

Smoke Signals Radio Program Episode 1993-02-27

Segment 3

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Mary Lou Smoke reviews a recent play, "These Days," that was workshopped at Native Earth's Weesageechak Begins to Dance festival in Toronto.

Host(s): Dan Smoke, Mary Lou Smoke

DAN SMOKE: Miigwetch, Peter. And Mary Lou is going to now share with us an announcement from Toronto.

MARY LOU SMOKE: William [to be transcribed]'s play, *These Days*, was recently workshopped at Native Earth's **Weesageechak Begins to Dance '92** festival at the **Native Canadian Centre of Toronto** on December 1st through to the 7th. The play was commissioned by two-spirited people of the First Nations and funded through a one-time grant from the Ontario Ministry of Health AIDS Bureau. The play was directed by Michelle George, Jeffrey Trudeau was the stage manager, and Lisa Longboat was the assistant stage manager. The cast was comprised of Gloria May Eshkibok, Rebecca Belmore, and Jerry Longboat, and Todd Charlie. The play describes the lives of the [to be transcribed] family of [to be transcribed] reserve for besieged by a series of attacks against them. The two-spirited son, [to be transcribed], is HIV positive. And when this information becomes known throughout the reserve, the citizens of [to be transcribed] react with violence and hysteria brought on my AIDS phobia, homophobia, and ignorance.

The family endures after a front as their own community attempts to drive them out. Disturbing as it may seem, the play is based on an actual incident which occurred on a remote reserve in Northern Ontario. Todd Charlie played the difficult role of [to be transcribed], making his debut as an actor in Toronto. Todd brought a gentleness and pride to his character. Jerry Longboat is [to be transcribed]'s brother, [to be transcribed], and Rebecca Belmore is his sister, [to be transcribed], and as reserve disc jockey, DJ Moose, played their characters with power and conviction. Gloria May Eshkibok once again displayed her dazzling comedic talents. In her role as Mariah [to be transcribed], an insidious villain, the beast. Her poignant performance as matriarch, Mariah who is both authentic and powerful. At several points in the play, the cast seemed to lose focus and momentum that could be due to the limited rehearsal time they had.

However, veteran actress Gloria who is very adept at focusing the energy and getting things back on the track.

As a work in progress, *These Days* show great potential as a drama and as an effective HIV/AIDS education tool. The content is not for the faint of heart as it deals very frankly with social and sexual issues in the Native community. However, with an epidemic poised to sweep through the Native community, we could no longer continue to bury our heads in the sand. Too many lives have already been lost. Billy [to be transcribed] continues to grow as a playwright and he displays an excellent ear for dialogue that is honest and authentic. *These Days* is powerful and, in many ways, painful to watch. The injustice and intolerance within the Native community are examined unflinchingly. Billy continues to explore the theme of patriarchy in the Native setting and its detrimental effects. His play teaches us that our recovery as a people must start by reasserting our feminine spirit and restoring it to its proper place within our community. There are plans in the works to stage the play in 1993, which should be a two-spirited event of the first order. We will keep our listeners posted as to dates and times.

DS: Nya:weh, miigwetch, Mary Lou. Ok now we're going to close this week with a song, a selection, from the **Peacemaker Drum**. It's the **Shake the Bush Dance**. But right now, I'd just like to say on behalf of Smoke Signals, Mary Lou...well they can all say goodbye themselves.

MS: See ya next week!

JOHN TURNER: See ya everybody! (*laughter*)

DS: Onen ki' wahi, gawaabamin, till next week.