The Unnatural and Accidental Women
By Marie Clements

Directed by Muriel Miguel
Assistant Director Penny Couchie

Set Designer Andy Moro
Costume Designer Sage Paul
Lighting Designer Jeff Harrison
Sound Designer Troy Slocum
Choral Music Director Soni Moreno

Stage Manager Lisa Russell
Assistant Stage Manager Jane Vanstone Osborn
Apprentice Stage Manager Brody Halfe

Bearing Witness 101
Performance Resources Offered by Montana Adams
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An Introduction

She:kon! I, Montana Adams, say she:kon because I’m a Mohawk of Akwesasne (which you can find on the map smack dab in the middle of Ontario, Quebec, and New York State borders), which means that I am a visitor. I went to school at the University of Ottawa where I graduated with an HBA in Theatre. I currently work part time at the National Arts Centre in Indigenous Theatre as a research assistant, and most recently, working on this performance resource! The National Arts Centre, as well as the University of Ottawa, are both located on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg. Those of us who are visitors or settlers on this territory must acknowledge our responsibility of being co-caretakers of the land now and for generations to come.

While working here at the NAC, I’ve encountered a few questions: How do we help people attend events and performances at the NAC? How can we ensure audiences leave with a better understanding of Indigenous artistic practices and lived experiences? And how can we do this using an Indigenous worldview, or Indigenous-centered approach?

My personal relationship with theatre started out as a gentle one. Once I got through high school, all with the corniness of the stereotypical drama kid tropes, I went to university, where my idea of theatre was taken for a ride. After completing my first-year, I started to approach theatre with caution, because now it was an enigma to me- as I’m sure it is to any student. Because sometimes, theatre is intimidating.

My goal is to identify why this work is so important and why its happening here and now, on Canada’s National Stage, and for you to identify these subjects with me. Within this performance resource, I discuss subjects that pertain to *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*. Hopefully, with this information, you will be able to gain a greater meaning from the performance and apply your own thoughts and ideas actively to those around you. With the discourses and activities provided here, we go into specific details about some realities and issues experienced by Indigenous people and dive into their significances in the theatre.
The Basics
This summary is pulled from the jacket of a hardcopy of the play:

"The Unnatural and Accidental Women is a surrealist dramatization of a thirty-year murder case involving many mysterious deaths in the "Skid Row" area of Vancouver. All the victims were found dead with a blood-alcohol reading far beyond safe levels, and all were last seen in the company of Gilbert Paul Jordan, who frequented the city's bars preying on primarily middle-aged Native women. The coroner's reports listed the cause of death of many of these women as "unnatural and accidental… Marie Clements reconstructs the lives of these women as shaped by lost connections - to loved ones, to the land, to a way of life. These are precariously vulnerable lives, so easily drawn to their end by the heat and light of a flame, lives that thirst for an end of searching in forgetfulness."

Personally, when I read this, it seems straightforward. However, when you view theatre, the meaning of the whole production does not stop and end with what is written on the back of the book. You still have to consider the creative choices within the production. In reality, the text is the base of it, but the entire creative team of actors, directors, and designers bring it to life.

Photo: Tracey Lynn Photography
Context 1.0

In order to immerse yourself in the experience of the performance and to value the messages of the production, you may ask yourself these questions: What is the play about? Why did the playwright choose to tell this story? Why is it being produced now? And why is it being produced at the National Arts Centre?

Think of it this way: everything happens for a reason. When something is produced, there is thought put into it, an idea is shared, and there is an urgency that pushes it forward. Why this play? Why now? Why on this stage? Why do we want you, to take time out of your day, to make your way to the National Arts Centre, and sit in a dark room for two hours with your attention focused forward?

Starting off

I want to begin by talking about the main players who bring this story to the stage. For instance, the playwright, Marie Clements.

The Playwright: Marie Clements

Marie Clements is a Métis playwright, actor, and artistic director. Born in 1962 in Vancouver, Clements now lives on Galiano Island in British Columbia.

