

# ECHOES OF THE HOMESICK HEART

By LAURA MICHEL

June 02-11, 2022  
PAVILION THEATRE

**WCT** WESTERN  
CANADA  
THEATRE



STUDY GUIDE



## **I Lost My Talk**

I lost my talk  
The talk you took away.

When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie school.

You snatched it away:

I speak like you

I think like you

I create like you

The scrambled ballad, about my word.

Two ways I talk

Both ways I say,

Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,

Let me find my talk

So I can teach you about me


-Rita Joe

A Mi'kmaw poet and songwriter

\*Please note that this study guide was created in May of 2022, just prior to the world premiere of Echoes of the Homesick Heart in Kamloops, BC Canada.

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## Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that this premiere is being presented on the traditional unceded territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc within Secwépemcúl'ecw.

Echoes of the Homesick Heart is a story of hope, survival, and overcoming the genocidal actions of the Residential School system. This play celebrates the resilience of Indigenous families, communities, and culture. First and foremost, I'd like to pay respect to the Elders and Survivors of our communities. This project would not have come to fruition without the loving and caring support of many people along the way. I would like to express endless gratitude to the participants of the interviews that were the basis for this script, whether they participated officially or anecdotally—your contributions were foundational to giving me the essential tools to bring this story to the stage.

I would like to acknowledge Western Canada Theatre for its unwavering belief in the legacy of this project and my vision for its development. I'd like to recognize TRU CURA (Thompson Rivers University—Community University Research Alliance), Canada Council for the Arts, and First Peoples Cultural Council for financially supporting the development phase of this script. I would like to show respect to the Elders, language speakers, and language teachers, who tirelessly strive to reclaim and revitalize our language—your dedication and perseverance without whom we would be lost. I wish to honour my Aunt, Dr. Kathryn Michel, who lead the charge in working with our Elders towards the creation of the Secwépemc Immersion School, Chief Atahm. I would like to show respect to the sacred knowledge of the elders that guided me and inspired me throughout this journey.

My mentors Marie Clements, Valerie Planche, and Andrew Kushnir helped guide me through this playwrighting process and helped me to become a better artist and writer. I would like to recognize my Kyeʔes and Sleʔes Anna and Joe Michel, Lucy and Les Williams, and all survivors of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, for their determination and legacy of Secwépemtsín. I would like to show deep gratitude to Sleʔe Lawrence Michel for gifting the feather story in this script.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their unending support throughout this process and indeed all my endeavours in life.

*This play is for my children, who carry with them the hopes and dreams of the future.*

~ Laura Michel

Cstalen (Adams Lake)



## Meet the Playwright



**LAURA MICHEL**  
Playwright



Laura Michel is an Adams Lake Band member from the Secwépemc Nation in the BC interior. A grandchild of Joe and Anna Michel and Les and Lucy Williams. She is a Thompson Rivers University alumna, with a Bachelor of Arts, Major in Theatre, and Minor in Sociology. Her personal work in the community is focused on community-engaged arts, including currently serving on the Board of Directors for the Kamloops Film Society and as a former Board Member of the Kamloops Arts Council.

Her most recent work *When Did I Lose You?* a piece about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls was originally broadcast as part of Western Canada Theatre's A Broad's Way Cabaret for International Women's Day. *Echoes of the Homesick Heart*, her full-length multi-generational language verbatim theatre project has been a community effort with Western Canada Theatre, TRU CURA (Thompson Rivers University— Community University Research Alliance), and Canada Council for the Arts, and First Peoples Cultural Council.

In her writing, Laura endeavours to put a face, a soul, and a person to the various issues that the First Nations people face. She intends to tell the story of her Sle7e, Joseph Stanley Michel someday; he was one of the first graduates of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. He went on to be a language activist and was recognized with the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for his lifelong work and dedication to his community.

## Meet the Director



Eric Coates lives on the unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit in Stratford, Ontario.

He has worked as a director, dramaturg, administrator, and actor since entering professional theatre in 1986.



He served as the Artistic Director of the Great Canadian Theatre Company (Ottawa) from 2012 through 2021 and as the Artistic Director of the Blyth Festival for ten seasons, from 2003 through 2012.

Eric's directing credits elsewhere include projects with Theatre Calgary, Drayton Entertainment, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Lighthouse Festival, and CBC Radio. Eric served as the President of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) from 2009-2015.

