



FACT SHEET: KAHA:WI DANCE THEATRE

HISTORY

Kaha:wi Dance Theatre (pronounced Ga-HA-Wee) is an artist based company founded by Artistic Director/choreographer Santee Smith (Mohawk, Turtle Clan) and incorporated as a not for profit charitable organization in 2005. KDT creates professional contemporary dance work. Through the work of the company, KDT is committed to increasing awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture. Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's Artistic Director has become known for her seamless fusion of traditional movement style and contemporary dance elements.

STATEMENT FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Kaha:wi means "she carries" in the Mohawk language. The name Kaha:wi is an ancient traditional name of my family. It is thousands of years old and it was the name of my maternal grandmother and is also the name of my daughter. This name Kaha:wi will be passed on to other individuals in my family for generations to come. The name is timeless...it spans past, present, future. It has sacredness attached to it and the connection to indigenous history. In the generic form, Kaha:wi means "to carry". Therefore, the name implies a connection to ancient Mohawk family ways and the action of carrying. This in a sense is what the organization does carrying culture through dance and dance related activities. It connects to the past, present and future perpetuating the idea of the continuous cycling universe. Creativity and the continuation of cultural knowledge and practice is the foundation of my artistic expression.

KDT's repertoire include several major choreographic works including *A Story Before Time*, *Kaha:wi*, *A Soldier's Tale* and *Here On Earth*. In 2007 and 2008, KDT produced new works: *A Constellation of Bones*, *The Threshing Floor*, *Sacred Spring*, *A Soldier's Tale* (in collaboration with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and Theatre Aquarius), *Tripped Up Blues* (a commissioned work for Aboriginal Youth Dancers), and a retelling of the Iroquois Creation Story for young audiences, *A Story Before Time*. The company has completed successful tours of *Here On Earth*, *The Threshing Floor*, *Kaha:wi* and *A Story Before Time* nationally and internationally. In addition to touring and performing, the company offers workshops on Iroquois movement and, in 2009, KDT launched their first ever intensive training program, designed as multi-week annual program to provide aspiring professional dancers with a means of deepening their knowledge of indigenous dance aesthetics. KDT also produces the Living Ritual: World Indigenous Dance Festival, the only festival in Canada to celebrate and promote Indigenous dance.

MISSION/ VISION

Our vision is to be a dynamic force in Aboriginal dance in Canada and a centre for creativity, innovation, artistry and Aboriginal expression that reflects, honours and celebrates the integrity of Aboriginal culture.

Our mission is to create, present and promote Aboriginal artistic expression to diverse audiences through the genre of dance and its associated disciplines of music, storytelling,



theatre and design, drawing inspiration from contemporary and traditional Aboriginal dance forms.

Kaha:wi has been performed at the following venues: (brief selection listed)

2010 *Kaha:wi* International Tour: 2nd Cultural Indigenous Festival, *Puebla, Mexico*; Two Worlds/Global Dance Fest, North Fourth Arts Center, *Albuquerque, New Mexico*

2009 *Kaha:wi* presented by Yokohama Arts Foundation at the Red Brick Warehouse, *Yokohama, Japan*

Kaha:wi excerpts presented at the “Opening Spectacle” for Planet IndigenUS Festival, Harbourfront Centre, *Toronto, Ontario*

Kaha:wi excerpts presented at Dusk Dances and Dancing on The Edge Festival, Queen Elizabeth Park, *Vancouver, British Columbia*; Chalkham Farm, *Toronto, Ontario*,

2007 *Kaha:wi* solo at the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, *Siksika Nation, Alberta*

2005 *Kaha:wi* presented by Canada Post’s National Aboriginal Day Celebrations, *Ottawa, Ontario*

Kaha:wi duet produced by CanDance Network’s Indigenous Dancelands Exchange, presented by Peterborough New Dance, *Peterborough, Ontario*; Tangente, *Montreal, Quebec*; New Dance Horizons, *Regina, Saskatchewan*; University of Lethbridge, *Lethbridge, Alberta*

2005 *Kaha:wi* on the **Yoh ha hee yoh International Tour** presented at The Banff Centre for the Arts, Margaret Greenham Theatre, *Banff, Alberta*; High Performance Rodeo, Vertigo Playhouse, *Calgary, Alberta*; Sanderson Centre, *Brantford, Ontario*; Centre for the Arts, Brock University, *St. Catharines, Ontario*; National Museum of American Indian, Smithsonian Institute, *Washington, D.C.*; Hartwick College’s Slade Theatre, *Oneonta, New York*

2004 *Kaha:wi* presented by the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards at the John Basset Theatre, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, *Toronto, Ontario*

Kaha:wi experiences its Premiere at the Premiere Dance Theatre, Harbourfront, Centre, *Toronto, Ontario*