She has written 12 plays – including Burning Vision, Now look what you made me do, Urban Tattoo (a solo show), Copper Thunderbird, and, of course, The Unnatural and Accidental Women.

In 2001, Clements founded “Urban Ink Productions,” of which she was Artistic Director. This intercultural theatre company, based in Vancouver, is “dedicated to developing, producing, and touring Aboriginal, Indigenous, and multicultural works”[i] of theatre, writing, and film. The purpose of the theatre company is to “celebrate and bring together different cultural and artistic perspectives and interracial experiences.”[ii] Urban Ink works with community and cultural groups, and “employs multidisciplinary forms and techniques including storytelling, dance, and film in its innovated projects.”[iii]

Clements’s projects have been presented at the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, the National Theatre School of Canada, the Banff Centre for the Arts, Firehall Arts Centre, and, of course, at the NAC.[vi]
An Insight to the Practice

I interviewed Kevin Loring, the Artistic Director of the Indigenous Theatre Department at the National Arts Centre, to bring some insight to how Clements works and reflect on his own experiences working with her.

Q: During your career as a professional actor, which Marie Clements productions have you been in?

I’ve had the pleasure of participating in the World Premiers of Burning Vision, Copper Thunderbird, The Edward Curtis Project, and The Road Forward.
Q: What draws you to Marie Clements' work?

I couldn’t be prouder to present The Unnatural and Accidental Women as Indigenous Theatre’s first production because Marie Clements has helped shape my career. I said this before, at the beginning of the first rehearsal of The Unnatural and Accidental Women, and I’ve said it to her personally—Marie is a Story Shaman. She creates a 4th dimension, one where all time is every time, and all space is every space. Her narratives are quintessential Indigenous dramaturgy. She creates worlds that form the life wheel or the medicine wheel, they are not linear but cyclical. Her work doesn’t care about time, doesn’t care about space. Instead, multiple instances can occur at once and transportation is possible.

Marie Clements taps into the 4th dimension to create a space where you can see inside and outside. She started as a spoken word poet and was heavily influenced by beat poets in the late 80s. She is one of those artists where the power of the word is everything. In each play that I have been a part of, she uses words to form rhythms, themes and atmospheres that are unlike any other. Words are so important to her, she spends weeks with her dramaturgs and other collaborators meticulously going over the words of her plays. She has an unrelenting drive and immense passion.

Q: Why did you choose The Unnatural and Accidental Women as the show to open Indigenous Theatre at the National Arts Centre?

Marie was writing about Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES) and the crisis surrounding Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) before it was a headline and before people were talking about it nationally. She started talking about Indigenous women and girls at the hands of violence, survivors of violence, and their families in the 1980s. Clements has a way of engaging with the great demons of our era and she calls it out. She works through social justice issues on a supernatural level. She is truly gifted with how to dismantle these realities in extremely exciting and specific narrative structures.

To begin the season, we at the Indigenous Theatre Department wanted to acknowledge current social and political realities that Indigenous communities and families are experiencing.

Specifically with the inquiry into MMIWG ending this year, we wanted to contribute to the resilient narratives, beauty and strength of Indigenous women and girls across the country. We want to help Canadians learn and to build community through the arts.
Q: Can you leave the readers with a question and activity to focus on?

My question for the reader or audience is “When did your worldview change while reading or watching the play? When did how you understand time to work feel challenged, or when was the space of the world unlike your real life? What does this mean about the world Marie wrote?”

I find Marie’s work so poetic, ambitious and humorous- take this style and turn it into your own! Write a 200 word poetic response to The Unnatural and Accidental Women.

*Interviewed by Montana Adams and Lindsay Lachance*
Muriel Miguel (middle) of the Kuna and Rappahannock nations, is a founding member and Artistic Director of Spiderwoman Theater, the longest running Native American women’s theater company in North America. She has directed and co-written all of Spiderwoman’s shows since their first show, *Women in Violence* in 1976. They have produced over twenty original works for the theatre.

