

NARRATOR: This episode of Public Square 2.0 includes some strong language and a bit of cursing. Just a heads. Up

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SPEAKER: The Public Theater is--

To me, The Public Theater is--

--the space that can be filled by real people.

--where I can see bold and experimental theater.

The Public Theater is a gift.

--revolutionary.

Public Theater is--

--like a neighborhood. When you live in a neighborhood or on a block, you can go to each other's house and feel welcome when you walk in. You feel like you're at home. That's what The Public Theater is for me.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** Hello and welcome to Public square 2.0. My name is Garlia Cornelia Jones, Director of Innovation and New Media at The Public Theater. And for our first-time listeners out there, welcome to the relaunch of a podcast from The Public Theater here in New York City.

As part of our new season, we will, from time to time, bring you these shorter, audio-only bonus episodes. Now normally it's not important for you to listen to these in order, but today's episode is actually an extension from last week. So check it out if you can.

Now before we get going, please remember to like, subscribe, follow, and give us that five-star rating you know we deserve. And as always, I am a person who stutters. It doesn't bother me, so don't let it bother you. So let's get going and dive into our fourth bonus episode of the season-- *What Do You Know? Part Two*.

OK, in the second part of this bonus episode, we continue highlighting an event that took place this past fall, 2022. On Monday, November 14th, *What Do You Know? Reflections from Indigenous Artists* was held as a free event in the Western Hall at The Public.

This intimate evening was an exchange of questions, ideas, desires, and provocations from some of the most preeminent, Indigenous theater makers in the US. *What Do You Know?* was organized by members of the staff and spearheaded by the New Work and Development department under the leadership of Amrita Ramanan and Jack Phillips Moore.

Madeline Sayet is an acclaimed writer, director, actor, assistant professor in the English department at Arizona State University and Executive Director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program. Her piece, *Where We Belong*, was produced with Woolly Mammoth Theater Company in association with Folger Shakespeare Library and directed by Mei Ann Teo.

To recap, in 2015, Sayet moved to England to pursue a PhD in Shakespeare. Moving between two nations that have failed to reckon with their ongoing roles in colonialism, she found comfort in the journeys of her native ancestors who had to cross the ocean in the 1700s to help her people.

In this intimate and exhilarating solo piece, Sayet asks us what it means to belong in an increasingly globalized world. *Where We Belong* made its New York debut playing at The Public from October 28th through November 27th, 2022.

Now if you go back and listen to part one, you'll hear Amrita Ramanan and Jack Phillips Moore from our Department of New Work and Development talk about the evolution of the event. You'll also hear Amrita share a little bit about her work as Director of New Work and Development. So take a look listen if you haven't already had a chance.

You'll also find excerpts of work from the first two Indigenous artists, Ty Defoe and Drew Woodson. This week we get a chance to feature the two remaining artists from the event, Vickie Ramirez and Tomas Endter. Let's jump into the middle of the evening as Vickie takes the stage.

VICKIE RAMIREZ: Greetings. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] [LAUGHS] [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] Vickie Ramirez. How's it going? I'm Vickie Ramirez. I'm Tuscarora from Six Nations. I'm an old dog. I've been kicking around the neighborhood quite a few years.

So I've probably met many of you folks out there. I'm just-- the lights are really bright. [LAUGHS] So--

[LAUGHTER]

--greetings. [LAUGHS] This is-- well, first of all, I just found out that I didn't print both pieces that I meant to share today. I might try and wing it for the one because it's just a short monologue. We'll see. We'll see.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: Whoo.

VICKIE RAMIREZ: These are from a piece called *Yuchewakenh*, which means bitter in Tuscarora, which tells you where my mind was at when I was starting to write. [LAUGHS] Yeah, so for the first one, I think I'll just wing that little mini monologue, see if it works.

Oh, *Yuchewahkenh*, is the story about Myra Henhawk. Made her Tuscarora to make sure I only get in trouble with my family. She is a woman who is kind of a corporate sellout, living in the city. I wonder who she's inspired by--

[LAUGHTER]

--but somebody who refu-- she feels like she has followed all the rules. She has got a good job. She's left the res. She's doing everything that her aunt raised her to do. We have-- me and her have-- some three lines that are very similar about the lasting effects of the boarding schools on everybody and what you're told is a good Indian.

But her sister has gone missing, her little sister who's an activist. And Myra's having some problems processing it. And so our host for the play is Bad Mind because he's my favorite, otherwise known as Flint I can't pronounce his name properly, but Tawiskaron, the brother of the creator.

And so Tawiskaron steps onto the stage. He is dressed in traditional-- oh, am I hiding from it? I do to. [LAUGHS] Tawiskaron, Bad Mind, steps onto the stage dressed in traditional Haudenosaunee wear with a twist. It's all black-- black ribbon shirt, black breech cloth, black leggings, beaded snakes decorating everything, bone jewelry, and a very black roach made from crows feathers on his head.

He walks in from the other place. It's night, perpetual night, wherever Bad Mind is. And he gives a wave. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] Hello to the rest of yous. It's good to see you can come when I call.

Everybody says that people have forgotten the old ways. Well, this is proof that they haven't, right? Because here you all are. You are here for me, right?

[LAUGHTER]

You know me, don't you? Huh. Hey, you in the back. I see eating a piece of rye bread. You're welcome.

[LAUGHTER]

That was me. My brother gave you all that boring stuff-- venison strip jerky, salmon belly, berries. I saw the settlers coming. I said starch and fat, yes.

[LAUGHTER]

I mean, what is diabetes, anyway? I don't think it's a thing.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, you know me, don't you? Think about it. You're at work. You've got something real important you're doing. Your boss is there. You're holding the whole room captive. And suddenly-- it's all going well-- and suddenly you rip your pants. Me.

[LAUGHTER]

It's telling you to pay attention to the small things. I'm teaching. That's what I'm doing. You know me. You don't, eh? Well, I can teach in other ways.

I can make the river rise to wash your house away. I can make that spark from the fire get missed when you're trying to put it out and burn down everything. Do you know me now? You may not think it's funny, but I do.

Yeah, you all remember my brother. You all talk about him still. Ooh, the creator this, ooh, the creator that. And you celebrate his gifts every day. Well, I just want you to remember mine. Rage motivates. Anger teaches. You know me now. All right, so that's that.

[APPLAUSE]

Now this is a scene. I'm going to try and read both parts. We'll see how that goes. And this is Myra in her apartment, day five of Ellie's disappearance. Myra and Tyler, who is Ellie's boyfriend, are sorting posters and making flyers.

Tyler Buck, 24, is Cayuga, Ellie's partner, and what I like to call visibly made of native pride. So here we go.
Scene five, Myra's apartment, day five of Ellie's disappearance. Myra and Tyler sort the posters and the flyers.

Tyler. You picked a good photo.

He holds up the poster. Ellie is caught midlaugh.

Myra. Yeah, Ellie loves a good laugh.

Tyler. Yeah.

Myra. After all, isn't that why she's with you?

Tyler. I do make her laugh.

Myra. I know, choker boy.

Tyler. Say it.

Myra. What?

Tyler. Whatever you're saying, just say it. I'm sick of trying to figure you out.

Myra. I know. It must be hard.

Tyler. Can you stop just for once? We're here trying to figure out what happened, trying to find her.

Myra. Are we? I think you here putting on a show like you always do.

Tyler. What do you mean by that?

