

KAHA:WI
DANCE THEATRE

SANTÉE SMITH, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

THE MUSH HOLE

Truth, Acknowledgement, Resilience

Photo credit: Fred Cattroll



The Mush Hole Performance Information

"The Mush Hole reflects the realities of the Mohawk Institute residential school experience and offers a way to open dialogue and to heal, through acknowledgement and honouring the spirit of Survivors and families that were impacted. The Mush Hole moves through the devastation of residential school with grace and hope for transformation and release. Opening a small window into the atrocities inflicted on 1000's of Indigenous children, it attempts to close the door on historical amnesia. A haunting portrayal, weaves through memories of Survivors, reliving traumas, school life, loss of culture, remembrance, returning to find each other. The residential school legacy and ongoing institutionalized erasure of Indigenous lives and culture is an issue that effects all Canadians. Through specificity we find universality, The Mush Hole is a story about hope and finding light in dark places. As much as it speaks to intergenerational trauma it screams resilience. Every single element that is represented on stage came from Survivors sharing their experiences with us. After years of silence Mohawk Institute Survivors are courageously moving past shame and sharing their story. The Mush Hole is their Truth on stage." Santee Smith

The Mohawk Institute a.k.a. The Mush Hole

The Mohawk Institute is the oldest residential school in Canada, after which all others were modelled. Operated in Brantford, Ontario from 1828 to 1970, it served as an Industrial boarding school for First Nations children from Six Nations, as well as other communities throughout Ontario and Quebec. For 142 years, the MO of the school was to forcefully assimilate children into Euro-Christian society and sever the continuity of culture from parent to child. Canada's first prime minister John A. MacDonald and super intendant Duncan Campbell Scott were the main perpetrators of residential school system, quoting Scott, schools were designed "to get rid of the Indian problem". Run in military style, children learned very little in the way of schooling rather serving as labourers. They experienced a range of abuses from sexual, food deprivation experiments and corporeal punishment at the hands of faculty and staff.

On Tour:

2025 and Beyond

Kaha:wi Dance Theatre is currently booking a Western Canada Tour for 2025. The company is looking for additional tour dates and in Canada and internationally.

The Mush Hole Archival Video

Archival from the University of Buffalo – Center for the Arts – Fall 2022:

<https://vimeo.com/771182111>

password: TMH2022

Target Age range is from Grade 4 + or age 11+

There is a study guide, we co-created with Young People's Theatre

Past Touring:

2022 – The Mush Hole – Spring Tour presented by FirstON PAC, St. Catharines, Sanderson Centre, Brantford, The Grand Theatre, Kingston, National Arts Centre – Indigenous Theatre, Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, Flato Markham Theatre, The Rose – Brampton, ON; Fall Tour presented by Capitol Theatre Chatham, FirstON Arts Centre Milton, Sanderson Centre (school show), Center for the Arts, University of Buffalo, NY, Schwartz Center, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

2020 – The Mush Hole – Tour, presented by Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Winnipeg MB; Burlington Performing Arts Centre, ON; Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, ON.

2019 – The Mush Hole – Tour, presented by IMPACT19 Festival, Kitchener, ON; Young People's Theatre, TO, ON; Market Hall Theatre, Peterborough, ON

2018 – The Mush Hole – Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford, ON; Art Gallery of Guelph, Guelph, ON; Celebration of Nations, St. Catharines, ON; Prismatic Arts Festival, Halifax, NS; Socrates Project, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON

Awards:

5 Dora Mavor Moore Awards 2020 In the Theatre for Young Audience Division

- Outstanding Direction: Santee Smith
- Outstanding New Play: Santee Smith
- Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble: Jonathan Fisher, Raelyn Metcalfe, Santee Smith, Montana Summers, Julianne Blackbird
- Outstanding Production: Kaha:wi Dance Theatre presented by Young People's Theatre
- Outstanding Projection Design: Ryan Webber, Shane Powless

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"Students enjoyed the medium of dance as the primary method of delivering the narrative. They thought the broken movements and particular scenes – such as the boiler room scene – showed the horror of the situation in an interesting and engaging way."

–School audience response, Capitol Theatre, Chatham (2022)

"The non-stop motion, demonstrating the emotional and physical pain that the Indigenous endured. The events portrayed the strength of the Indigenous culture. It was an effective awareness piece, evoking emotion in their viewers."

–School audience response, Capitol Theatre, Chatham (2022)

Photo credit: Thomas Boethe



Production Credits:

Creative Producer/Director/Performer: Santee Smith

Tour Producer: Kaha:wi Dance Theatre

Cultural Advisors: Geronimo Henry, Thohahoken Michael Doxtater, Roberta Hill

Performers: Jonathan Fisher, Katie Couchie, Montana Summers, Raelyn Metcalfe

Composition/Arrangement: Jesse Zubot

Additional Composition: Adrian Dion Harjo

Songs: "Find My May", commissioned remix by Nick Sherman; "I Saw The Light", performed and recorded by Nick Sherman, Semiah Smith (vocals) and Nathan Smith (fiddle); "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry", performed and recorded by Nick Sherman; "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" by Patsy Cline, arranged by Nick Sherman, Semiah Smith (vocals); "The Storm" by Iskwe; T'will be Glory, Martin Family Singers from the album "Kaha:wi", Rob Lamothe (voiceover)

Video Tech/Director: Ryan Webber

Original Set/Lighting Designer: Andy Moro

Costume Designer: Adriana Fulop, Leigh Smith, Elaine Redding

Production Tour Manager/Tour Lighting Designer: Sebastian Marziali

Tour Stage Manager: Senjuti Sarker

Production Support/Videographer: Shane Powless

Production Support: Woodland Cultural Centre, Thru The Red Door, Art Gallery of Guelph

Banff Centre for the Arts & Creativity

Company Support: Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council



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Contact Information

Booking Contact:

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www.kahawidance.org/



[@Kaha:wi Dance Theatre](https://www.facebook.com/Kaha:wiDanceTheatre)



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***Technical Rider available upon request**

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