**Q: With your experience originating the role of Aunt Shadie, how does that affect your understanding of the play in this production?**

It's really different being a director and being an actor. I had to come into this without any of the memories I had of playing Aunt Shady - because I played her twice! On the first day, I had to say I played it twice, but I am now the director and all of [my memories as an actor] has to go away.

I have Women and Violence, Spider Womans' play; it's over 40 years old. So, I reviewed it, because the same things were being said now, about violence. This is an important piece because it's still happening. Same things are happening then and now. Feminism, over 40 years ago, was having a baseball team and going out to play; it was uphill all the time. We went to Europe with [Spiderwoman's] piece (Material Witness) and the people there said “That only happens in Canada.” But those people would come up to us and say they just got beat up in the street!

If all [these feminist movements] [are] happening, with “#MeToo”, “Not in Our Space”, and “Not Anymore”, what about what's happening here? Why can't we do something about women disappearing here? What about what's happening here? Women being trafficked? This play will bring attention to this issue; It has to been out there all this time. It happens all the time, and we
need to make sure we are always talking about these women, and remind ourselves that its ongoing, and stay focused on sharing the issues.

**Sisterhood and agency are talked about a lot in reference to this play. Are you going to interpret Sisterhood and Agency throughout this production, whether it be in the creation process or the final product?**

We talk about that a lot here. The first time we did [The Unnatural and Accidental Women] in Vancouver at the Firehall, [Gilbert Jordan] was out of jail. He was walking around free! That’s hard to swallow. So we have tried, and this is hard, but we have started an ensemble with the women, and there’s two men in the cast, so include the men. It's important that we can all be on the same page, all sitting at the same table to talk about what's happening. If you think about, the women kill him at the end… is killing and murder the same? If you kill someone is it the same as murder? Why does he get killed? Well in this play he gets killed and that’s what’s in this play.

We were all given this play, and that's all part of the actor and director to think about it, but that's the way the play was. I bet there’s a lot of famous plays… well let's think about it, what are the famous books and famous plays where the man dies at the end? Not everyone is going to give him up at the end.

And then you know you think of the spirits, they are all around us. They are all around us. The first time we did the play, we didn’t have a ceremony around [the women who died], but we are calling out their names, real names. We are calling on these women.

I remember coming out on stage one day, and I came out and saw a woman, or saw something, out there one night - and we never acknowledged them. So [this production] had to do something to acknowledge them. So, we had a feast, had a smudge, and put out a spirit plate, and you know what. It works. It works in many ways, not just because you acknowledge them, but because they acknowledge it. And it brings you back to what you are, you know?

So, I was determined to do that when we all got here. Everyone came to greet us, that we would have a feast, a smudge and bring in Annie (pictured above on the right) to have a welcome.

**Do you feel a difference, taking those steps to acknowledge the women, in this production?**

Yes, I’m more relaxed, but you know things happen- (Muriel is interrupted with a clatter of her cane, which was seemingly pushed off the table by no one. We laugh; because we all realize at that moment, the spirits are listening. With a chuckle, she continues.) No, I really feel it. They
aren't all that far away. And you think about it a lot within our group itself, the spirits of these women are acknowledging us, instead of us acknowledging them.

**Specifically, in relation to your professional career, how do you create theatre to cultivate a relationship with violence against Indigenous women?**

Well when I was in Theatre groups, feminist theatre groups, one of the things I observed is that women talked about all of the horrible things, and that they never let it [soak in]. Like they were banging *(she hits the table with her hand four times)* over and over again, and all [the audience] just kept saying was “Ow ow ow! That's terrible!” So I tried to figure out ways to approach these subjects in ways that are, maybe, coming into the back door. You aren’t looking them in the face, but maybe you are goosing them; or you start out as a joke, and then it goes into the real.

You take something, and you make something obscured. You make the horror obscure. How do you do something that makes it so that the horror can be understood.

We do that in this production with storyweaving, one person is talking, but everyone is onstage, and they are talking through it and all together.

We do that a lot. Storyweaving.

