

2022-2023 Artistic Director's AGM Report

This past season we returned to in-person full productions while navigating the shifting realities of the pandemic (COVID-19 shut down other companies' shows as recently as March). We co-produced *Every Brilliant Thing* with Rosebud Theatre which ran for 8 weeks in their Studio Stage July 8-Aug 28, 2022 and was seen by nearly 2000 people. Audience responses to the show and talk-backs were just as enthusiastic as our previous productions, and performer Sarah Robertson shares our conviction that this story about mental health needs to be told as widely as possible, which led to plans for presentation in BC and a future SK tour through the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils.

We produced the second half of our *We Treaty People* fiction podcast (through a 2021 Canada Council grant). The 18 episodes of audio plays and interviews brought together 49 Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to explore the question, "What does it mean to embrace all our relations?" The series received its radio broadcast premiere by CFR 90.5FM in May-July 2023, and they aired the series a second time because their staff found it so meaningful. Native Earth Performing Arts (Canada's oldest professional Indigenous-led theatre, in Toronto) invited us to submit the series for their Weesageechak annual festival of Indigenous work. We were honoured that they selected all 18 episodes, to be presented in Nov 2023.

We produced the SK premiere of *Evergreen* by Krista Marushy Feb 2-12, 2023 which impacted audiences deeply with its invitation to risk being known. We made significant artistic friendships and discoveries about good collaboration in the process, even if audience sizes were below our expectations.

We presented *New Blood* in March, for students and the public, as one way we continue to respond to the TRC Calls To Action and the MMIWG inquiry's Calls For Justice. The project allowed us to develop new partnerships with Persephone, GTNT, corporate sponsors, schools and community-based organizations; new friendships with dozens of artists, several Elders and residential school survivors; and to grow community for future collaboration towards hopeful change. We continue to learn from Indigenous friends and mentors good ways to develop more restorative and respectful ways of producing plays, of working toward reconciliation, and of cultivating more connections between the arts and our real lives.

We shared another unique *Christmas Presence* mashup of stories and songs, complemented by a live-recorded radio show podcast version for the month of December. We continued developing Sienna Holden's new musical *Breathe*, a challenging drama about recovery from opioid addiction. We also supported Wanita Bird's new script *Kneel Down*, an exploration of systemic racism in our city's history, and Mara Teare's new play *Sad Girls Watch the Princess Bride*.

We made progress towards integration in equity and diversity among our contracted artists, programming, and leadership, and we commit to continue closing gaps. We participated in processes to develop our organization's integrity and capacity, including SaskCulture & Arts Action's organizational planning cohort, and the Cultural Pluralism cohort hosted by SK Assoc. of Theatre Professionals. We refined our mission, values and mandate as part of strategic planning processes with our board, and sought ways to cultivate healthier organizational culture for our staff, while maintaining that same priority for artists and audiences.

Grateful for your support of BTT,



Stephen Waldschmidt, Artistic Director

2022-2023 by the numbers

Over 3640 people saw our live performances
Digital productions experienced over 5500 times
92 artist contracts (up from 57 in prior fiscal year)
Staff included 4 to 5 part-time positions

2022-2023 President's Report

In alignment with our mandate, this past year involved creating "space for sacred encounters through the embodied act of storytelling, inviting audiences and artists to bear witness to the spiritual depth of our shared human experience."¹ Even though the last fiscal year still had ripple effects from the pandemic, like smaller than anticipated in-person attendance at our events, our staff and board worked diligently to produce meaningful art with significant impact. The audio series *We Treaty People* completed its production and final release. We delivered our first in-person production of a new full-length play in Saskatoon since 2020, called *Evergreen*, and brought a powerful musical called *New Blood: A Story of Reconciliation* to Saskatoon for the first time.

Regarding funding, it is worth mentioning two significant grants we received. First, we received our 2nd year of the SK Arts Professional Arts Organizations Core Grant, which allowed us to maintain our staffing level. We also received a significant grant from Dakota Dunes Community Development Corporation, which enabled us to present the *New Blood* production. We also thank our season sponsor Shercom Industries, community partner sponsors Riversdale Neighbours Church, Stobbe Photo, Prairie Fusion, Executie Arrangements, Lakeview Church, MCC SK, College Park Covenant Church, and the many private donors who gave one-time or monthly donations. Our work would not be possible without their support.

Burnt Thicket Theatre continued to grow, which meant developing another paid position: General Manager. The past year included the search for someone to fill that role. We were not successful in hiring for that position in 2022-2023. However, the role was recently filled (in our current fiscal year), and we are confident our new General Manager Ed Mendez will strengthen and support our organization through administrative and HR-related tasks.

As a board, we worked collaboratively with our Artistic Director, Stephen Waldschmidt, and Artistic Associate, Tim Bratton, continuing to develop our strategic plan, focusing primarily on three strategic pillars:

- 1) Foster and Grow the BTT Community
- 2) Develop and Support BTT Staff
- 3) Develop and Produce Plays

I am pleased to serve on the Board of Directors alongside others who are dedicated and passionate about this work. We desire to support Burnt Thicket Theatre as it continues telling stories that kindle hopeful change in people's lives.

Sincerely,



Jessica Isaak,
Board President
Burnt Thicket Theatre

¹ Burnt Thicket Theatre, "About Us," Burnt Thicket Theatre, 2021, <https://burntthicket.com/about-us/>.