and cultural evolutionist Kim Senklip Harvey created with prominent theatre companies during the process of working on a recent Indigenous matriarchal play, and then I look to the set of seven values or traditional principles expressed by Native Earth Performing Arts[9] (NEPA). Both these vital sources,

one from an individual perspective and the other from an organizational perspective, offer excellent inspiration by laying protocol and expectations to work in a good way.

In her document, Harvey speaks very clearly about the process and the expectations of how she will be working. This is because colonial institutions are set in ways of working that very often do not respond or hold space for Indigenous or, for that matter, any ways of working outside of Euro-Western capitalist patriarchy. Harvey outlines "Ceremonial Protocol" and "Indigenous Approach and Methodology," emphasizing and centring an "Indigenous Matriarchal story" (2018). Explaining in each section what that means to her – from her teachings and from her nation – allows these colonial entities to understand not only how Harvey will be working, but why.

NEPA proposes a set of values that are a wonderful example of an organization putting forward a principled and values-based approach to the work. NEPA offers that "in service of [its] mandate and mission, the company strives to operate according to 7 traditional principles which inform decisions in all undertakings" (2023). These values could be interpreted, upon first glance, as less specific than Harvey's treaty, but I would argue otherwise. The values stated by NEPA assure a secure set of working protocols within all the relationships that might be established while working with(in) the organization. These protocols allow any collaborator strong ground to stand on, fostering things like "patience," "tolerance," and "wisdom" (*idem*). They become the seed for further practices and protocols that can be set throughout a process. I think we all strive to identify shared values, especially in the theatre, but by detailing specifically what that means to each party, everyone engaged in telling the story can enter together on the same foot, in the same spirit, with the same intentions.

This overview of creating an agreement, contract, or protocol is a starting point of good beginnings. The way of working discussed above assumes that the (Indigenous) artist or group is entering a lateral exchange and that the institution or organization is willing to meet the artist's requests for decolonizing and Indigenizing ways of working. Within my journey at York University, there was an impasse where it became clear that another set of understanding needed to be created because many ideas and processes were entrenched in white supremacy and colonial ideals.

The thesis production *UBU* was meant to be a reimagined and recontextualized *Ubu Roi* (1961 [1895]) by Alfred Jarry, situating the story of power, greed, consumption, and violence in a contemporary context as it relates to colonization. As I prepared to direct the production, which was to be a culmination of my learning and experiences as an MFA Directing student, I witnessed the theatre department's seeming inaction and apathy towards the clear racial inequities within the department and the many calls of unsafety made by Black, Indigenous, and students of Colour. I saw what seemed to be gaps in understanding and protocol around how specifically to support students and practices that exist outside of Eurocentric heteropatriarchal norms. This realization made clear the power structures at play and that other agreements and protocols needed to be laid in place. This brought about the creation of the *UBU* BIPOC Agreement, which is a document that was born during the early stages of the thesis production of *UBU*, which was slated to be presented through Theatre @ York in 2020.

It is important to note here, the complexity of working within an educational setting that is attempting to uphold, what it considers, a level of professional standards. In some ways there is a temporary longevity[10] that exists within an educational setting that certain professional spaces do not have access to. A show may have a four-week rehearsal process, where a program or degree can last two, four, eight years, and the relationship to an institution shifts. On the other hand, an educational institution is, seemingly, far less accountable to the broader theatrical and artistic ecosystem and is, in many ways, self-sustaining, so what occurs in a rehearsal at a school might not have the same consequences as what would occur in a professional space. Because the Department of Theatre at York University was entrenched in layers of bureaucracy, this stage of agreement, although important on an individual, relational level, did not have the same effect that one does

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with a theatre company where the levels of hierarchy and bureaucracy are condensed, and a human-centred approach may be more tangible.

The next day Mouse gathered the village and declared, "I am going to cross River!"

Beaver looked at Moose, Moose looked at Wolf, Wolf looked at Beaver.