What makes this story, and what makes the story have weight, or the word have weight? And how many ways of looking at that word can bring you meaning?

Years ago, I was talking to [someone], an Anishinaabemowin speaker and the way he would describe one word was that it had so many different layers. Not just in a dictionary spelt one way, like this or like this; it had so many different meanings.

That’s what Marie’s stuff did for me, because [her stories have] so many different meanings. It's the weight of it all. I think of language speakers and how they can find so many meanings in one word.

It was just a simple word but had so much weight and meaning!

**How would you want the students reading this performance resource to interpret story weaving on their own?**

I think of it in terms of like a story. A story has a beginning, middle, and an end, but if you look at it, it really doesn’t have to have that. It can have just one part, or all three, and then it moves from there. You take a story or take a word in the story and use it.
For example: What does mother mean? What does it mean in your language? Maybe it’s sister, or whatever word: what do these words mean? What does it mean for you?

And story weaving isn’t really something I discovered, I discovered it under the kitchen table. I just tried to teach it to others- they are always so surprised that they have stories. But that's what we are born from, you know, all these stories.

*Interviewed by Montana Adams and Lindsay Lachance.*

**Activity Time:** Take an aspect of the play, and write down what it means to you. Then, in a sharing circle (and if you don’t know how to do one, there’s a guide to do one later!) take what that aspect means to others, and create something of it. Whether it be a new story, a collage, a poem, or a new take on an already preconceived idea you had!

**Context 2.0**

Talking to Muriel really helped me create an outline of these issues that the play discusses, and why this production helps us to understand the impact of these issues on our own people. We really want this subject to hit home, so below is a compiled list of subjects the play touches on.

Go forth to this subject with a clear mind. We understand that this production is going to have audiences of all backgrounds, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, so every person will have a different relationship with the concepts below.

Take a moment before you allow yourself to absorb this knowledge.
Indigenous women are demographically the most likely to be victims of gender-based violence. These numbers have been proven again and again through first hand witness accounts and multiple investigations and studies.

Marie Clements describes the women she writes in this story as being with her, the entire time she was in the process of creating this play; That it was her responsibility to give a voice to these indigenous women. She channels the voices of those women, like Rebecca channels the aunties in the play.

Clements spoke for these women, years before there was a national inquiry.

The “Genocide” issue

Following the release of the 2019 report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, there was a big debate on the language used within. The term genocide was used in the report, taking the use the definition that was created during the Genocide Convention, where the term and usage was solidified.

What happened and is currently happening to Indigenous women in Canada does in fact constitute as genocide. While some may argue that Canada has committed no actions that constitute as genocide, it is its lack of action that finds Canada guilty.

“Genocide is defined in the Genocide Convention as:

[…] any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

...In the Canadian Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, genocide is defined as:

[…] an act or omission committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, an identifiable group of persons, as such, that, at the time and in the place of its commission, constitutes genocide...“
Ideas

During my time in university, I started understanding new rules about how to view theatre. You gotta start asking questions to grasp an understanding of what that play has to say. Whether it be doing some research on the playwright, the director, the company itself and their mandate, or all of the above, these factors contribute to a further understanding the production.

Below here are some ideas that Clements takes on in *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, and with these you might want to start asking yourself some questions, whether you’ve seen the performance or not. David Rush’s *A Student Guide to Play Analysis* has a few questions that can help you process these ideas on your own terms. Below are some questions, inspired by his, to guide you:

Which “window” are you looking at this play with (what are you studying)? What society did the playwright live in? Does it reflect the culture today? What’s Maries view of this world? How does her worldview change yours? How do the choices made in the play reflect their goals? Their messages? How does the structure help your understanding of the play?

You might want to take a moment right now, before going forward, to recognize where you stand in relation to these ideas that we are about to dive into.

In relation to where you stand in society, your worldviews may differ from these ideas that are being put forward. Allow yourself to give space to understand.