Myra. Well, choker boy, here you are, going through the motions, being a good boyfriend.

Tyler. Or I could actually be trying to find her because I love her.

Myra. Right.

Tyler. What does that mean?

Just know that when a woman goes missing, half the time it's because of a domestic partner.

Tyler. Wow. Do you really think I would hurt her?

Myra. Maybe.

Tyler. I'm not violent.

Myra. I know you drink.

Tyler. I go out once or twice a week with my buddies. So?

Myra. So I know Ellie didn't like it.

Tyler. Yeah, I get a little bit flirty sometimes. So?

Myra. That's not all.

Tyler. Yeah, that's all-- look at me shaking, geez-- I've never threatened Ellie or raised a hand.

Myra. I know that she asked you to move out a couple of months ago.

Tyler. Only because I was flirting with LaDonna again. It was a flirtation, and she was over it by the next day. Ellie gets jealous.

Myra. I don't know. Do you like to play good boyfriend, the spiritual little Indian who keeps it real? Is that your thing?

Tyler. Wow, I really make you uncomfortable, don't I?

Myra. Yeah, you do.

Tyler. Yeah, I do because I like to celebrate our identity, Indigenous pride.

Myra. More like Indigenous cosplay for white people.

Tyler. This is our culture.

Myra. OK, choker boy.

Tyler. Will you stop calling me that?

Why? I suppose I could call you braids boy.

Tyler. How about Tyler?

[LAUGHTER]

What? No nicknames? What's Indian about that?

[LAUGHTER]

Tyler. Well, at least you could pick a nickname that doesn't try to shame me about celebrating our culture.

Myra. Sorry. I don't like pandering.

Tyler. I'm not pandering. I'm proud. When's the last time you felt that way?

Myra. Excuse me?

Come on, Myra, admit it. You wish you were white, don't you?

Myra. You want me to dress up and play Indians and Indians with you?

Tyler. I'm not dressing up. I'm Indigenous. I'm being me. Last I checked, that was nothing to be ashamed of.

Myra. I'm not ashamed.

Tyler. I don't blame you guys. I know your aunt raised you, and she was boarding schools. It's all part of the legacy.

Myra. Now you're talking smack about Henny? Ellie goes away, your true colors come out, don't they?

Tyler. Ellie is missing. She is missing. Myra, I know it doesn't compute with your worldview. You and Ellie are good Indians. All bad things don't happen to you. But Ellie is gone, and I didn't do it, sorry to disappoint you-- sorry, my nerves.

Myra. You do disappoint me in so many ways. Do you know how many times Ellie's had to borrow money to keep you two afloat? When she started with you, she stopped coming over to see us, to see her family.

So you have to understand why I am asking you where she is. Because if you didn't do it, then you failed to protect her. Either way, braids boy, you're bad news. Beep.

Tyler. We love each other. I know it doesn't matter to you, but we are planning to spend the rest of our lives together. I'm going to do whatever it takes to make that happen. So you better get ready to accept it because I'm going to find her.

All right, goodbye. [LAUGHS]

[APPLAUSE]

Thanks for that. Thanks for that.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:**

That was Vickie Ramirez presenting her work at the Public Theater as part of the event, *What Do You Know?* We caught up with Vickie at the end of the night and had a moment to check in.

**VICKIE
RAMIREZ:**

Should I come on over?

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:**

No, you are totally fine. That is the technology we have.

**VICKIE
RAMIREZ:**

Oh, fancy.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:**

[LAUGHS] OK, thank you. Vickie, I'm going to ask you to say and spell your name, please.

**VICKIE
RAMIREZ:**

Sure Vickie Ramirez. V-I-C-K-I-E R-A-M-I-R-E-Z.

GARLIA Thank you. And how does it feel having just heard your work in this space?

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE [LAUGHS]

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA [LAUGHS]

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE Amazing.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA Yeah?

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE It's a little overwhelming. It's such a storied space here at The Public. It's, I mean, it's-- and we're there on Madeline's set, and it was great. It felt like a nice full-circle moment.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA Is this the first time that you have shared the work that you shared this evening?

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE No, I've shared it on Zoom with Native Voices at the Autry. We did a reading during the pandemic. [LAUGHS] The pandi.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA [LAUGHS] The pandi. I like that name.

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE But yeah, it's the first time that it's been shared on the East Coast, basically.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA OK. And do you have future development plans? Is it work that--

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE Yeah, it was a commissioned work from the National New Play Network. I won the Smith Prize for political theater with the proposal for it. And I've just been sort of hammering it out because the entire shape of the play has changed so much from the original proposal. I'm like, this is it.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA Right, which is something that happens. Our plays grow and they shift, and then we have to say, this is the new path that it took us on.

CORNELIA

JONES:

VICKIE Yeah, yeah, I was trying to make it fit for a long time. I think that's why it was slow going.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA That was slow, right? Because we-- sometimes the plays have their own journey, and we cannot fit them into a particular box.

CORNELIA
JONES:

VICKIE Yeah.

RAMIREZ:

GARLIA Well, I really appreciated hearing your work. And I'm looking forward to putting all of this together, so thank you.

CORNELIA
JONES:

VICKIE Thank you. [LAUGHS]

RAMIREZ:

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GARLIA Up next on this look back at *What Do You Know? Reflections from Indigenous Artists*, we have actor and playwright, Tomas Endter with his piece, *Built on Bones*.

CORNELIA
JONES:

TOMAS Sorry. It's very exciting. I'm just-- you guys are a lot blurrier than I remember.

ENDTER:

[LAUGHTER]

So this play-- this piece is from a play called *Built on Bones*.

AUDIENCE: Whooh.

TOMAS First of all, my name is Tomas, Tomas Endter, neither of which are spelled to pronounce exactly how you would expect.

ENDTER:

[LAUGHTER]

This play is called *Built on Bones*. It comes from a place of my own questioning with my own relationship with home. I am the child of a '60s Scoop survivor. And a lot of the legacy of what that means and what I've inherited from that has gone into this play. I'm going to move this paperclip. I'm going to put my glasses back on, so I can read.

You guys are going to hear me argue with myself a little bit. I hope you're excited. This is the first time I've acted in four years.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

TOMAS All right.

ENDTER:

[APPLAUSE]

So a little bit of setup. This is going down in Saskatoon. No, I'm not going to do any accents for you. This is taking place in an apartment that belongs to Naomi and her family. It's a very rundown apartment. Things are falling apart, left and right. And Naomi's husband, Jason, who is a lawyer, is just coming home after a long, long day. All right.

Jason. Hey, stranger.

Naomi. This apartment is cursed, Jason.

Jason offers an arm to be relieved of groceries. Naomi takes it.

Naomi. Jesus, this is heavy. Why didn't you make more than one trip?

Jason. Because I wanted to show a display of strength as your partner, earning me your affections eternally. And it's really fucking cold outside.

[LAUGHTER]

Naomi. Don't I know it? I'm just glad the pipes aren't frozen too.

Jason. Did you call the--

Naomi. --superman? Yeah. He said he can be over tonight or tomorrow morning. He'd let us know.

They look around awkwardly. Could the home collapse on them in this very moment. When they finally look at each other for the first time, it's as if it is the first time today.

Jason. Hey.

Naomi. Hi.

Jason. The scented candles were a good choice. That smell-- lilac?

Naomi. Lavender. I figured our home could use a little cleansing after the past spell. So what did you bring me?

Jason. Oh, bring you?

Naomi. What's this?