"Maybe it will keep Mouse occupied for a while," whispered Wolf.

"True," replied Beaver.

"WHAT?" said Buffalo, who was slightly deaf.

"We think it's great!" declared Beaver, winking at Buffalo and Wolf.

That night Mouse prepared for the journey and laid down Tobacco.

Bright and early in the morning, Mouse ran down to River. Mouse looked to the west and then to the east. Hmmmmm, which way to cross? Mouse started walking to the west, away from sunrise, since Mouse had forgotten sunglasses. Mouse walked and walked.

"Wow," thought Mouse, "River really goes on for a long time."

Now this whole time, Coyote has been watching. Because Coyote is always watching. Coyote saw an opportunity. Because Coyote always sees an opportunity.

and we begin again

The *UBU* BIPOC Agreement began with a voluntary gathering of all members of the production who identified as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour (BIPOC), which all happened to be students at the time. In these beginning meetings, we dreamt of the kind of space we wanted to work in, where there was a freedom and safety to express our full selves. For the next phase, a few members and I, who had the capacity to enter the lengthy and involved process, moved into a research phase, outlined below. But I must say the space of speaking, listening, visiting, and being together was at the heart of the document. The reason the details around that space are sparse is to respect the privacy and voice of those who helped to build the document.

At the inception of the document, there were many different public and internal calls for training institutions to take action due to the Black Lives Matter movement's rise in public conscience and the deep inequities that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed. These calls were coming from students and, at times, faculty for theatre departments to shift their practices and create safe(r) spaces for racialized people. Calls like this have gone out and continue to go out to every theatre training institution across the nation and to wider academic institutions. And more broadly calls to action in the theatre community, including the widely read call of We See You, White American Theater[11] (2020a). These acts of resistance and insurgence became inspiration and research for the potential demands for safety and action that could be and can be made. In addition to our text-based research, we took time to visit and speak with theatre artists and activists who had experience working within and pushing against white-colonial institutions. I outline two sources of major inspiration for the *UBU* BIPOC Agreement below.

First is a letter addressed to the National Theatre School of Canada, a call to action written by Lisa Karen Cox, which begins with demands of "ideological and policy shifts" within the institution stating, "Recognize that White (Eurocentric) is not neutral" or "Students need to be heard: Uncomfortable conversations encourage growth on both sides" (2020). The letter then moves to "Culture shift: Actions that can be taken immediately that require a long-term commitment" (*idem*). In this section, there are well-defined action items that can be taken up quickly, efficiently, and to the benefit of current students. This piece is particularly inspiring – less because of its content, because the conditions of its creation are calling for much broader curricular and cultural shifts, more in that it is directly addressing a theatrical training institution and, in many ways, setting the stage for this kind of dialogue.

Second is "We See You, White American Theater," an extremely comprehensive call for a shift in the United States theatre ecology; organized into four sections – "Statement," "Principles," "Demands," and "Tenets" –, the call clearly outlines what the movement stands for and what kind of action needs to be taken. The call is full of great wisdom and serves as an incredible inspiration for decolonizing practices. In the "Principles" section, the self-identified collective speaks of the "Equitable Presence," "Code of Conduct," and "Transformative Practices" (We See You, White American Theater, 2020b), demanding 50% BIPOC representation of artists then calling for theatre spaces to make room and create conditions of success and safety for these artists and finally demanding transformation of our theatrical ecosystem. In a survey of the call's demands, there is incredible fruit to be honourably harvested.[12] The specificity in which they demand transformation leaves no room for questions, ifs, ands, or buts. For example, a piece we were directly inspired by: "We demand that BIPOC actors be invited to actively engage in any conversation regarding their hair and makeup. These conversations must be anti-racist in language and tone, provide the BIPOC actor with agency with regard to their final look and be carried forth without retribution" (We See You, White American Theater, 2020c). The collective goes on to further specify the terms of this demand. There is an entire section that outlines demands placed on training institutions, which we gathered gratefully into our agreement. These speak to the necessity for anti-racism to become a core value in an institution and the necessity for mandatory anti-racism training.