Spirit World

The Spirit World is a belief in life after death. It regards the spirit as a continuous existence. The world exists alongside our current one and is the next step after life. Clements draws on this concept through Rebecca’s dream sequence and through the narratives of the other women in the play. They allow their story to be unravelled through flashbacks and imagery of nature proving that we are connected inherently to the land, through body and spirit.

In Michelle LaFlamme’s article *(Re)Animating the (Un)Dead*, she talks specifically about this play and Clements’ ability to portray women who have disappeared through performative utilities. Whether it be through their voices, their actions, a re-lived experience of the moments before the death, or an exploration of their human needs that prevail even in the spirit world, they are represented and are brought forth in our own world, and therefore allows the spirit
world to be present and acknowledged in our reality. They are present and intimate with the living (the audience, or the witness). She writes:

“Clearly Clements wants audiences to consider the notion that redress for the missing and murdered [Indigenous] women in Canada may be assisted by traditional knowledge, the power of matriarchal community, and perhaps even the spirit world.” (230)

During the rehearsal process, the team always made sure to recognize who was present with them. The names used in the play are the names of the real women who were taken away from us, and into the spirit world. Recognizing the women around us, and providing a smudge and a spirit plate helped those spirits have a hand in that process.

Sisterhood

Along with acknowledging the spirits in the room, the rehearsal process really touched on the aspect of sisterhood. There was honesty and transparency in the room with the whole process—from touching on their moods, to the jokes made throughout the day. They took the time to make sure everyone was accounted for mentally and did routine check ins with each other.

Particularly, when there was an intense scene that they had to block and rehearse, they brought back the smudge for the end of the day. No one left the room with baggage on their shoulders.

They created an ensemble, a sisterhood pact with each other to ensure that the play was coming from a place of love, rather than sadness or revenge.

The bond between the women in the play translates to the bond the actors are required to have. As they progress through the story, from the beginning being the spirit world to the collusion of that world and our world, they slowly gather to form an alliance together to fight for justice. They find strength in one another.

Agency

This is a stem from the power roles played in this story. The power of the man goes to the women in the end, and this is done by allowing the women to take control of their own narrative.

Clements made a profound choice in deciding to leave the men unnamed until it was absolutely necessary. This allows the focus to go on the women for the most part, and those distracted by the need for more men involvement in the story are asked to reason with themselves to why they insist on giving the men of the story more agency in an obviously established female-oriented place within this world.
Looking at recent documentaries made, we can think critically in different ways at the portrayal of other male on female crimes. Films, the new documentary of Ted Bundy, focus more on the psyche of the male figure, rather than the women who go defined by their first name and the way that they died. It’s a tragic happening, but now these women are left to be known forever as a victim of a man, infamous for his violent ways. The frame of these killings that happened is not painted in horror, but instead in fascination, which can easily translate to admiration.
Bearing Witness

“The media, and its framing of [Indigenous] people, acts as an active mechanism connecting many of the contextual variables that lead to social denial. It, as we shall see, relies on its colonial roots to frame MMIWG in a way that marks them as invisible. However, what are the specific mechanisms used in media representations of violence against aboriginal women? To what extent do they contribute to the societal reproduction of the denial of this violence?”

Rebecca Bychutsky, above, writes about the direct relation of portraying Indigenous women and their issues to an audience that can feel and act upon what they have seen. Depending on what was shown, it can lead to a direct effect on stereotypes of all indigenous women; usually to the detriment of their own portrayal in, specifically, a Canadian society.

Working towards a better understanding of Indigenous women, from an audience with a preconceived notion of what Indigenous women stand for, is something that artists are working towards today. With this background given, I invite you to practice bearing witness in order to come to a conclusion of how you can act on what you have seen, within any sort of message having to do with Indigenous people.

One of the steps to doing this in the case of The Unnatural and Accidental Women, is to recognize that the victims of this violence is not a one-off, lone wolf situation. It is systemic, and one that continues to affect Indigenous women to this day. Recognizing that some media outlets frame this issue as one that is still not in effect today, fails to recognize the ongoing trauma that Indigenous women have to live with.