Naomi places her hand on the brown bag in Jason's free arm.

Jason. A celebratory aid.

Naomi. What is there to celebrate?

Jason. We'll talk shop on that in a little bit. Talk shop.

Naomi. Talk shop. Oh, god, it's important stuff. Are you pregnant?

Jason. Nothing nearly so biblical.

Naomi. Oh, god, am I pregnant?

[LAUGHTER]

Jason. I'd honestly be impressed if you were--

Naomi. Seriously.

Jason. --with how careful you-- we-- are.

Naomi. I know. It's practically an obstacle course for your little guys.

[LAUGHTER]

Jason. Hey. Who said anything about little?

[LAUGHTER]

Naomi. Oh? Certainly not me, boss.

Staring contest.

Naomi. You blinked.

Jason. Fuck.

[LAUGHTER]

Naomi. You blinked.

Jason. You always win. You always win.

Jason sets down his bags on the counter.

Naomi. Hm, And I thought your laser eyes were supposed to be superior.

Jason. Lasered eyes--

[LAUGHTER]

--yes. And at least I'm not using the same pair of glasses from college.

Naomi. Sucks to suck. Where's my prize?

Jason. Right here.

They kiss.

Naomi. We live in such a shithole. I'm so tired of being here. It's like every day, there's something new that breaks and we have to take care of.

Jason. I know.

Naomi. I mean, the troubles with the Corolla, the frozen pipes because of that poor fucking raccoon in the insulation.

Jason. Don't mention him. We're supposed to be in mourning.

[LAUGHTER]

Naomi. The raccoon is dead.

Jason. Long live the raccoon.

[LAUGHTER]

Naomi. And today with the fucking lights.

Jason. We don't have to be here for much longer.

Naomi. I don't know, Jason. Can we even last this lease? How much until something important breaks here like us or you?

Jason. Or the fridge?

Naomi. Shut up. I'm serious. I am scared, Jason. This place has had bad spirit to it since Des died.

Jason. I know, Naomi.

Naomi. I mean, aren't you scared?

I just want to mention right now that before we did this reading, I said there was the word fuck only three times in the script. I'm realizing I lied as I'm reading it again.

[LAUGHTER]

Jason gives a shit-eating grin. Jason kisses Naomi's forehead.

Jason. No. I mean, I've got some courage.

He breaks the embrace and pulls a bottle of Crown Royal.

Jason. All hail the king, baby.

Naomi. Are you serious?

Jason. Deadly.

Naomi. You know I hate it when you drink whiskey.

Jason. It's not just whiskey, Naomi. It's a Crown.

[LAUGHTER]

Naomi. You get mean on whiskey.

Jason. You like me mean.

Naomi. Between the sheets, babe. But on two legs like this, you're a walking hurt-machine. Come on, we don't need whiskey to celebrate whatever tonight.

Jason. King's got to have his crown, baby.

Naomi. You know I don't like alcohol in the home with Emory. Please tell me this isn't for the raccoon.

Jason. Would it be so bad if it was?

Naomi. Come on, what do you know that I don't?

Jason. A lot of things.

Naomi. Yeah? Nice try, asshole. You don't even know when the war of 1812 was.

[LAUGHTER]

Jason. How about you sit down and let me pour us both a glass. And then I can school you.

Naomi. Jason.

Jason. Trust me.

Naomi sits. Jason prepares a drink for the both of them in silence before returning to the table.

Jason. Cheers.

Naomi. Hi, hi.

They drink. Jason stares at Naomi with a smile.

Naomi. OK, seriously, am I fucking pregnant? You're starting to freak me out.

[LAUGHTER]

Jason. No, it's not. I'm sorry. It's just, I'm so happy.

Naomi. Happy?

Jason. Excited.

Naomi. For?

Jason. For our life together.

Naomi. Power outages and raccoons galore.

Jason. No, not this. I mean, this is great.

Naomi. This is great?

Jason. No, not this. You-- I love you.

Naomi. But--

Jason. Could you not interrupt me just for a moment?

[LAUGHTER]

I love you.

Naomi. I love you too, mania and all.

Jason. I'm excited for our next step together, our next steps-- a home for our family.

Naomi. God, I know, baby, me too. To Be honest, it feels like the closer we get to financially, the more fucked up things happen.

Jason. Eight steps forward, eight steps back. All that motion is good for a running start. You know the place by the river?

Naomi. With the big porch? Oh, and those gorgeous shutters?

Jason. Yeah, god, the panel work too. Well, I was passing by it today, and it's for sale again.

Naomi. Oh.

Jason. Right?

Naomi. That's too bad. I was hoping if it did, we would be able to--

Jason procures an application.

Naomi. What? I--

Jason. I got a big case offered to me.

Naomi. A case?

Jason. Yes, your honor.

Naomi. A big case? Big as the miners case?

Jason. Big enough.

Naomi. So who else is on the team-- Mark Tase?

Jason. No, not Mark. Amber. I'm the lead.

Naomi. That's my baby.

Jason. With the money that we should get from that, we should be able to finance purchasing the place or any place. Well, not any place, but you know what I mean.

Naomi. I do, but that's so exciting.

Jason. No more creaky floors, no more raccoons or rodents, and no more breaking shit.

Naomi. Besides our banks. Really? How much?

Jason. Enough.

Naomi. How much is enough?

Jason. It's a big job.

Naomi. I always knew this day would come. They owed you after skipping you for the miner case.

Jason. You know, I had that feeling too.

Naomi. Maybe, but you don't have my wily Indian skill of divination.

Jason. Perhaps not, but I have in my possession a depth of love for you and hope.

He holds her hands and looks at his suitcase.

Naomi. What does hope look like?

Jason. Easier than anything I've done before.

Naomi. Really? Anything?

Jason. Besides marriage, this hope is the easiest thing I've done.

Naomi. But you're giving me a funny look. What's wrong?

Jason. I guess it depends on how you feel about who sells it.

Naomi. Who sells it? What's the case?

Jason. Nothing, not a huge deal, just a figure of speech, banter.

Naomi. No, but you said that you've been offered but not accepted it.

Jason. Confidentiality.

Naomi. No confidentiality between bedfellows. Something's bothering you. I think just this once, marriage can trump confidentiality.

Jason. I don't think I should. It's, um, it's not a happy case.

Naomi. Are they ever? It's not a deposition, so all I can tell was that somebody got fucked. That was bad phrasing on my part, wasn't it?

Jason. It's-- listen, it's a hard case. I have my hesitations about it, but--

Naomi. But you want a home.

Jason. I want our home. I think it's our only chance to get out of here during this lease.

Naomi. I want it too. But I want it for us, no reservations. Come on, tell me.

Jason. I can't.

Naomi. Who has the bankroll to hire your firm in enough confidence they feel comfy with a rookie leading.

Jason. Ouch.

Naomi. Don't get me wrong. You work the court like a choir conductor. You can make prosecution sing your tune without a doubt. But you're a risk. Wasn't so long ago you were fetching coffees.

Jason. It's a living. What can I say?

Naomi. Who is your mysterious benefactor?

Jason. You're awfully curious about this.

Naomi. Call it my intuition again.

Jason. I can't tell you who they are.

Naomi. Aha, they. So it's a group.

Jason. I didn't say it was a group. For all you know, it could be the world's richest nonbinary. Let's not play any more games with this. It's just complicated.

Naomi. But now you've got me worried. So not a big corporation. Otherwise you'd have a larger, better team.

