

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2017

Making Treaty 7 – across Canada, reconciliation in action;
Local Treaty 7 play goes on national tour to Winnipeg and Ottawa for Canada 150

Calgary, AB – A local theatre production that explores the historical significance of the 1877 signing of Treaty 7 – the founding event of modern southern Alberta – is going on national tour.

The Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society is pleased to announce that its theatrical performance, *Making Treaty 7*, has been chosen for the National Arts Centre's Canada Scene Festival to coincide with Canada 150 commemorations. Co-directed by Michelle Thrush and Blake Brooker, it will perform in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre on June 20th. Prior to that, the show visits Winnipeg for a performance on **June 15th** at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre.

“We couldn’t be more pleased by the national interest in this production,” says Lee Crowchild, the board chair and Chief of Tsuut’ina Nation. “This conversation is 140 years overdue. The production reflects the story of all Prairie Treaties entered into in the late 20th Century and will resonate with a Winnipeg audience,” said Crowchild.

The production has been recognized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as an example of reconciliation, adds Michelle Thrush, Co-Director of the production. “Through the powerful medicine of the arts, we hope to share the stories that heal and empower. Stories that have been held deep in the land and are now being woken up...stories that bring people together to build stronger community relationships and create much needed conversations. *Making Treaty 7* tells heart stories. We hope the show inspires other projects across the country, and a similar production in Manitoba about the events leading up to the signing of their first treaty, the Selkirk Treaty.”

Tickets for both the Winnipeg and Ottawa performances are now on sale and may be purchased online at our website: <http://www.makingtreaty7.com/>

- 30 -

For further information or to arrange media interviews, please contact:

In Calgary:
Paula Arab,
Media Relations Consultant
paula.arab@hkstrategies.ca
Cell: 403-889-9128

In Winnipeg:
Joy Keeper
Communications
joy.keeper@live.com
Cell: 204.791.6824

Making Treaty 7 Backgrounder

The seeds of *Making Treaty 7* were planted in 2012, the year Calgary was the Cultural Capital of Canada. Curator Michael Green was extremely moved by the relationships that developed over that year with members of the Cultural Capital's Aboriginal Advisory Circle, particularly with Narcisse Blood and Reg Crowshoe. The advisory committee was formed with First Nations, Metis and urban Aboriginal members, to help integrate the Aboriginal aesthetics and perspectives into the overall Calgary 2012 cultural program. Michael became aware that year of how little Calgarians truly knew about Treaty 7 – the 1877 agreement between the First Nations of southern Alberta and the Crown, which basically set the stage for the development of what is today's modern Alberta.

Michael's vision was to create a theatrical performance that re-enacted the 10 days at Blackfoot Crossing, which culminated in the signing of Treaty 7 on Sept. 22, 1877. He wanted to explore the true meaning and intent of the Treaty, through the Indigenous perspective. The committee created a legacy fund to get the project started. In December 2012, he met with elders from the Treaty 7 First Nations community, along with local historians, artists and cultural workers.

That led to a residency at the world renowned Banff Centre in February, 2013, where a diverse group of 20 Aboriginal and non-native artists spent three weeks in collaboration. That culminated in the creation of an 80-minute performance that was presented twice to sold-out audiences.

The Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society was then founded in March 2013, and registered as a non-profit Alberta society, with a mandate to reflect: *an evolving nexus of activities that include themes of cultural literacy, education, historical commemoration, tourism, and a revitalized appreciation for First Nations identity and perspective. The society invites participation from a broad cross-section of groups and institutions.*

Over the next two years, the show went through a number of iterations before holding its world premiere in September 2014. Members of the audience came from across the country and around the globe. Despite tragedy in 2015, the show went on and the audience continued to grow. The play was staged that year at a bigger 650-seat venue and sold out all three performances. In 2016, the production got even bigger, and was held at the state-of-the-art Grey Eagle Resort and Casino Event Centre, which seats up to 2,900 people. Two school matinees for 3,000 students were held, along with an evening performance as part of a gala fundraiser. It was an outstanding success. This year, for 2017, the society is planning something even bigger to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the signing at Blackfoot Crossing on Sept. 22, 1877.

Remembering Michael Green and Narcisse Blood

We remember and honour co-founders Michael Green and Narcisse Blood, who died Feb. 10, 2015 while pursuing their commitment to the shared belief that we are all treaty people. They and Aboriginal artists Michele Sereda and Lacy Morin were travelling to Piapot First Nation in Saskatchewan to help develop a similar production about Treaty 4, but never arrived. A fatal accident on the way took all four lives. Though grief stricken and uncertain, community leaders came together to ensure MT7 would carry on.

Michael's powerful vision in 2012 was to bring people together from all backgrounds to explore the relationship between settlers and indigenous peoples. He imagined what our country might have looked like today if 150 years ago, indigenous and non-indigenous people had been able to sit across from each other and truly communicate. What would have happened if there was real dialogue, conversation and true and powerful exchange of ideas when those treaties were signed. His vision was to start a conversation and work together today, to create changes that make all of our lives better.

We have carried on the conversation he started and it has been ongoing, growing louder and more wide-spread with every year we grow the show. There is no truly better way than that, to honour the lives we have lost.