Going into discussion of the subject, and allowing the following steps to take place, along with seeking out additional resources, is the start of the viewers own responsibility when bearing witness.

For discussion after the play: How does Rebecca bear witness? How do the aunties bear witness to Rebecca? Maybe Why do the aunties bear witness and how do they protect her throughout the play? What does this do to the world of the play? How do these women live in past, present, and spiritual realms?
Don’t just sit there - TAKE ACTION

In the chart above you have the action items in order to contribute to bearing witness. In each box, you have a colour that represents each of the four sections on the medicine wheel. I recognize that the medicine wheel usually functions in a cycle, however, for this exercise, this is a linear experience with the notion of life after the cycle ends.

During the creation of this chart, I had the notion of the Great Unknown come to the table. The Great Unknown is an annishinabe term for what happens after death; or the end of the cycle. It could further be a reflection on your actions, and/or a continuance of the same linear process until you come to a conclusion.

In your entire experience, whether it be what you saw in the story, or your own observations during the process of going to see the performance, what aspect of *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* can be identified with each action step?

For example, to combat silence, voice is given to the aunties in the story. How is that voice?
The Set
Designed by Andy Moro

The first act of the play is designed after Pigeon Park, an urban park in the DTES, that is mentioned in the text. This building holds significance for the people who are in the DTES, where there are sellers that are outside and where a lot of these events take place. There are five rooms, which the directors described as “cells” for each woman.

The second part of the play takes place in Rebecca's apartment, and replaces the previous five rooms.

The copper planter on the ground represents Aunt Shadie’s room, or domain, embedded into the earth. She, along with all the other women, are constantly onstage. After the stage transforms for the second part, they are unlocked from their cells and allowed to roam throughout the space. However, Aunt Shadies bed will be one of the first images onstage and will serve as the last image as well.

The copper - Used throughout the set, copper is a symbol of the West coast. The productions us of the material because of its significance in Vancouver and the surrounding areas. It is a sacred metal.
Lights up on a logger looking up at a tree, handsaw in hand. He shouts across time. *TIR-BER*

AUNT SHADIE: Re-beccas...

A big woman emerges from a bed of dark leaves. Gasping she bolts upright, un/alien. Nude, she rises. She follows the sounds and images of the trees.

SLIDE: Rita Louise James, 52, died November 10, 1978 with a 0.12 blood alcohol reading.

No coroner's report issued.

THE UNNATURAL AND ACCIDENTAL WOMEN.
BY MARIE CLEMENTS. DESIGN ANDY MORO
The Sound
Designed by Troy Slocum

The entire soundscape of the world of the play is inspired by music that inspires a retro feel to the play—music from the 60’s and 70’s, along with songs of tradition mixed with a modern feel. It’s a reminder of what has happened, and what is happening now.

Within the play text itself, Clements outlines sounds of nature, to human noises and sounds of the urban setting into the text itself. She gives suggestions to how the atmosphere should not just be reliant on what is being said with words, but to have an otherworldly feeling of overlapping stimulants all around the first part of the play.

These sounds are echoes of memories that all women have, of living systems in relation to our natural history, and the life of the spirit world; they should not be presented as if it was in our reality.

The Costumes
Designed by Sage Paul, Stacey Mitchell

Each of the characters have a colour scheme inspired from the imagery Clements provides in the text. Hues of the forest, of the nature all around them intertwined with the spirit world.

For instance, all the aunties have clothes that are stained with dirt, as an illusion of being dirty. Yet if you look closely, each of them is clothed elegantly, with pieces reflecting modern fashion. But those closely related to the spirit world, those women like The Dancer/The Woman, or Aunt Shadie, who have costumes that are white.

The end scene, where all the women are gathered together for a feast, they are all wearing ribbon skirts. Ribbon skirts are traditionally worn by Indigenous women to ceremony and are further being normalized by Indigenous women by being worn casually or to any other formal events. In this instance, they are celebrating each other, and are having a feast in respect for the spirits of the women all around them.