Jason. I've got to be honest with you. I'm not proud of it. It would be better if we didn't talk about this at all.

Naomi. I'm certain I can handle whatever you throw at me.

Jason. I could lose my job. It's a murder charge. Second degree.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[APPLAUSE]

All right, awesome.

GARLIA So I'm going to ask you to say and spell your name for me--

CORNELIA
JONES:

TOMAS Awesome.
ENDTER:

GARLIA --please.

CORNELIA
JONES:

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** My name is Tomas Endter. That's T-O-M-A-S E-N-D-T-E-R. Neither really sound how they're spelt or spelt how they sound. But it's a name, and it's what I have. [LAUGHS]

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** Wonderful. Well, I love your name.

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** Thank you very much.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** So how does it feel to have presented your work here in this space tonight?

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** You know-- [LAUGHS]

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** [LAUGHS]

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** How to unpack something I'm still living through.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** Yeah, yeah.

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** This piece specifically and a couple other my pieces have only existed in usually smaller places, smaller performances on Zoom. I've had a lot of pieces on Zoom. But this is one of the first times that I've presented this piece in front of people who haven't heard it before in drafts or anything and heard genuine laughter and genuine shock at something that I have racked my brain over for the last year and a half, two years, over and over again.

It was very thrilling to hear yes this piece as something new because there's the give and take as a performer and writer. Like I'm giving the script and giving my performance, and I'm getting back the reaction which changes the piece. The temporal nature of theater, the always-changing essence of it, was particularly notable tonight. It's really exciting.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** Yeah, I was thinking about that as you were saying it. Now we didn't have a talkback where audience gives feedback. Do you find that audience feedback is helpful to you, or are you more looking to hear the cues-- laughter throughout-- or are you--

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** I th--

GARLIA --more interested in--

CORNELIA

JONES:

TOMAS I'm sorry.

ENDTER:

GARLIA --actually hearing-- it's OK-- or are you more interested in hearing people actually probe you with what questions afterwards?

CORNELIA

JONES:

TOMAS I think as far as like an actual talkback goes or receiving feedback from an audience, because I write my work for me and for other very specific people, it's really only those people that I want to hear from. Like, I love to talk about my work and love to hear questions from other people about my work. But any comments or concerns, they mean something else from people who aren't Indigenous or who don't have similar diaspora experiences.

ENDTER:

So I really love gauging more on feeling, anyways. I love the reaction of an audience because I think maybe part of that's a little more true to what I want, like the in-the-moment laughter, the in-the-moment whispers, the in-the-moment hearing people's seats creak as they're leaning forward or leaning away, depending on if they're interested or if they're upset about what's going on.

GARLIA Right, right, right.

CORNELIA

JONES:

TOMAS I find that to be, right now, at least, a little more honest than the questions and comments that are added on later. And that helps me navigate a little more, based off of feeling rather than something a little more stoic and academic.

ENDTER:

GARLIA Is there a development journey that this piece is on?

CORNELIA

JONES:

TOMAS Yeah, this piece is currently looking to go up this summer-- I think we were thinking about June or July, I think June-- with Amerinda, the American Indian arts association here in New York. We're still hammering out some of the finer details, but this is a play that was written in a really, really cruddy apartment that I used to live in, where the floors were cement but they were painted over. And as you would walk with bare feet, the paint would come off of the cement in like chunks and sometimes pull some cement with it.

ENDTER:

It was a nightmare apartment. And space is so important to it. And the two times it's been read so far is once on Zoom when it won the young Indigenous performing arts award for young playwrights. And that was on Zoom, which is not connected to physical space as much. It was exciting. The readers were fantastic, and the director, Daniel, was amazing.

But it's not a physical space. And hearing some of those words in a physical space here was fantastic. And I'm so thrilled to hear what happens when this play that's all about the space that you inhabit and how it's justified feels when it's read-- not read, but actually physically acted out in person, performed, no scripts in hand, living inside a space that's been constructed to mimic this argument.

GARLIA Well, thank you for--

CORNELIA
JONES:

TOMAS [LAUGHS]
ENDTER:

GARLIA --sharing all that. Oh, it's OK.

CORNELIA
JONES:

TOMAS I've just been staring at it the whole time.
ENDTER:

GARLIA It's OK. No, it's OK. I've been looking at you. It is OK. We are off camera, so--

CORNELIA
JONES:

TOMAS [LAUGHS]
ENDTER:

GARLIA --it's just audio. It's totally fine. But thank you. It was really a pleasure to hear your work and to meet you through
CORNELIA your work. And I look forward to seeing the next stage of this piece and in your work as well.

JONES:

TOMAS Thank you very much for coming to see it, inviting me to this conversation. And I hope to see you too, to see you
ENDTER: there when it goes up.

GARLIA Yes, I would love to be there.

CORNELIA
JONES:

TOMAS Yeah, awesome. Thank you so much.
ENDTER:

GARLIA One of the best parts of this evening actually came at the end of the night. Artist Ty Defoe, who you heard
CORNELIA present his work during our last episode, *What Do you know? Part One*, also served as the host. He sat down with
JONES: everyone and led a conversation about the work.

TY DAFOE: Hey.

[APPLAUSE]

All right, amazing, amazing. I'm going to give the microphone over to these fine folks here. Excellent. Yeah, so we just have a few questions I wanted to ask you all that we have here today, wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your-- the way at which you have come to this work. So any kind of origin stories and also how you identify in this theatermaking space. I think it would be really wonderful for folks here to listen to maybe a specific story about that.

**DREW
WOODSON:**

Yeah, OK. So I kind of said before too, I really identify as an angry playwright. And that that also goes for me as an actor. I identify as an angry actor as well.

[LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHS] But yeah, origin story. I'd say a specific story that kind of drove me into telling my own stories, I was an actor at UC Berkeley because I was an undergrad there. And for the majority of my undergrad experience, I only knew that I wanted to be an actor. That was kind of my trajectory.

And I was getting frustrated because there was no real resources to find a lot of Native artists and Native theatermakers. I was trying to find plays by Larissa FastHorse and other incredible theatermakers. But there wasn't really any options available to me.

I would go to these professors there and ask them like, hey, I'm looking for these Native theatermakers because I want to be an actor, and so I want to act in plays that I identify with. And they would say, oh, yeah, well we'll try to do that for you. We'll see. And then there would be no response after.

And so then I met with and I took a class with the incredible playwright, Philip Gotanda, who then started mentoring me. And he was really passionate, and he was really telling me how he came up. And he was having kind of a similar struggle where he was wanting to be in the space, but there was nobody telling stories that he could directly identify with. And so then that drove him to creating stories of his own.

And so he said, that's what you can do. If you're not seeing something that you intrinsically identify with, then you should create that. And so then that's when I started writing my first play in his class. And I've still been continuing to write it.

But I've kind of like continued with that idea that if I don't see it in the world or if I am angry about something or I want to see something, that I need to create it myself and surround myself with as many wonderful Native theatermakers as well as possible to get that story told. And so yeah, that's kind of--

TY DAFOE:

Thank you so much. Wow, yeah, just thinking about the idea of publishing Native plays, where are they and who are they? And I know oftentimes I'm emailing Vickie. Like, hey, Vicky, do you have--

**VICKIE
RAMIREZ:**

[LAUGHS]

TY DAFOE:

--this play? I'd love to read it. So I think that's also a really great point about where are the Native plays? Can we have more out there that are published for folks that are coming down the pipeline? It's very, very important. And also you naming other BIPOC writers who are creating and making spaces for Indigenous work, Indigenous people.

