

## 2021-2022 Artistic Director's Report



Our company saw significant growth this past season, even in the midst of continued COVID-19 challenges. We leveraged the success of our first audio drama series *Tied In Knots* to access our first-ever grant from Canada Council For the Arts to create *We Treaty People* (the largest single grant we've received to date). This 19-episode podcast of 9 new plays (8 world premieres we commissioned) and 9 artists' interviews brought together 9 creative teams of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to explore the question, "What does it mean to embrace all our relations?" The first half of the series premiered in spring, with the final episode airing last month. We will be working to share the series across Canada for the next 3 years.

*We Treaty People* is one way we are responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call To Action #83, to support good ways "for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process," and the Calls For Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The project allowed us to develop new friendships with dozens of artists and several Elders, growing good community for future collaboration and hopeful change, and to learn from many (especially being mentored by Yvette Nolan, previously AD of Native Earth Performing Arts). That learning is helping us develop more restorative and respectful ways of producing plays, of working toward reconciliation in community, and of cultivating more connections between the arts and our real lives (audience included).

We returned to live production with *Christmas Presence*, complemented by a streamed video version for the month of December. This June we rehearsed *Every Brilliant Thing* for an 8 week summer run on Rosebud Theatre's Studio Stage, featuring Sarah Robertson, opening just days after our fiscal year-end.

As part of our work to develop new works, the online re-release of Andrew Kooman's *Delft Blue* script reading included development support. We developed Sienna Holden's new musical *Breathe*, a challenging drama about recovery from opioid addiction. Wanita Bird's script *Kneel Down* received support, an exploration of systemic racism in our city's history. We also supported Mara Teare's development of her new play *Sad Girls Watch the Princess Bride*.

We've long had equity of gender diversity among our contracted artists and board leadership, and made significant strides this year to close gaps in ethnic diversity and gender equity among our staff, playwrights, programming and artists.

We participated in processes to develop our organizational leadership and capacity: Artsvest's marketing and sponsorship training, with mentorship by Ann Lewis Luppino (retired CEO of Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, 10 yrs) and Ruth Smillie (AD/CEO Emerita of Globe Theatre, 20 yrs); SaskCulture/Arts Action's organizational planning cohort, grant-seeking training from Grantstation.com, and an on-going Cultural Pluralism cohort hosted by SK Assoc. of Theatre Professionals. These opportunities contributed to our rebranded logo and website, refining [our mission, values and mandate](#) as part of strategic planning processes with our board, and exploring ways to cultivate healthy organizational culture for our staff, while maintaining that same priority for our contracted artists and audiences.

Thank you for your support of BTT,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Waldschmidt".

Stephen Waldschmidt, Artistic Director

### **2021-22 by the numbers (incl. Every Brilliant Thing)**

Over 1950 people saw our live performances  
Our digital productions were played over 4000 times  
57 artists contracted (compared to 26 in prior fiscal year)  
Staff grew from 2 to 5 part-time positions

## 2021-2022 President's Report

As I reflect on Burnt Thicket Theatre's 2021-22 year, I am struck by the ways in which our organization has grown and cultivated relationships in the community. An operating grant enabled us to hire additional contracted staff to expand our work, and engaging artists in various projects enabled us to foster new and existing relationships which will benefit our organization in the years to come.

Though we still had a pandemic to contend with, which limited in-person performances, we continued to fulfill our mission to "tell stories that change people's lives" through audio dramas with the re-release of the *Delft Blue* script reading and the launch of the *We Treaty People* series. Additionally, we hosted our annual Christmas Presence as in-person in December and prepared for the re-mounting of Every Brilliant Thing in June (which opened to live audiences in July).

"Community" is one of Burnt Thicket's values. We experienced this anew through relationship building with local playwrights, actors, and artists to create the *We Treaty People* series. There was much we learned through this process and much mutual understanding gained.

We were grateful to receive a SK Arts Professional Arts Organizations Core grant, providing us with the first of four years of operational funding. Through this grant, we welcomed new part-time staff Yulissa Campos (Producing Associate), Brooklynn Bitner (Marketing Associate), and Danny Knight (Community Outreach Associate). Tim Bratton's Artistic Associate position also moved from volunteer to paid.

With the expansion of our staffing capacity, we worked through the process of rebranding together with the Burnt Thicket Theatre board. We were excited to launch a redesigned website and a new logo to better reflect our organization. The logo invokes the power of fire to clear the ground for new growth, life that couldn't emerge without the flames.

Burnt Thicket also received grants from Canada Council For the Arts, Creative Saskatchewan, Business For the Arts, and Canadian Heritage. These grants are fostering the continued growth of our organization. We are extremely grateful to have the confidence of the Arts Community, which is enabling us to produce theatre that invites artists and audiences to live more intentionally for the common good of all. Our work would not be possible without their funding and the ongoing support of our sponsors and donors. Thank you to our season sponsor Shercom Industries, community partner sponsors Riversdale Neighbours Church, Stobbe Photo, Prairie Fusion, College Park Covenant Church, and the many private donors who give one-time or monthly donations.

As Board President, it is my immense privilege to work with our passionate and engaged board as we provide direction for what lies ahead for Burnt Thicket Theatre. I am grateful for the work of our staff, artistic associate, and especially for Stephen Waldschmidt, our Artistic Director, who has remained dedicated to Burnt Thicket's vision through the pandemic challenges of these past few years. As the theatre world opens to live audiences once again, I am excited to see what the next year will bring!

Respectfully,



Carol Tebay, Board President  
Burnt Thicket Theatre