He is a tribal member of the Samish Indian Nation and is proud to be the Skipper for the Samish Canoe Family and an active participant in Straits Salish language revitalization. He is happy to greet you: Si7ám schál7eche7, hóy7sxwq'e kw en-sená7 álhe7 i7 e kw en-s-séleqtel e tse en-schténgexwen



## Meet the Cast and the Crew



### Cast

- CHRIS BOSE** Abe
- ISSIAH BULL BEAR** Sunec
- MEREWYN COMEAU** Emily
- GLORIA MAY ESHKIBOK** Bernadette
- LORI MARCHAND** Bernadette Understudy

### Creative Team

- LAURA MICHEL** Playwright
- ERIC COATES** Director
- ANDREW KUSHNIR** Dramaturge
- HAILEY VERBONAC** Set, Lighting, and Projection Designer
- BONNIE ACKO** Costume Designer
- JEREMY KNEESHAW** Sound Designer
- KELSEY RAE** Stage Manager
- DONNA SHARPE** Assistant Stage Manager



This play deals with the history of residential schools in Canada, and the erosion of language and culture they left behind. There is no direct mention in the play, of the physical violence and other atrocities meted out to the students in these schools. However, the impact of it on their lives is referred to or discussed. There is a death in the play, though it is neither graphic nor violent. Some younger audiences may find the death distressing, and should best be prepared for it in advance.

Some of the audience may find the topics covered/ referred to in the play to be distressing, traumatic, and/ or triggering. Some audience members may have Elders or other family members who went to these residential schools. Some audiences may have gone to such schools themselves. They may find the reference to the residential school system distressing.

Trauma is an overwhelming reaction to distressing situations. It can result from a direct experience or from witnessing or listening to someone else's stories that are traumatic. Even if we think we haven't experienced a trauma reaction, it is important to be observant so we can address any adverse reactions before they become too overpowering.

## Self-Care

Science tells us that witnessing trauma or even overwhelming emotional stories can impact our health, well-being, and energy. It is important to be observant and engage in self-care the moment such a situation presents itself. Self-care helps us reduce the stress of processing the event.

Some self-care strategies include:

- Exercise
- Adequate sleep
- Eating healthy
- Mindfulness techniques (meditation or yoga)
- Speaking with a counsellor or someone you trust

The following links may also be helpful:

1. Indian Residential School Survivors Society Toll-Free - 1 (800) 721-0066
2. Indian Residential School Survivors Society 24-hr Crisis Line - 1 (866) 925-4419
3. [Taking Care of Yourself after a Traumatic Event](#)
4. [30 Ways to Practice Self-Care: Take Care of Yourself](#)
5. [7 Self-Care Strategies You Can Use To Manage Trauma Triggers, According To Experts](#)

## How it all began

Several years ago, Laura Michel attended a language conference where she was asked to find a monologue or a theatre piece to be performed as a part of the entertainment. She struggled in vain to find anything contemporary. She noticed that the stories of language reclamation and revitalization were missing from the social narrative of the present day.

Laura could see her community struggle, just like almost every other Indigenous community, to preserve their language before it was lost forever. This is what prompted her to interview different generations of Secwépemc people about their connectedness, or lack thereof, to Secwépemcsin. These interviews were where the seeds of her play *Echoes of the Homesick Heart* were sowed.

The first green shoots of the play sprouted, when Laura Michel and WCT's Artistic Director James MacDonald discussed it, almost six years ago. James was new to Kamloops and as he immersed himself in the history and circumstances of this region, he was struck by this play that is so close to the community from which it has emerged; capturing voices from a diversity of ages and backgrounds across the Secwépemc Nation. Laura's dedicated work to share the real-life stories of many Secwépemc people, in hopes of preserving the Secwépemc language, became something WCT wanted to support and share with a wider audience.

In April, WCT hosted a workshop on *Echoes of the Homesick Heart*, in which Laura had a chance to work with a director, designers, and some local actors and crew. This helped her develop her script further; along with experimenting with some technical elements of the production. Much of *Echoes of the Homesick Heart* is in the style of "Verbatim Theatre," in which the dialogue that the actors speak comes directly from interview transcripts. A part of that workshop is presented in this short clip, featuring Kamloops actors Allandra Gardner and Brittney Martens. You'll also see WCT's very own Selena "Twitch" Tobin behind the camera.