And I have I have a teacher like that too, Kyle Bass, who is a gay, Black man playwright who is so amazing and makes space for me to take that space. And so these people become so, so important, I think, for Indigenous writers, Indigenous makers.

But Vickie, do you want to speak a little bit about the origin story. You said you are an old dog since 1989.

VICKIE [LAUGHS] 1989.

RAMIREZ:

TY DAFOE: 1989, right. So--

[LAUGHTER]

VICKIE Yeah, the clock is there.

RAMIREZ:

TY DAFOE: [LAUGHS] If you want to talk a little bit about--

VICKIE Sure.

RAMIREZ:

TY DAFOE: --your viewpoint there.

VICKIE I mean, I've always told stories in some form or another. From before I went to school, it was just a thing. I would
RAMIREZ: walk around handing them out. But my first experience of theater was my father driving us two hours to go see any at all like once or twice a year, because there was no theater where I grew up. There was no drama clubs. There was none of that in school.

We read plays in school. We read Shakespeare. And my dad would take us to see Shaw or something. So it's like, oh, theater, I enjoy it. It's interesting. It's all these old, white people up there.

[LAUGHTER]

And it's like it's very fun and everything, but it didn't-- and I came. I decided I was going to be an actor and just be nebulous, bright, beige person. So I came to New York. And I was here. And they did a reading of Tomson Highway's *Dry Lips Ought To Move To Kapuskasing*.

And that for me just flipped my world on end because I heard people that I grew up with. I heard their voices on stage. I started seeing the faces of my family on those actors and the poetry and the beauty of it. And I'm like, oh, there's room for us? And we're gorgeous, and we're lyrical, and we're beautiful.

And so I suddenly felt like, OK, maybe I can try and bust into this format. And so I started writing and working with a devised theater group, Chukalokoli, which was with Steve Elm, Cochise Anderson, Irene Bedard, Elisa Cato, a whole bunch of us way back. And we started doing devised.

And then I realized-- really, you saw how good I am on stage.

[LAUGHTER]

And I can't stand it. [LAUGHS] But I was happy to correct what everybody was reading the work.

[LAUGHTER]

And so I found my way that way. But that's me.

TY DAFOE:

I love that you were just like naming all of those theater makers. Oftentimes, people are like, Ty, where are all the Indigenous, Native theatermakers. I'm like, listen, listen, folks have been doing this work for decades, for years. And I think-- I love that you named some of my favorites too-- Steve Elm, Irene Bedard, all across Turtle Island who are in small rural communities making and creating theater and then came to New York City to create work together on a larger platform. So yeah. Tomas, how about you? Any origin story?

**TOMAS
ENDTER:**

Oh, sorry, hi. [LAUGHS] Yeah, I mean, I grew up-- I mentioned earlier that my father was a '60s Scoop survivor, so I grew up not in my homelands. I grew up in Wisconsin and in Washington and in predominantly white neighborhoods and areas.

So my early concept of theater was going to see *Oliver Twist* when I was in the first grade and being like, I wish I could do that. But that's only for a little, dirty, white boys. And--

[LAUGHTER]

--I may look like one, but I'm not one. And I kept that like in my pocket for years. I wish I could do this. But where are any Indigenous people? And this is pre-Netflix, pre-anything. There's the-- not pre-anything. But this is pre-Netflix.

And there's like a Family Video down the road. And the only thing that has Native Americans in it is *Last of the Mohicans* or *Dances with Wolves*. And it's like, it's not. [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER]

Like, there's Native people, but there's some work to be done. [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER]

But it didn't really start coming together until I moved out to Washington with my dad. And I had a friend who was in a production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. And I forget the name of the younger character who's there at the ward with all of them. But there's a young boy-- not boy character, but a 18, 19-year-old. And he played that character.

But then I remember seeing Chief on stage for the first time played by a white man. But Chief on stage for the first time and hearing, I'm not big enough. And this motivating character, and I'm like, wow, white people can be Indians too. [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER] But it comes down to-- like that friend later on, they said-- he said, they're doing *Anything Goes* here. And I'm, like, oh, *Anything Goes*. I know what that is.

For the people listening to the recording later on, I shook my head. I didn't know what that was. [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER]

And so he offered me \$20 to do it. And I did it. And that's the origin story of how I started acting. But as I started going through college and started going to the new school through their BFA acting, writing, directing program-- this is their drama program-- which was a predominantly white place with predominantly white professors. No offense. Some of those professors are some of the most wonderful people I ever met.

But I was doing these works over and over again, trying to justify how am I an Indigenous person in each and every one of these pieces, breaking my back and my heart over it? And then eventually I met Carmen Rivera who was one of the playwriting professors there at the new school.

And it was the first time I was allowed to dictate my narrative beyond what happens off-stage, beyond why juror 12 in *12 Angry Men* is, in fact, Native American, for some reason. And I've been writing ever since, and acting not until just now. So, hi.

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

TY DAFOE:

I love that. I know. It's like, I see indigeneity all over, like Baby Yoda. I don't know if you know Baby Yoda from the movie is also Indigenous. I mean, it's like, when you have this kind of lens, it becomes so important and very moving.

So my next question to you all-- I kind of was thinking about this. I grew up also in Wisconsin-- hey, hey-- northern Wisconsin. I remember going with my mom to the city. And there was a little sandwich board out there in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

There was a play there. And it was a David Mamet play, I think, called *Psycho Beach Party*. Yes, audience? OK, *Psycho Beach Party*. And we went. And I remember going with my mom, and I was maybe about seven or eight years old.

And I was there. And you know David Mamet's piece. It was a lot of misogyny and everything, watching people walk across the beach. And there was a joke that was made about a beaver and a woman. And the whole audience erupted in laughter, and they roared and everything.

And I was there, seven or eight years old. And my mom-- there was a silence-- and then my mom turns in the middle of that play to me, and she's like, what's a beaver?

[LAUGHTER]

Right? And so in thinking about that Indigenous concept of stories and what theater is, what's a beaver came out of, oh, a beaver is in our clan system of where, growing up Anishinaabe, that was a very significant animal. And this whole show going over my mom's head a little bit about, what is going on? And also why would the patriarchy be sort of making fun of the matriarch, because she's Oneida.

So in kind of thinking about this at that, it was very formidable as an adult in terms of defining relationship to Native theater, Indigenous theater. And so my question for the panel here and you all is sort of thinking about, we're here for a very specific reason. Everyone here identifies as Native Indigenous in some kind of way.

Thinking about that in Native theater, what is your relationship to Indigenous or Native theater as writers or theatermakers or spacemakers. And Vickie, why don't you start us off with this question here, your relationship to Native theater?

**VICKIE
RAMIREZ:**

For me, it's about turning around the point of view. It's trying to get people-- like creating Native theater, it's bringing our lens on stage, our point of view, our worldviews, and sharing it. And hopefully people will follow along. But it's also-- because I write specifically-- my audience in my brain is my family, the folks on Six.

