

“Youth are tired of thinking that they don’t have a future.” -Micaela Iron Shell-Dominguez

Since the last World Day for Theatre for Children and Young People, we’ve seen youth, once again, make rallying cries for change across the world. Whether it’s the Parkland Student inspired March For Our Lives; or India’s Global March Against Child Labour that mobilized hundreds of thousands of youth; or 13-year-old Autumn Peltier from the Wikwemikong First Nation addressing the UN on the protection of water; there is a new generation of youth seizing their potential to foster change through grace, defiance, resilience, and integrity. The youth of today ask tough questions and they demand that we consider their thoughts carefully.

Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) provides space where change can be explored. Youth have the right to participate, to express their opinions, and to be heard. TYA is at its best when it offers space for youth by hearing their stories, reflecting their voices on the stage, and engaging them as active partners in creation. Quite simply, youth have challenging ideas and questions. It is TYA’s role not only to care for these views, but to also ensure that these views are expressed freely. Theatre gathers people together so that we can talk as a community. In TYA, this is a community made not only of youth, but also teachers, parents, friends, peers, and elders. It is a safe space where challenging ideas dance alongside imaginative theatrical work. A space where sympathy and empathy are valued and upheld. A space where open-mindedness is celebrated and encouraged. A space where productive civil change is welcomed and needed. When TYA creates such a space, the imagination not only flourishes but youth also rehearse for change in their lives, in their communities, and in the world-at-large.

For many Indigenous people there is a belief that we don’t own land—we come from it. We give back to it as it nourishes us. One of the most important lessons I’ve learned as a mother and artist working with youth is to start with the question: How do we give back?

Young people will provide us with the answer.

TYA ASSITEJ Message from Jessica Carmichael
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Jessica Carmichael Theatre Bio 2019

Jessica is a non-status mixed Abénaki/Euro artist. She specializes in theatre directing, acting, dramaturgy and creation. She is an Assistant tenure-track Professor in Theatre at Concordia University. Jessica has contributed to a variety of artistic roles over the years, notably as Artistic Director of Carousel Players in St. Catharine, Ontario for three theatre seasons and as a past artistic associate with Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto, where she was Program Director of their Creators Unit Animiikiig. Jessica is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada (Acting), the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art/Kings College London (MA Text & Performance Studies with Distinction), the University of Alberta (MFA Directing with Distinction) and the Stratford Festival's Michael Langham Workshop for Classical Direction (2014, 2016). As a freelance artist she recently led dramaturgy for the development of *Pawâkan Macbeth* at the Stratford Festival (July 2018), she dramaturged *Women of the Fur Trade* at Native Earth's 2018 Weesageechak Festival (April-November 2018) and co-dramaturged Jeff Ho's *Cockroach* with Playwrights Workshop Montreal and Repercussion Theatre (October 2018). Upcoming: director of *apəTHĕ/* at Concordia University; performer and co-dramaturg for *Guilty by Association's 1991* as part of Why Not Theatre's Riser Project (May 2019).