Watch the video [here](#).





**Play Synopsis**

...

This multi-generational story explores one family's connection and disconnection with language, culture, and community.

To rediscover what was lost, and to move forward in understanding, each generation must learn from the other with the help of a wily trickster and teacher *seklép* (coyote).

Based on in-person interviews conducted across the Secwépemc Nation, *Echoes of the Homesick Heart* shares stories of this land by incorporating lived experiences and the real-life voices of youth to elders—celebrating the resilience of Indigenous families, communities, and culture.

...



## The Characters

### **Sunec/Travis - Youth**

*15-year-old, first nations male, casual but trendy and tall for his age. He is a bit of a skater, into video games, and often has an air of adolescent apathy, but uses this to cover a deeply feeling sensitive soul.*

### **Emily – Young Adult**

*First Nations female, 30s, beautiful, well-dressed “city girl”. She is well educated but new to the professional field and tries to project confidence to cover general inexperience. She is passionate, if not a bit naïve at times.*

### **Abe – Adult**

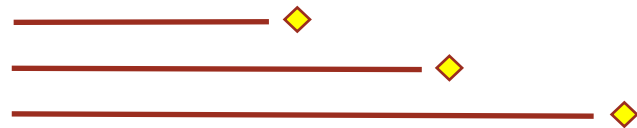
*First Nations male, 50s, tall and strong, but well educated. He is a mixture of traditional and contemporary, embracing traditional First Nations practices, while still able to highly function in a professional setting. He is very friendly with good sarcastic humour, but with a strong moral conviction.*

### **Bernadette – Elder**

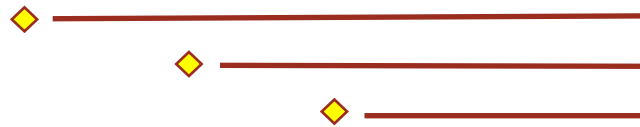
*First Nations woman, 80s, advanced in years but still physically capable. She is a handsome woman, can seem stern, but she has a warm heart and a quick wit. She has dealt with much in her life, but wouldn't ever be considered feeble or incompetent. She carries herself with grace, wisdom and good humour.*


### **Sek'lep**

*Androgynous, several ages.*



## Learning Resources





## How were the languages lost?

The land collectively referred to as Canada today, has been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. Prior to the Europeans' arrival, there were approximately 450 languages and dialects spoken throughout these lands.


With the arrival of Europeans and their interactions with the Indigenous peoples — both on a social, and a commercial level — the very milieu and the fabric of the Indigenous communities began to change, irrevocably. What started largely as mutually beneficial commercial alliances became more formalized and restrictive over time through various treaties, laws, and acts that would come to govern the lives of Indigenous peoples.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 became a tool for the Crown to take over the lands of First Nations people. The Indian Act of 1876 decimated Indigenous people's sense of identity — their cultural, social, economic, and political distinctiveness. However, arguably, the most long-lasting effects were caused by the incorporation of residential schools, which operated from the 1830s into the latter half of the 1990s, forcing young generations of Aboriginal language speakers to assimilate culturally and speak a language that was alien to them. Indigenous students caught speaking their languages were punished, often in the most inhuman ways. Some of them were as young as four or five years old when they were snatched away from their homes and their parents, and thrown into a life of confusion, oppression, and outright mental and physical torture.

Even after these schools were shut down, the fear of speaking Indigenous languages lingered in the minds of many of these residential school survivors, thereby impeding the transmission of these languages to future generations. Even in the present day, when efforts are underway to revive these languages, Indigenous students are required to attend schools away from their territories and hence are forced to learn and converse in a language that is prominent in their regions, such as English and French.

**Language death** is a process whereby a language is lost over a period of time because of a drastic reduction in the speakers of that language. Linguist David Crystal estimated in his book *By Hook or by Crook: A Journey in Search of English*, that one language dies out somewhere in the world, on average, every two weeks. The same was the conclusion drawn by the Enduring Voices Project, by the National Geographic Society. Additionally, the study cited that by 2100, more than half of the more than 7,000 languages spoken on Earth — many of them not yet recorded — may disappear; taking with them a wealth of knowledge about history, culture, and the natural environment, and the human brain.