And hopefully other folks will jump in and get the jokes, or ask me questions so they can get the jokes or the stories or understand the context. But that's, for me, the priority is bringing our point of view, our way of seeing, onto the stage. And sometimes it's a little bit of an awkward fit because of stuff like magical realism and all that. But that's not necessarily always translating to other-- but sometimes it's just also to--

It's that thing, though, like sitting in this space, this space that we're all sitting in, and watching these stories and telling these stories. You feel it, though, don't you? The seats sitting beside you, whether you're Indigenous or not, you feel that energy there, all the posteriors that have been in those chairs and the folks that have walked through before, the voices before, and the voices that are going to come after, all these things that you carry with you.

And it's just kind of that thing. It's sort of that Indigenous headframe. It's like, I'm not just walking down the street. I'm walking down the street with my ancestors or some relatives or some other folks' relatives. And we're meeting, and we're bumping into each other. And we're sharing.

So it's all about that. Anyway, I'm rambling. I'm passing.

[LAUGHTER]

TY DAFOE:

Vickie, that was great.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Tomas, do you want to go next? I'm going out of order. I'm decolonizing the lineup, so we're going on a little place here this evening. Yeah, relationship to Native theater.

**TOMAS
ENDTER:**

I mean, yeah, I touched on a little bit. A lot of my relationship with Native theater has been excusing my own presence. So my concept of Native theater, like the smallest definition, is theater that contains an Indigenous person because I really struggled with inserting myself into narratives. And I know that a lot of other Indigenous theatermakers and actors and musicians and everybody has had to wrangle with that in some way or the other with themselves.

And I-- sorry, I'm a teacher, and it's been a long day. [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER]

But yeah, I mean, when I was in high school, some friends and I, we started a Shakespeare company together. We grew up in Verona, Wisconsin, so it was called the Fair Verona Shakespeare Company. Yeah, very nice, man.

[LAUGHTER]

We thought we were so smart. And every single Shakespeare piece that I did, I had to-- I was always an actor. I wasn't directing because I have no real organization or administrative skills in my body. And every single time, I had to be like, why is Horatio Indigenous? [LAUGHS] What am I doing here in Denmark?

[LAUGHTER]

So my relationship and my perception of Indigenous theater is very minimal. But as I've been exploring it more, and as I've been exploring it more here in New York City, I've been seeing a lot more firm representation, a lot more Indigenous writers, a lot more Indigenous actors, a lot more wholly Indigenous projects. And it's the most exciting thing I've ever seen to see parts of who I am finally represented in a fuller capacity.

I don't know if you guys have heard of the show.

[LAUGHTER]

Where We Belong, the set back here. Come see it. It's here until the 27th.

TY DAFOE: Yeah, 27th.

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** Yeah.

TY DAFOE: I love it. Yes, Drew, how about you? Relationship to theater and also how would you define Native theater? So I'm doing a combo question for you. Oh, yes.

**DREW
WOODSON:** Ooh, OK, OK. I would say my relationship to it and how I identify it is very similar to what you were saying where-- but it's also evolved. When I was an undergrad, when I was an actor, I viewed my own relationship to Native theater as being just-- because it's a theater production, but you have Indigenous people in it. You have a Native person in it.

And so me being the Native person in a production, I would, without the director's knowledge, create a history. So all of my characters were all Native and were all from the same line of ancestors, just in different areas.

So one time, it was in-- I was playing a character who was from England. And so I was mapping out, I was like, OK, so he went to England, then from here. And then his ancestor came back and was in LA for this play.

[LAUGHTER]

So all of the characters were related. [LAUGHS] And then as I kind of like got more into different Native theatrical spaces, like spaces that are specifically made for Native people, then that became more of a relationship of us as a collective bringing our own individual stories as Native people from our own individual bands and tribes and lands.

We together create the space that then the language of the theater has changed to our own rules. We make the rules in that space. We don't have to abide by kind of the colonial, white rules that have been set for hundreds of years, going back to Shakespeare and whoever.

And so now when I think about my relationship to Native theater and specifically how I define Native theater, it's that. As my grandmother said, she said, no matter what anybody says, no matter what room you go into, you are Shoshone. And so you will go into that room being Shoshone, being from this family.

And so I carry that into every theater space I go into, but I especially carry that into spaces like this where it's allowed. It's normalized to be Native and Indigenous. And it's so exciting, and I'm so happy to be here.

[LAUGHTER]

TY DAFOE: I love that. And seriously, holy water, grandmas. Your grandmother, right? Shout out, grandmas.

AUDIENCE: Whoop.

TY DAFOE: Yeah.

[APPLAUSE]

And grandpas, but grandmas, come on. Telling you that because I'm thinking of our teacher back home who is Anishinaabe, Winona Laduke, who's-- she always says, if you're not dreaming seven generations ahead, you're not dreaming big enough. If you are not dreaming seven generations ahead, you are not dreaming big enough.

And I continue to think about that in terms of the framework and the why in terms of process, which I think is really, really, really important. So this brings me to my next question about you all in your work, why you do what you do. And if you had to pick one piece, because I'm sure you have written and have performed and/or done various things and acted in shows, if you had to pick one piece, what is you as an artist with a concept or theme that you hold or a value, how do you make that work as an artist, as an Indigenous artist, if that's how you identify?

And if someone could talk about that, and let's start with Tomas for this one. What is your process?

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** [LAUGHS] My process. I would call myself a very selfish writer. I write because I am filled with arguments and indecision that I process so much better when I take it out of myself and I put it into little imaginary people on stage. And some of these things are inconsolable arguments-- not inconsolable, but arguments that a lot of people have been having for a long, long time.

And there are solutions but they're inactionable, either because of the conditions of society-- thinking about some of the greater horrors of reality being colonialism and assimilation and the processes therein. And my relationship to it is complex and unique as every single individual Native's relationship to it is. And I work a lot with these arguments that I can't settle.

And some of them, like for *Built on Bones*, they're pretty straightforward. But others, like another piece that I wrote, *Hostile*, comes from a place of really understanding I am actively living in [LAUGHS] a system that is bent on assimilating me and bending me into something else, and looking at the face of the inconsolable, looking at the face of what I can't resolve that easily.

And I get a little inspired by the absurd and by the magical, specifically like thinking about Kurt Vonnegut in Slaughterhouse-Five, the bird [LAUGHS] that, after multiple moments inside-- in the book, goes-- something horrible happens, like the bombing of Dresden happens, and then it's quiet. Then you hear the bird go, poo-wee-tweet because what else is there to respond to such things besides birdsong?

And I like writing birdsongs. So every single one of my plays has something absurd-- used to be magical realism, but [LAUGHS] some professors didn't like that very much. [LAUGHS] So I started like pulling away from that and leaned into the absurd, and suddenly it's a classic.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, so I love to take these questions and make fun of them and dance around them and sit with myself and have my own little birdsong.

TY DAFOE: I love that. Thank you. Let's go to Vickie next about-- with this question just because of the tie-in to magical realism and some of these large terminologies, I think, where it's like constant translation of-- Tomas, you were saying, a teacher didn't like this, et cetera, and constantly trying to redefine and find some kind of language in English to explain what the work is, whether it's impressionism or surrealism and various types like that.

So I'm curious for you, Vickie, in terms of your work in process. So you've been doing this for many years now, writing various plays. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit to that translation but also, if you want to pick a piece, but just curious about your process and how that has shifted or changed or what you're finding in the work that you're creating.

VICKIE RAMIREZ: I mean, for me, for some reason, when I create the work, a lot of times it's because I'm hearing talking in my head. [LAUGHS] And it's connected to that energy. And so always, always, I started-- I would throw in characters like Bad Mind that from the stories when I was growing up or like any of those stories.