In creating the *UBU* BIPOC Agreement, we not only borrowed some direct content and ideology from these documents, but the form and structure became extremely important. In our agreement, there are three distinct sections that first outline our "perspective," then into "guiding promises" and principles, finally moving into "commitments" (demands).

Finally, the creation of this agreement would not have been possible without visiting methodology.[13] There was much time spent speaking, sharing, discussing, crying, laughing, and being in space together. We also visited with many theatre organizations who voiced their support and offered firm advice in proceeding with this kind of work. Donna-Michelle St. Bernard and Cole Alvis of AD HOC Assembly[14] provided strong listening ears and open hearts in providing support as the document proceeded into the public.

In the document, you can see a direct reference to AD HOC Assembly's "Voluntary Addendum" (2020), which was created to expand on the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres / Canadian Actors' Equity Association's Not in Our Space![15] program, working to cover harmful behaviour that goes beyond "sexual harassment and bullying" or "questionable behaviour" (Alvis *et al.*, 2021: 56). Including this section from their preamble, "As an acknowledgment of the vastly skewed power dynamic, this process is weighted in favour of the artist" (*ibid.*: 57), and inspiration from the radical clause.

This agreement became an important pillar in the way we were going to create, work, and play. Unfortunately, it became a deep point of contention that burst the seams of an institution's empty words and laid bare the entrenched colonialism and white supremacy at the heart of its processes. When a final draft, after countless hours of uncompensated labour, was prepared and released, a

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dismissive and condescending message was released from upper administration. Keep in mind that faculty and the chair had been kept in the loop with this agreement and its many drafts. The message questioned the document and its place in the already established processes of the institution. This act was like throwing a match into a tinderbox, the message shook the confidence of students and brought about hard divisions in faculty, administration, and students. The department essentially screeched to a halt, and external mediators were brought in to keep the ship moving. A shared narrative report[16] was created which represented some of the accounts of what occurred, while leaving many truths out. The details are painful to express; the hurt is profound, but if you want to know more, let's get tea sometime and I have a tale to tell.

Mouse decided to set up camp for the night since *wiya* had not found a place to cross. As Mouse was just about finished laying out the sleeping bag, Coyote sauntered over.

"Taanshi," smiled Coyote with a sly Coyote smile, "beautiful night, eh?"

"Yes," said Mouse, startled. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh me?" Coyote replied, all innocent like. "I am getting ready to cross River."

"Hoollyyy. You're going to cross River?! So am I?! What a coincidence!"

Coyote smiled an even bigger Coyote smile, "What a coincidence, indeed! Why don't we cross together?"

Mouse thought about this for a moment. *Wiya* had had some bad experiences with Coyote in the past.[17] But Mouse did need help, and *wiya* couldn't go back to the village without new ways to be in a good relation.

"Okay, fine," said Mouse. "But there are a few conditions."

"Totally cool with me," nodded Coyote, all serious like.

"The first thing is that you need to honour the teachings of respect and being a good relative. The second thing is you need to understand that I am a smaller creature, and sometimes I need extra support with things, but my smallness is also my strength."

"Of course," nodded Coyote with a furrowed brow who was taking notes on an iPad. Because Coyote is into all the new technology.

"Finally, when we cross, I will pick you five big handfuls of berries."

"Great. I've got this all down. I just need you to sign here and here," Coyote said. Handing Mouse the iPad. Mouse signed the fancy touch screen with a flourish.

Then Mouse looked at Coyote, then at River, then back to Coyote. "Wait. How are we going to cross?"

"Oh, I'll swim, and you can sit on my belly. Of course."

Something didn't feel right for Mouse. But *wiya* had signed the iPad, and Coyote did seem sincere.

"Okay," swallowed Mouse.

and we begin again and again and again

The final way I want to highlight how I create good beginnings is in the drafting and creation of Community Agreements. If it is challenging to create a safe(r) or accountable space in relation to an institution, perhaps you can build your own bubble of decolonizing, anti-racism, anti-oppression, queering, or all of that (and more) mixed together, with close(r) collaborators.