Closer to home, in 2016, Statistics Canada reported that for about 40 Indigenous languages in Canada, there are only about 500 speakers or fewer. Losing a part of one's identity, as significant as language, has profound and far-reaching implications for the community as well as the individuals. Many Indigenous people live with a sense of loss, shame, anger, or even frustration because of their inability to speak or understand their language.



## Language Reclamation and Revitalization

Indigenous languages are sacred and living beings that deserve protection. These languages contain words and concepts that embody their ancestral cultures and ways of being.

On June 21, 2019, the *Indigenous Languages Act* (the *Act*) received Royal Assent, with the overall purpose of supporting the efforts of Indigenous Peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages.

The process of reclaiming and revitalizing languages on the brink of extinction is by no means an easy task. Past trauma has to be reconciled before the ground is fertile enough to support the regrowth of languages, and past trauma can't be reconciled until a language is revitalized. This makes the process complicated and tenuous.

It is a process that needs to be established and nurtured, nevertheless. A 2007 study by researchers at the universities of Oxford, British Columbia, and Victoria looked at 150 Indigenous communities in B.C., and found that in areas where at least half of the people had a conversational knowledge of their Indigenous language, youth suicide rates were very low – and in some cases zero. In communities where fewer than half of the members had this knowledge, youth suicide rates were, on average, six times higher.

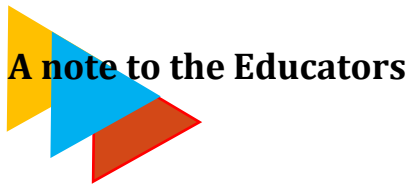
There has been some recent improvement, however, in the magnitude of this situation. In 2016, Statistics Canada revealed that 260,550 Indigenous people reported the ability to speak an Indigenous language; this represents a 3.1 percent increase from 2006. It is small but a promising drift.

Programs for learning, teaching, documenting, and revitalizing Indigenous languages have been developed by various colleges and universities. For example, Indigenous language revitalization programs at the University of Victoria, the First Nations Languages Program at the University of British Columbia, and the Yukon Native Language Centre at Yukon College.

Communities have carried out more in-depth documentation of languages. In addition, organizations, such as First Voice and the First Peoples' Cultural Council exist to support the health of Indigenous languages. Many websites have been developed to encourage language learning; one example is the Michif Language Project. On 7 April 2022, the Government of Nova Scotia introduced the *Mi'kmaw Language Act*. This legislation enshrines the Mi'kmaq language as the province's first language. It also supports efforts to protect and revitalize the language. The Act is seen as a step toward reconciliation. It takes effect on Treaty Day, 1 October.

The journey is far from over of course. To undo the erasure of language and culture, done over centuries, is a formidable task. But people like Laura Michel are dedicated and undaunted.

This play is just the beginning of the tides of change their efforts can bring.




Study guides are an excellent tool to enrich and extend the theatre experiences of participants, as well as add to the educational and community engagement needs of the audience, by providing all the vital background information and discussing the key themes and theatrical elements of each play. These guides may be used to conduct pre-and post-show sessions with the audiences.

We hope to add to the awareness and understanding of key issues, as well as spark important and efficient conversations about them. Echoes of the Homesick Heart deals with a dark part of our history, and all discussions need to be conducted from and in a place of empathy, awareness, and caution.

Any mention, even an indirect one, of the Residential schools may come with mentions or memories of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, physical abuse. There are issues of family separation, forced cultural assimilation, and cultural and identity erasures to consider. Many Aboriginal communities are still reeling from the impacts of these residential schools. The healing has been steady, yet slow. The last year, since the discovery of the graves of Le Estcwéy (The Missing), followed by many such discoveries across Canada plunged many families and communities back into the abyss of trauma that they may have taken generations to climb out of. The first step to offering support to those suffering is to build awareness and understanding about the issues and traumas that plague them.

This study guide hopes to be instrumental in initiating these much-needed conversations.

As educators, you have a unique opportunity to have such conversations with young people in a way that builds awareness and empathy. The following pages carry learning resources, activities, and links to additional reading materials for your perusal. The activities focus on three key takeaways themes – the importance of language, the character of Sek'lep, and the powers of the ancient wisdom (depicted in the play by the motif of the feather). Hope you enjoy sharing these activities with your students, and the process of learning together.



## Preparing for a live theatre performance

Live theatre is even more valued and exciting in a post-pandemic world. The ability to sit in an auditorium or room with people who appreciate art as much as we do feels like a blessing after two years spent locked inside our houses, mostly. However, that makes a quick reminder of all the basic housekeeping rules, even more imperative.