And it would be a touchstone for me or a framework or just a rooting of the story to tell this very contempor-- because I'm clearly very contemporary. I'm sitting here in my jeans, and my manufactured boots and--

TY DAFOE: I love those boots.

VICKIE RAMIREZ: Oh, good, and thank you. They're very squishy.

[LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHS] And it's like I'm very much contemporary of this world, but at the same time-- for me, when I get the stories, it's like somebody's tapping on my head sometimes. And I'm like-- so it's that connection to the other. But as always, yes, the dramaturgs and the folks who were very excellently educated in certain forms of theater remind me that it's often a crutch.

So I work with it, and sometimes I pull back from it because I feel like the story no longer-- used to be, I was told to pull back. And often I've gone back and replaced that character after that particular development moment. Other times, I was like, yeah, that story didn't need that at that time. But they brought me in. Sky Woman brought me in, and I appreciate her for that. But I didn't need her.

And so now I am starting to trust my instincts but also trust those moments when I pull back from it as well. I'm starting to control the choice of when I use those moments for the process. And for a piece, again, always going back to *Dry Lips* because it just blew my mind, man. And it was-- I don't write remotely like the wonderful Mister Highway. I wish I had that flare for the poetic, but it just-- it-- I do remember his fun and his irreverence.

And that's one thing I also grabbed for a lot too because in my family, there is a strong thread of humor constantly, very much gallows humor. But my grandfather was hilarious. My great-grandmother was hilarious. And they-- boarding schools, grandfather went in with three brothers, came out with two like so many folks who probably sitting in here.

But they always had that sense of humor, that sense of fun and irreverence. It was never that-- because I didn't relate to that. I relate to-- [LAUGHS] I relate to people who joke. I relate to people who tease each other. I would go on Six, my whole family are a bunch of-- but anyway, that's me.

TY DAFOE: No, Vickie, I love that. I totally think that, too, back home in my community or being with Native folks, I'm like, wow. Sometimes the perceivedness of Nativeness or Indianness is very serious--

VICKIE RAMIREZ: [LAUGHS]

TY DAFOE: --right? But I'm like, listen, OK. Everyone is laughing constantly. My face hurts when I see folks even in New York City on the subway. When we get together, it's like all laughter and connection. And that's something I really appreciate being in this contemporary theatermaking, placemaking city, which is-- yeah, terrific point.

So yeah, Drew, can you speak to this, your process in the piece that we heard or your other pieces? I'm so curious, how you find yourself creating or writing plays.

DREW WOODSON: Yeah. I would say that I come very much from a place of-- I usually just try to just let all of my thoughts go down on the page, just try to freewrite as much as possible. And what really draws my attention a lot of times is, is what I'm writing, is this idea I have, does it make me uncomfortable? And do I think that it would make an audience full of non-Native people uncomfortable as well? And do I think that it would even make Native people potentially uncomfortable but in a safe way?

So this piece that I just brought, the thing that excites me about it is because it does make me uncomfortable, the idea that this father who is very connected to his culture, who is Shoshone, who is like-- he's certain in that, who is the head of this kind of white institution, who then decides to give up his Native identity in favor of this white institution. What happens when he does that, when he makes that choice?

And so that makes me uncomfortable as a writer and as a Native person to put that down on the page. And so that's what feels exciting for some weird reason. [LAUGHS] And so a specific piece that I was writing, that I started writing an undergrad, it was essentially the same concept. It's about this Native actor who used to be in LA, who used to work as a stereotypical Indian actor in movies that were made by non-Natives, that were essentially comedies that made Native people the butt of the joke.

And so his trauma from doing that, what does that do to him as a Native person? And to hold that in his body that he did something that he is so ashamed of because he feels that he disgraced not only himself but his ancestors. And so that idea also made me uncomfortable, and that's what kind of drove that.

And so yeah, coming into when I start trying to write, start trying to come up with ideas, I try to think of how am I best serving myself as a Native person and best serving what I believe to be what stories I think I need to tell?

TY DAFOE: Thank you for that. I love that, that sort of dual consciousness that's happening within one. Absolutely. And the idea about making work that makes you sweat. I kind of like that. I think about that when I go for my workout.

[LAUGHTER]

But listen, everyone. We are at the end of this panel. And very quickly across the panel here, I wanted to ask you one last very important question as Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks in this studio audience here today at The Public I'm wondering who or what or what movement should folks be either reading, watching on TikTok, or know about as Native theatermakers or practitioners or educators. And why don't we start on the end with Tomas, and we'll work our way this way?

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** Can I get that question rephrased again? [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER]

TY DAFOE: Who, what, should folks here who are Indigenous and non-Indigenous in this audience, who should they sort of read, look up? What should they be attuning themselves to in this theater, Native theatermaking world?

**TOMAS
ENDTER:** Yeah. Firstly, I'm going to make this joke again. But if you haven't seen this show--

[LAUGHTER]

--see it. I'm serious. It's one of the most wonderful things I've seen recently. I saw it on a night where there were a lot of Indigenous people in the house. And it was a different atmosphere in the audience than I'm used to in many audiences. And it was beautiful, and it was wonderful.

You should also probably look up everyone in this line.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm sure plenty of us have websites.

(WHISPERING) I don't.

[LAUGHTER]

But we also probably all have work being developed or attaching ourselves to something. But I'd like to plug us all in. And then I can't see Maddie. Otherwise I'd point to you. Actually, I can see you. Hi. Look up Maddie.

[LAUGHS]

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, that's what I'd like to plug right now. There you go.

DREW WOODSON: Yeah, I would say, and not to go off of what you were saying too much, but this show-- no, this show is-- I saw it last night. And it was one of the most moving experiences I've had in theater in a while because there was something in it that really spoke to the experiences that I've had for my entire life, the sense of coming into a space, and you're constantly being attacked with questions that-- by non-Native people that you don't quite know how to answer. And just all of these different things, I felt really, really spoke to me and spoke to how I feel in different institutions, especially institutions of higher education.

I would also suggest probably one of the funniest plays I've seen recently, which is the 1491s'

VICKIE RAMIREZ: Oh, my god, yes.

DREW WOODSON: --*Between Two Knees*--

AUDIENCE: Whoo.

VICKIE RAMIREZ: Yes.

DREW WOODSON: --which is so good. And I saw it recently. Well, not recently, but I saw it at Yale when it was up in Connecticut. And it was so funny. And it was just that kind of reminder that like, oh, that's right. Contemporary Native theater can be something so extraordinary and farcical and hilarious and just so subversive. So that's another thing I would highly recommend.

VICKIE RAMIREZ: Thank you. OK, you got a minute?

[LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHS] First of all, yes to everybody on this panel and the great, great Madeline Sayet, super talent, super talent. Please come see the show. In town, you have the wonderful Amerinda arts organization that does theater-producing. You have the American Indian Community House that does projects. You have the North American Indigenous Center who also just produced this wonderful festival over in the fall, celebrating-- I can't remember all this stuff.

But Google them all, check them. Rihana Yazzie has New Native Theater out in Minneapolis. Native Voices at the Autry in Los Angeles. Marissa Carr, Dylan Chiddo, PC Varone, Tara Moses. Let me see. Who else am I-- who am I missing?