This is a practice I have encountered in many settings that I constantly morph and reassess in just about every space I create or am invited to, according to the values and needs of the space. The Community Agreement is a set of agreed upon actions, values, principles, protocols, or ways of working that guide the process that a group is entering. Things like "self-care is community care," which speaks to the importance of caring for your own well-being so that you can show up as your best self in relationship to others. Or "we speak from the I," which indicates that everyone is speaking and has the intention to speak from their lived experience and not a generalized community or group; it makes room for disagreements and differing perspectives.

Drafting the Community Agreement is done collectively and through consensus, so it constantly changes depending on the group I am engaging with. I often present it as one of the first tasks in a rehearsal, classroom, or workshop. It depends on the level of experience of a group but prompts and questions might need to be offered to get the dialogue started. This first meeting, rehearsal, moment, beginning, is a way to set the expectations of the group and assure a safe(r) and accessible space is being honoured by every member of the process. The Community Agreement, which can take on any name, form, or structure that suits the group, is really a way to say: "this is how we want to work together, and this is what I need to work in a good way."

The agreement is a way to focus on the specific needs and requirements of those in the room and create a collective accountability to ways of working while also destabilizing a hierarchy and fostering lateral space for sharing. The responsibility does not solely lie on whoever is leading, facilitating, or holding the space, but is spread equitably throughout the group. Of course, relationships morph and change throughout a process so the agreement becomes a living document, and I will always revisit it throughout a process.

The praxis of creating a Community Agreement is echoed at the heart of the aforementioned *UBU* BIPOC Agreement. Much of what I would do in the consensus-based building of a Community Agreement was done within the *UBU* BIPOC Agreement process. It was integral that all voices were heard as much as they could be and wanted to be.

The agreement process also requires a practised facilitator who knows how to focus the conversation and dialogue and work with the collective to bring about accountability. When there is a disruption in the established agreements, it is important to make space to discuss the breach of the agreement and what the next collective steps might be. Depending on the situation, it can be helpful from the beginning to outline very clear steps and protocols around certain items. For instance, if safety is integral to the group, what does that need to look like in tangible forms? What kind of safety needs to be prioritized in the process, cultural, physical, psychological? How are we accountable to each other's safety? What does the space need to promote that safety? That kind of clarity allows us not to make assumptions and states expectation, so the group can navigate accordingly. I have found that the process of creating the agreement is often itself the spirit of the agreement. The document that arises is a reference point, and the relationships and values emerge in the dialogue that grow from the creation. By honouring the creation of the agreement as integral we also decentre the written form and honour orality as vital to the protocols and relationality of the group.

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So, in the middle of the night, Coyote puts on a swim cap and goggles. Mouse fashions a life vest out of birch bark, and they both slip into the water. It was dark, and River was doing a midnight dance. The waves splashed against Coyote, who was surprisingly good at doing a backstroke. River was not that wide but wide enough. In the middle of River, Coyote stopped.

"Just taking a quick break. All this swimming sure makes me tired."

"Yup. I bet," said Mouse.

"It also makes me hungry."

At this moment, Mouse realized this was the first time *wiya* had been this close to Coyote. Mouse could smell Coyote's rank breath and feel the heave of Coyote's chest.

"Could we keep going?"

Mouse stared into Coyote's deep yellow eyes, and Coyote stared back. And with one quick move from Coyote, and nowhere for Mouse to run, Coyote gobbled Mouse down.

we understand the story in the context of the teller

As I conclude with this investigation, I reflect on the success and failures of my attempt at good beginnings. A key struggle that I find in good beginnings is assuring that all parties are accountable for and to what they agreed upon in the first place. Especially when working up against or alongside large institutions: how can accountability be fostered? Where does accountability fall?