It is important to note that some students may have never attended a live theatrical performance before and, hence, might need some guidance as to what standards of behaviour apply. This will ensure the best experience for all people involved in presenting and watching the show.

A live-theatre play is a symbiotic relationship between the audience and the actors. The audience contributes as much to the overall enjoyment and power of the performance as the performers do.

In-class preparation can be of great help. If the audience walks into the performance space thinking about the issues the performance aims to highlight, they prove to be the most intelligent, responsive, engaged audience a performer can wish for. By talking about the play beforehand and asking the students some key questions to watch for, the educators can help prepare them to take away the most benefit from what the play has to offer.

Some things to bear in mind when in the theatre:

- Please respect the performance space and equipment. Speaking aloud to friends during the performance may disturb other audience members. It may also distract the performers.
- Photography or recording is not permitted during the performance.
- Use of cell phones, pagers, music players, and headphones (iPods, MP3 players) is not allowed. All devices must be silent during the performance.

Thank you for your help.

Enjoy the show!

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## Key Takeaway - 1

### Theme: **The Legend of Sek'lep**

Prelude:

Sek'lep (Coyote) was an important figure in Secwépemc oral history. He was a helper to the people as well as a trickster. He could transform himself into anything he wanted. He could die and come back to life. He used his transformations to help and trick the people.

Through the stories, Coyote taught the people many lessons. Coyote had magical powers, great knowledge, and was very cunning. He is known in Secwépemc stories as The Trickster. He is Trickster, a hero, and a creator.

Trickster stories are a common trope in Indigenous storytelling. While there are some cross-cultural similarities of tricksters amongst nations, each nation has its own unique trickster and related stories. Sek'lep is considered a trickster by Secwépemc peoples. In their stories, Sek'lep often breaks the rules and thereby brings teachings through his mishaps. These teachings have strong ties to local societal values, traditional knowledge, spirituality, and overall worldviews. The inclusion of the Trickster Sek'lep's buffoonery and the magical acts of other Transformers always makes for a good story. The use of a Trickster character as a key protagonist is common in many First Nations oral traditions across North America. The Salishan and Plateau Coyote joins the ranks of other notable Tricksters from across Canada including Raven, Wesakechak, Nanabush, and Hare. The Trickster character presents an exaggerated version of humanity that offers the audience a window through which to see themselves. (Source: [Trickster's Path to Language Transformation: Stories of Secwépemc Immersion from Chief Atahm School, by Kathryn A. Michel](#))

Let's try and understand more about the Sek'lep with the help of the following activities.

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#### **Activity for elementary students:**

1. What do you think Sek'lep would look like? Draw a picture of Sek'lep and share it with your friends.

2. Take a few minutes to imagine how Sek'lep would walk, talk or behave in general. What kind of voices would it talk in? Share your version of Sek'lep with your group through a role play.

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**Activity for middle-grade/high school students:**

Characters like Sek'lep are common in Indigenous storytelling. Such examples can be found in folklore and tales from across the world. Research similar characters from other Indigenous cultures and communities, from all over Canada and the world, and share them with your group. Do these characters have common names, personalities, or traits?

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**Activity for the mature audience:**

- ✚ Are there people in your life who display the attributes of Sek'lep?
- ✚ Are there any attributes of Sek'lep that you identify with?
- ✚ Are there any public figures that match the description of a Sek'lep?

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## Key Takeaway - 2

### Theme: **Language**

Some fundamental questions to discuss before the activity.

- What does language mean to us?
- What would happen if we lose our language?
- What are the benefits of learning a new language?
- What are the challenges of learning a new language?

Prelude:

Indigenous children, some as young as four, who were forcibly sent to residential schools, had to face the enormous and harsh realities of the questions above in ways that we cannot even imagine.

Languages and cultures can be either high-context or low-context. A high-context culture or language focuses on underlying context, meaning, and tone in the message, and not just the words themselves. Conversely, a low-context culture or language expects communications to be explicitly stated so that there's no risk of confusion.

Words in many of the Indigenous languages are typically complex, often expressing in a word what is contained in a sentence in languages like English and French. Such languages are often called polysynthetic, with words composed of a string of meaningful parts. Moreover, there is also a great amount of diversity in the Indigenous languages spoken within Canada. Indigenous languages in Canada are generally grouped into 12 families; further bifurcated into dialects, this number could go into the hundreds. These languages and dialects vary in terms of words, sounds, phonetics, syntax, and sentence formation.