For this production, each of the actors were given the opportunity to design and sew their own ribbon skirt. They each chose ribbon colours that they felt either represented themselves or the women they are recreating onstage. They were able to work with a local ribbon skirt maker, Stacey Mitchell, to guide them through this process.
Questions

After the performance:
If you have read the script:

What directorial choices (design, casting, blocking, etc.) could you see in the performance? Share what connections you found between those choices and the messages of the play.

What would you have done differently? Why?

What did you discover about your understanding of the play, compared to before the performance?

Did you feel any strong emotions about the play? Can you pinpoint certain times within the performance you felt these, and reflect on why you felt them?

Were there choices in the performance you did not understand? (AKA choices in the production that made you go “what?”)

Consider the current events of today in regard to Indigenous politics. Can you see a connection to the message you derived from this performance?

If you haven’t read the script:

What were the images that stuck out to you? Why?

Can you make connections to what is happening in current day politics? How do the characters reflect those ideas?

What is unique about this play, in comparison to the discussion around Indigenous theatre?

Consider what you already know about Indigenous culture and the people. Were there any realizations, or learning moments within the play?

How can you connect to the characters (emotionally/mentally)?

Did you feel any strong emotions about the play? Can you pinpoint certain times within the performance you felt these, and reflect on why you felt them?
During the performance:

Think about the academic mindset you are entering with. Is this for your English class? Drama class? Indigenous studies or sociology class? What kind of different lenses can help contribute to your understanding of what your about to see?

Are you able to put that lens aside and learn differently for this moment?

What are your expectations going in? How are you feeling?

How can you transform these feelings into direct actions once you leave the theatre?

Before the performance:

What do you want out of the experience of watching the performance with this knowledge of MMIWG in mind?

How do you see yourself in relation to Indigenous people? Specifically women.

What is this photo trying to tell us? What does the show poster show you or explain about the world of the play?

From social media and other public accounts of the piece (show info blurb, about the author, character list. Buzz about the show), can we make assumptions about what we think we will experience?

What are some imagery that you look forward to seeing on the stage? Did these meet or differ from your expectations?

Current events inherently influence our understanding of art. Think about why this is being staged now, in 2019. How can you educate yourself on the social realities and truths being shared in this story and how can you be accountable to their realities in our contemporary society?
A Sharing Circle - Intro

After the performance, we would encourage you and your class to participate in a sharing circle, inspired by the questions above. There are a few rules when completing a sharing circle, and especially if you are a non-indigenous participant, that you must take into account.

1. Everyone is equal
   For the whole “sharing circle” thing to work, you must already establish that in the circle, everyone is worthy of being heard, no matter what. Allowing others to express themselves, while also looking into your own beliefs to make sure you’re not smothering the beliefs of others, is essential for these to work.

2. Establish a turn taking system
   This can happen with what we call a “talking stick” which can be anything from a fruit to a feather. This gets passed on, and whoever has it has the floor to speak to their own thoughts and feelings, with the respect of being heard and uninterrupted.

3. Have a facilitator
   Like a moderator, this person will be in charge of being the figure to enforce these boundaries that are set between all participants. They ensure that all forms of biases are not to influence the listeners, including themselves. They are not an authoritative figure, they are a guiding one.
An Outro

So you’ve got all this information. You’ve seen the play. You are now a little more educated on Indigenous issues.

It’s now time to think about how you are going to bring these new lessons forward in life; think about how they are able to interfere with your daily life, and how you can contribute to the cause it speaks for with respect.

Our goal for this performance resource is to get you to take action and realize that you can have more involvement than you realize. From allowing Indigenous women to speak for themselves and to uplift their voices, to educating others about these issues, to actively engaging with the communities that they affect.

Below, we’ve gathered resources to help aid you in your journey. With both Indigenous and non-Indigenous resources, you should find yourself able to find something to engage with and participate in to further your involvement.

