



Remarkable Food for Thought

A struggle over wild rice harvesting emerges a larger discussion on equity, colonization, and Indigenous rights.

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SAINT JOHN – In February, the Atlantic Repertory Company (ARC) returns for sixth season with a heartwarming tale of reconciliation. *Cottagers and Indians*, the renowned play by Drew Hayden Taylor will be staged at the BMO Studio Theatre February 21-25, 2024.

The play was inspired by real events that took place in the Pigeon Lake, Ontario area. Local media dubbed it the "Wild Rice Wars," and it pitted waterfront residents against local First Nations over the proliferation of wild rice beds on the lake. A Curve Lake First Nation man had been harvesting manoomin or wild rice from Pigeon Lake for years, but residents argued that his harvesting methods

were interfering with their enjoyment of their waterfront properties.

The play deals with conflict, ownership, equity, tradition, health, colonization, and reconciliation, raising questions about Indigenous rights and traditional foods. With warmth and humour, it delves into issues of community, respect, and ownership.

Cottagers and Indians will be performed at the BMO Studio Theatre, located at 112 Princess Street, with matinee and evening performances available. General admission tickets cost \$35, while students can enjoy the play for only \$20. Tickets can be purchased by visiting tickets.saintjohntheatrecompany.com or calling 506-652-7582.

The production is made possible by the generous support of several organizations, including the Government of Canada; the NB Children's Foundation; Nutrien; the Province of New Brunswick; RBC Emerging Artists and the Sisters of Charity.

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Learn more about ARC and its future homebase.

Since its inaugural production in April of 2019, the Atlantic Repertory Company has steadily grown.

What began as a small pilot project with the goal of employing Atlantic Canadian theatre artists in Atlantic Canada has now developed into a fully realized professional company. ARC turns out a minimum of three productions every season while also providing ARC Academy professional development training to artists during the off-season.

As ARC continues to grow, so does its need for a space to operate out of. By 2025, we hope to employ a full-time team of permanent Resident Artists who will work on every ARC production in some capacity. The reality of this plan is that the 112 Princess Street production facility is simply too small to house the SJTC's permanent staff and that proposed for the ARC.

That's where the Sydney Street Courthouse comes in. When the Courthouse Theatre is fully operational, it will become ARC's new homebase. It will provide office space for Resident Artists, more and larger rehearsal/production spaces, and the opportunity for in-person ARC Academy sessions.

The new Courthouse Theatre will become a cultural hub for professional Atlantic Canadian artists, and it is our hope that this state-of-the-art, brand new production facility will encourage Atlantic Canadian talent to stay in Atlantic Canada whilst also enticing national and international artists to make New Brunswick their new base of operations. The professional caliber of ARC's productions increases Saint John's theatrical reputation with every performance, and the addition of the Courthouse Theatre as a homebase will secure ARC's continued ability to make our city shine, both on-stage and off.

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