When the children from such diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds were forced to switch over to a very different and low-context language like English, almost overnight, they must have felt the weight of the four questions the students were asked to ponder over, at the beginning of this exercise. The Indigenous children, however, suffered much more trauma and distress due to those questions, than mere pondering.

Let's try and understand the difference between low-context and high-context languages through the following activities.

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### **Activity for elementary students:**

The educator can assign a word from the following list to each of the students. Each word pertains to an object they see or use in their daily life. The students then must write down 5 sentences about the object, explaining what the object is or what it does, without ever mentioning the name of the object. The students then must read out these descriptions to their

friends and see how many sentences it takes for the others to guess what the object is. The group can then, collectively, decide which one sentence would be the best descriptor to replace the word.

*Example:*

*Word – Table*

*Descriptive sentences –*

- 1. It is used to put things.*
- 2. It can be made of wood, plastic, or metal.*
- 3. It usually has four legs*
- 4. We all have these in our homes; maybe even one in each room. We also have them in school.*
- 5. They come in different shapes and sizes.*

**Activity for elementary students – List of Objects**

Bus	River	Ball	Table Lamp	Thermometer
Plant	Spoon	Blanket	Bowl	Spade
Couch	Carpet	Cartons	Duct Tape	Oil Crayons
Lantern	Blender	Skis	Mall	Park

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**Activity for middle-grade/high school students:**

The educator can assign a word from the following list to each of the students. Each word is an emotion they must be familiar with. If required, the teacher may define the emotion.

The students then must write down a few descriptive sentences about the emotion, using the following questions:

1. What colour would you associate with this emotion?
2. What physical posture/action would you associate with this emotion?
3. How would you express this emotion using only your face?

The students then must read out these descriptions to their friends and see how many sentences it takes for the others to guess what the emotion is. The group can then, collectively, decide which one sentence would be the best descriptor to replace the word for that emotion. Alternatively, the student may choose to enact the emotion without saying anything about it. The group can then come up with the best way to describe that emotion, without actually naming it.

*Example:*

*Word: Rage/Anger*

*Descriptive sentences –*

- 1. Red is often used to depict this emotion, but sometimes it could also be green.*
- 2. People often clasp their fists tight when feeling this emotion.*

3. People feeling this emotion may have furrowed eyebrows, creased forehead, or clenched teeth.

**Activity for middle-grade/high school students – List of Emotions**

Admiration	Disgust	Sadness	Confusion	Anxiety	Romance
Fear	Satisfaction	Calmness	Sympathy	Awe	Excitement
Joy	Nostalgia	Adoration	Interest	Boredom	Appreciation
Amusement	Craving	Horror	Empathy pain	Awkwardness	Envy

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**Activity for the mature audience:**

Have a discussion with your friends or family about some or all of the ideas mentioned below. They may need you to explain some terms, beforehand, based on what you have learned from this study guide or the play. If someone from the group hasn't seen the play, you may want to share a brief synopsis with them, before conducting the activity.

- ✚ How can a low-context language become a high-context language?
- ✚ What about the people or the things that surround us is their most important attribute which makes them who or what they are? Is a house merely a shelter, or a place where most of our cherished life memories are crafted. Is a diary merely a journal of our life or the most honest conversation we will ever have in our life. Is a dress just a piece of clothing or something that makes us feel more confident to step into the outside world. Is our sibling merely a someone we share our parents with or the first and deepest friendship we will ever make.
- ✚ What if instead of looking at things and people as just who they are, we start defining them by what they bring to our life?
- ✚ What unique proposition do they offer to us that no one else does?

After the discussion, try and come to a consensus about what an outlook like that can do to our understanding of the world that surrounds us. Will it change the way we appreciate and care for things? Would it make us value things in a different light? Would it make us more or less materialistic?

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## Key Takeaway - 3

### Theme: **Wisdom**

#### Prelude:

Across various Indigenous communities and cultures, it is believed that all things possess an inherent virtue, power, and wisdom. The feather, for example, is a powerful symbol that signifies honour and a connection between the owner, the Creator, and the bird from which the feather came. It symbolizes trust, honour, strength, wisdom, power, and freedom.