There are so, so many folks that you need to check out their work. Carolyn Dunn. [LAUGHS] Somebody help me. There's so much more. Bill Yellow Robes. Bill Yellow Robes, the entire catalog is now being managed by the Dramatists Guild. So you can reach out to them to do a read and just find a-- just spin a bottle, you'll find a great play by Bill Yellow Robe. [LAUGHS]

And I don't know anymore. And Tomson Highway's got plays published in Canada. You should check them out too. And to use, the wonderful Ty. That's all I could think of, but--

TY DAFOE: All right.

VICKIE --give me a minute.

RAMIREZ:

TY DAFOE: Oh, no, I mean it is flowing.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you all for that information. The download of knowledge here in this room, prolifically naming some of our relatives. Bill Yellow Robe and Mary Catherine Nagel, Larissa FastHorse. Doctor Carolyn Dunn was mentioned and many, many, many, many others who are playwrights directors, choreographers, stand-up comedians. The list goes on--

VICKIE Emily Johnson.

RAMIREZ:

TY DAFOE: And folks are out there. Emily Johnson. There's all kinds of different groups that are happening. And so just wanted to give a shout out to all of our brothers and sisters and relatives who are in this movement to make it happen. And of course, one of my current, ultimate favorites, I would be remiss without saying *Where We Belong* by Maddie Sayet on the list, just to make her turn more red in our studio audience today.

Listen, folks, it is time. It is time. Time is one of our biggest colonizers.

[LAUGHTER]

Time can also be relative, so we really appreciate you staying a couple minutes over and also waiting as we get started here today. There is more information like this. And if you have any questions, shout out to the new work development here at The Public Theater. Thank you so much, everyone, and have a wonderful, wonderful evening. Be well.

[APPLAUSE]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GARLIA Part of what I love the most about my job is that I get to connect to you, our audience, with the staff here at The
CORNELIA Public. Sure, everyone wants to talk to the actors and musicians, and we know how much we all love playwrights.
JONES: But it takes a lot more people to bring a show to life, and I'm not just talking about the crew.

The front of house administrators, managers, marketing experts, there are a lot of people here that come together every day to produce theater. One of those individuals is Courtney Banks. She works as an assistant production manager and also identifies as a person of Indigenous heritage.

She was so affected by the event that she actually tracked us down, wanting to make sure she had a chance to speak. So we did what we always do and turned the microphone back on. What you're about to hear is that conversation between Courtney and myself. And in a short time, we cover a lot of topics-- some fun and some that illustrate just how hard we work to make sure that every piece we present is supported by a truly diverse institution.

That last part isn't always easy. Take a listen, and you'll see what I mean.

OK, so I'm going to have you say and spell your name.

**COURTNEY
BANKS:** Yes.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** Please.

**COURTNEY
BANKS:** My name is Courtney Banks. C-O-U-R-T-N-E-Y B-A-N-K-S.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** And Courtney, would you share with us your title, and what you do here at The Public Theater?

**COURTNEY
BANKS:** Yeah, I am an APM at The Public Theater, so I'm assistant production manager. And I help with events coordination and coordinating shows here.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** And thank you for that. And what was your connection to this event this evening?

**COURTNEY
BANKS:** I was an audience member first. But I also helped with the event as a substitute for someone getting sick. So I kind of just jumped in.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** I saw that and I was like--

**COURTNEY
BANKS:** Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** That's the behind the scenes thing that may not end up on the podcast.

**COURTNEY
BANKS:** That's behind the scenes.

**GARLIA
CORNELIA
JONES:** --podcast, yes. And so you identify as a--

COURTNEY BANKS: Yes, I identify as an Indigenous person. I am iwa from White Cloud, Kansas.

GARLIA CORNELIA JONES: And how did it feel to hear this work in this space this evening for you?

COURTNEY BANKS: I was curious about how it would feel at first because I've never actually gone to event and heard all Indigenous voices. So I was-- didn't really know what to expect. But it was actually incredibly comfortable, because every story I heard was connected to myself in some way.

And so it was actually incredibly comforting. And it felt a little bit like home to hear these voices in the place that I work, which has never happened before.

GARLIA CORNELIA JONES: Yeah, yeah, are you-- have you seen *Where We Belong*? Are you were working on the show? No.

COURTNEY BANKS: I am not working on *Where We Belong*, and I'm saying it Sunday. So I know what the show is about, but I have not seen it yet.

GARLIA CORNELIA JONES: OK, great, and are you hoping and-- or, sorry, have you been involved in the work with the kind of ability of a writer and just and some of the work that we've been doing here to strengthen our relationships with the Indigenous community?

COURTNEY BANKS: I think that I'm trying. There aren't many people that identify as Indigenous that work at The Public Theater, so it is quite hard to feel like you're maintaining a balance of making your voice very loud but also not trying to be just typecast as the Indigenous activist that won't stop talking about it. So you have to find a really good balance to be both, and I think that's something that a lot of BIPOC people have to work with in the workplace is how do you help your culture but also be looked at as a professional?

So I mean, I try to bring up our relationship with Indigenous people of like, how are we getting tickets to people that can't afford them? How are we making this an easy commute for people? Because I've seen this company bend over backwards for people, and I would love to see that given to the Indigenous community every once in a while.

And I would love to see our land acknowledgment stand for something and not just something that is on the marquee in the lobby. And I think that's something that I've talked about pretty frequently here.

GARLIA CORNELIA JONES: OK, well, that's all good things to know.

COURTNEY BANKS: [LAUGHS]

GARLIA I'm on the land acknowledgment subcommittee. [LAUGHS]

CORNELIA

JONES:

COURTNEY OK.

BANKS:

GARLIA OK, I feel like we need to do a Fuller staff interview with you that's not just here. But I really-- I do hear you just in terms of thinking about what it means to be a BIPOC staff member within this institution and to have to kind of stand for your race well as your title in your department, to sort of have to wear all of those hats can feel very overwhelming in a predominately white institution like this actually is. So yeah.

COURTNEY Yeah, I think-- I don't think it's a secret that women of color have a difficult time in the workplace maintaining all the hats that we are forced to wear. And so I think it's a really hard balance that people don't acknowledge as much as they should.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GARLIA Thank you.

CORNELIA

JONES:

COURTNEY Thank you--

BANKS:

GARLIA Thank you.

CORNELIA

JONES:

COURTNEY --for letting me step in.

BANKS:

GARLIA Of course, of course.

CORNELIA

JONES:

COURTNEY I was like, hi, give me a time--

BANKS:

GARLIA No, no--

CORNELIA

JONES:

OK, so that's part two. On our next episode, we focus on our upcoming April 2023 production of *Shadow/Land* by Erika Dickerson-Despenza and take a look behind the scenes with members of the creative team. You may remember the audio play during the spring of 2021. The stage production was postponed because of the pandemic, and we are so pleased to have it back as part of our season.

As always, remember to like, subscribe, follow, and give us that five-star rating you know we deserve. For everyone here on the Public Square team, I'm Garlia Cornelia Jones, and we'll see you next time, Thursdays at The Public Square.

NARRATOR: Today's episode of Public Square 2.0 was hosted and produced by Garlia Cornelia Jones, Director of Innovation and New Media at The Public Theater with support from New Media associate Emily White. Creative production includes story support by John Sloan III of Ghostlight Creative Productions and audio production by Justin K Sloan of Ghostlight Creative Productions.

Special thanks to Ty Defoe, Tomas Endter, Jack Phillips Moore, Vickie Ramirez, Amrita Ramanan, and Drew Woodson. For a full list of credits, please visit our website publictheater.org for the show notes.