I also hope to look at more culturally and ancestrally rooted ways of relationship, reciprocity, and accountability aiming to bring a specific Michif-Jewish perspective and practice rooted in the land to my future protocols, agreements, and contracts.

Further, I am frustrated by the work that equity-seeking groups must do to ensure spaces are accessible, accommodating, and even safe at the most basic level. Especially when many of these groups are bearing the brunt of the harm from these institutions. I hope that some of what I have offered makes the path a little easier or spurs organizations and institutions in positions of power to take the first step in offering a good beginning.

In the end, I believe, at the heart of all these practices is an acknowledgment of two parties coming together and creating relationships with clear expectations. It has been my experience that in colonized society, we have a hard time entering relationships because we do not acknowledge who we are as individuals, where we come from, and the experiences we hold. These agreements, protocols, and contracts are ways to lay down very clearly and with good intentions where we speak from and where we want to go. This is true for Indigenous kin and Settler folx equally. We cannot change who we are, but we can change the way we act in the world. As I shared in the beginning, offering a proper introduction can make all the difference.

…

Four days later, Mouse, half-covered in Coyote shit, woke up with a start. Confused, Mouse felt a tickle and looked, and there was River cleaning between Mouse's toes.

Biographic Note

Philip Jonah Logan Geller (he / they) is a Métis (Red River) and Jewish (Ashkenazi) artist and educator, who is focused on decolonizing his process by listening to and dialoguing with ancestral and cultural knowledge. They have worked across Turtle Island as a director, educator, performer, clown, creator, and producer with companies and festivals like Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Theatre YES, Gwaandak Theatre, Centre for Indigenous Theatre, Citadel Theatre, Nextfest, Play the Fool Festival, Edmonton Fringe Festival, and Paprika Theatre Festival. They have been through a BFA from University of Alberta, an MFA from York University, and is pursuing an MEd in Urban Indigenous Education from York University. More importantly, he learns from all the incredible relations – human and more than human – he has the fortune of visiting with.

Notes

[1] “The people who own (govern) themselves.”

[2] As Fiola describes: “Help me live a good, balanced life (*mino-bimaadiziwin*)” (Fiola, 2015: 10) and “*mino-bimaadiziwin* (good life, good relations)” (*ibid.*: 76).

[3] She / he / they singular in southern Michif.

[4] That rarely worked.

[5] At least that’s what Mouse’s mom said.

[6] This is never a good thing – okay, never say never; 1 out of 100 times it is a good thing.

[7] A theatre organization founded by Michael Greyeyes (Plains Cree), putting on Indigenous work throughout so-called Canada: www.signaltheatre.ca/ (http://www.signaltheatre.ca/)

[8] No longer available: www.kimsenklipharvey.com/the-treaty (http://www.kimsenklipharvey.com/the-treaty)

[9] “Native Earth is Canada’s oldest professional Indigenous Theatre company” (Native Earth Performing Arts, 2023).

[10] Temporary because two, four, eight years is not that long to build a relationship and certain institutions have a habit of forgetting the lessons of their students.

[11] Although created specifically for the United States, the calls and conversation around it still resonate deeply in our “Canadian” theatre ecology: www.weseeyouwat.com/ (http://www.weseeyouwat.com/)

[12] Robin Wall Kimmerer outlines her perspectives on the honourable harvest in her many talks and book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*.

[13] As outlined in *Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way – Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology* (2018) by Janice Cindy Gaudet.

[14] adhocassembly.wordpress.com/ (https://adhocassembly.wordpress.com/)

[15] An anti-harassment initiative for all live performance across “Canada”: pact.ca/initiatives/not-in-our-space/ (https://pact.ca/initiatives/not-in-our-space/)

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[16] ampd.yorku.ca/news/shared-narrative-report-in-theatre/ (https://ampd.yorku.ca/news/shared-narrative-report-in-theatre/)

[17] Like the time Coyote tried to convince Mouse that *wiya* could fly, so Mouse jumped off a big pine tree and was in a full body cast for seven months.

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