In the play *Echoes of the Homesick Heart*, there are four colours of feathers, used by a family member to pass invaluable wisdom to future generations.

Black Feather – represents physical strength

Yellow Feather – represents strength derived from personal and family values and personal gifts.

Red Feather – represents knowledge of the lands, where one has come from, and where they have been.

Green Feather – represents knowledge of all the languages; the power to talk to anyone or anything.

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#### **Activity for elementary students:**

Props needed: A opaque bag or box, with a mouth big enough to put one's hand through. Four feathers in black, yellow, red, and green colour.  
Put the feathers in the bag/box. Ask the children to come forward one by one, close their eyes and pick up a feather. Depending on which feather they pick, the children must do one of these activities.

Black Feather – Talk about their favourite superhero, and which special power would they want to have if they were a superhero.

Yellow Feather – Share one word of wisdom or special learning they received from a grown-up, that they think their friends should know too.

Red Feather – Tell your friends about something interesting about a new place you visited.

Green Feather – If you had the power to talk to anything or any object in the world, what would that be and what would you ask it? For example, what would you ask a mountain? What would you ask a clock?

**Activity for middle-grade/high school students:**

If you could only have one of the powers bestowed by these feathers, which one would you choose, and why? Discuss with your friends.

In the play, the Kye7e says to the Youth, "Only use this when you really need it. You will know when the time comes". Can you think of instances where you feel you would be required to call upon such powers?

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**Activity for the mature audience:**

- ✚ What is the wisdom that you would like to bestow on your future generations and why? They could be the powers of these four feathers or something different.
- ✚ What is the system of knowledge and wisdom transmissions you have established in your families, or you would like to?
- ✚ What are the powers/attributes you think the future generations would need the most? Do you have examples/anecdotes to share from your own life and experiences to share with your future generation, concerning them?

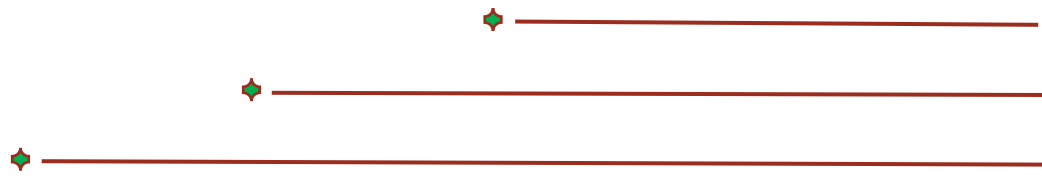


## Additional Reading Resources

1. National Association of Friendship Centres - [Link](#)
2. List of Friendship Centres in British Columbia - [Link](#)
3. Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society - [Link](#)
4. Our Languages, Our Stories – A Discussion Paper by National Association of Friendship centres – [Link](#)
5. Secwépemc Museum and Heritage Park - [Link](#)
6. Indian Residential School Survivors (IRSSS) - [Link](#)
7. List of IRSSS offices - [Link](#)
8. Indigenous Languages in Canada - [Link](#)
9. Indigenous Perspectives Education Guide - [Link](#)
10. Trauma-Informed Care for Educators (Crisis Prevention Institute) - [Link](#)
11. The Death and Revival of Indigenous Languages (Harvard International Review) – [Link](#)
12. An Interactive Map of Indigenous Languages in the World (Native Land Digital) - [Link](#)



# Western Canada Theatre Staff



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 PAUL CUTHBERT Associate Technical Director (Sagebrush)  
 SELENA TOBIN Associate Technical Director (Pavilion)  
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 SABRINA STACE Head of Wardrobe  
 EMILY THIBERT Stitcher  
 CHARLOTTE WAGNER Stitcher  
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***Echoes of the Homesick Heart is now ON SCREEN!***

Presented in partnership with the Kamloops Film Society, this important piece will see its on screen debut on Sunday, June 22, 2025. This will include a special presentation of the play, as well as a panel discussion with theatre and musical artists as well as language specialists. Included will be a lobby display from Shay Paul and the Indigenous Resurgence Project.

100% of the proceeds from this event will go towards the *Echoes of the Homesick Heart* Bursary, which aims to support emerging Secwepemc scholars committed to sustaining and reclaiming their language. For more information about the bursary, contact Laura Michel at [lmichel#wctlive.ca](mailto:lmichel#wctlive.ca)

For any additional information, please contact:

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