When you take these pieces forward, be sure to apply them to more Indigenous art you consume as well. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and stand up for injustices that you view in your everyday life. Don’t be afraid to remember the lessons you may have learned here.
Additional sources:

The Reflection Room

During the run of The Unnatural and Accidental Women, the National Arts Centre is offering culturally appropriate supports, with resources and activities in the Reflection Room (located in the Ruddy Lounge), in partnership with local Indigenous organizations. All are welcome to utilize the resources they are providing, if needed.

For more information, please visit
https://nac-cna.ca/en/indigenoustheatre/moshkamo/supports

Indigenous Specific

Wabano Centre

Mental Wellness

Walk-in Counselling is a free service for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community members of all ages (individual, family, couple). No referral or appointment necessary. This service uses a client-centered, strength-based, culturally safe, and collaborative approach to counselling while incorporating Indigenous and Western approaches to healing.

HOURS: Mon 1-5:30, Tues. 1-8pm, Wed. 9-5:30pm, Thurs. 1-8pm, Fri. 9-5:30pm

CONTACT: Kathleen Harding, 613 784 0657 ext. 309, medicair@wabano.com, 299 Montreal Road.


Odawa Native Friendship Centre

PLEASE NOTE: This program is family-focussed but still a good resource.

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Program

The goal is to foster improvements in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal individuals, families, communities and Nations.

The area of responsibility of the Healing and Wellness Councilor is to ensure that the healing and wellness needs of the Aboriginal community are addressed by implementing the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy at the local level. The HWC worker program focuses on the
reduction of family violence and improving Aboriginal health which is achieved through provision of services for those most at risk, notably women and children. Services include but are not limited to; healing circles, counselling, crisis intervention, education, and training, Kanawayhitowin community actions plans, and activities using the Kizhaay Anishnaabe Niin Initiative model.

HOURS: Mon-Fri. 9-5pm

CONTACT: Jennifer Kohoko, 613 722 3811 x236, healingandwellness@odawa.on.ca, 815 St. Laurent Blvd.

http://www.odawa.on.ca/programs/hwp.htm

Minwaashin Lodge

Indigenous Women’s Support Centre

Irene Lindsay is available to do individual traditional support and counselling.

HOURS : Mondays 10-3pm

CONTACT : 613 741 5590 ext. 262, info@minlodge.com, 100 -1155 Lola St.

CRISIS LINE : 613 789 1141

https://www.minlodge.com/program-calendars

Non-indigenous

Walk-In Counselling Clinic

*No referral is required for the Walk-In Counselling Clinic.* You will be assisted, with no appointment, on a first-come, first-serve basis during our Walk-In Counselling Clinic hours. The Walk-In Counselling Clinic is open to Ontario residents within the greater Champlain region.

The Walk-in Counselling Clinic offers counselling services in English and French at a variety of different locations. Clinic hours are available at different locations throughout the week, including evenings and weekends.

HOURS : Changes depending on location

CONTACT : 26
613 233 4443 ext. 2109, 420 Cooper, Wednesdays 12-8pm

613 238 8210, 55 Eccles, Tuesdays, 12-6:30pm

613 725 3601, 312 Parkdale Ave., Tuesdays, 12-8pm

613 737 5115, 1355 Bank St., Tuesdays, 12-6:30pm

https://walkincounselling.com/
Indigenous Crisis Lines

Hope for Wellness

Offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada.

- counselling
- crisis intervention

HOURS: 24/7

CALL: 1 855 242 3310

ONLINE CHAT: www.hopeforwellness.ca


Talk 4 Healing (Ontario)

A culturally grounded, fully confidential helpline for Indigenous women available in 14 languages all across Ontario

HOURS: 24/7

CALL: 1 855 554 4325 (1 855 554 HEAL)

ONLINE CHAT: www.talk4healing.com/live-chat/

https://www.talk4healing.com/

Additional resources on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls:

http://www.stolensisters.com/
http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/
https://www.highwayoftears.ca/
https://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/campaigns/no-more-stolen-sisters


http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/
Works Cited


Clements, Marie Humber. The Unnatural and Accidental Women. Talonbooks.


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