



News Release

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Milwaukee Public Theatre Receives Major Grant for “Mino Ayaa”

“Being well” is the focus of *Mino Ayaa*, an innovative intergenerational project designed to encourage a healthy lifestyle among Native American families in the Milwaukee area. Thanks to a substantial grant from the Forest County Potawatomi Community Foundation, Milwaukee Public Theatre (MPT) will help to further develop a book of Native recipes and stories to nourish bodies, minds and hearts in collaboration with the St. Ignace Indian Health Center and the Indian Council of the Elderly.

Through this grant, MPT artists and youth from the Indian Community School (ICS) and Spotted Eagle High School will conduct oral interviews with elders from the South Eastern Oneida Tribal Services (SEOTS) to provide new stories. Native American visual artist Kristelle Ulrich San Felippo will hold workshops with Indian elders and youth to create illustrations for the book. In addition, nationally renowned Ojibwe/Oneida storyteller, dancer and musician Thirza DeFoe will work with a youth ensemble at ICS and Spotted Eagle to create an original theatrework based on stories from the book.

Previous grants from the Forest County Potawatomi Community Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts sponsored the creation of MPT’s *Winter Voices Project* in 2008. The project was comprised of a series of hands-on workshops, a Resource Guide celebrating the seasons, and an original production, *Winter Voices*, a vibrant spectacle honoring the voices and stories of Native American elders and featuring DeFoe. Over thirty students from the Indian Community School have since participated in the project, forming the *Peaceful Warriors Dance Tribe*. The youth ensemble performed regionally throughout 2010 and was recently seen at Milwaukee’s Indian Summer festival.

DeFoe will continue to work with this core group of 15-20 youth in over 80 hours of after-school workshops, where they will study traditional stories, music and dance from the Ojibwe, Lakota, Snohomish, and Iroquois nations, among others. The youth ensemble’s repertoire will include stories of the Medicine Wheel from *Winter Voices* and at least one new work based on stories from the recipe book.

Performances by DeFoe and members of the *Peaceful Warriors Dance Tribe* are scheduled for: October 13, Pow Wow at UWM; November 22, Honoring Ceremony at Indian Community School; December 2, Holiday Diversity Celebration at the Italian Community Center; and December 4, at UWM.

Through this grant, 500 copies of the book will be printed and made available at each of at least five sites throughout Wisconsin in collaboration with the Wisconsin Tribal Services—reaching, involving and inspiring over 2,000 low income minority and Native American children, youth, families and elders.

Mino Ayaa also complements another MPT venture, *StoryBridge*, which brings elder storytellers together with young children to encourage a love of stories and develop literacy skills. *StoryBridge* is currently being offered at Keefe Avenue School and at the Next Door Foundation, working primarily with African-American children.

Funding from the Helen Bader Foundation, the Milwaukee Arts Board, Milwaukee County CAMPAC, the Wisconsin Arts Board, the National Endowment for the Arts and the United Performing Arts Fund helps to support these exciting programs. For additional information, contact Milwaukee Public Theatre at 414-347-1685.

Links

Milwaukee Public Theatre Mino Ayaa project
www.milwaukeepublictheatre.com/programs-healing.php

Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center
<http://gliihc.net/default.aspx>

South Eastern Oneida Tribal Services
www.oneidanation.org/socialservices/page.aspx?id=6264

Indian Community School
www.ics-milw.org/home/index.php

Spotted Eagle High School
www.spottedeagle.us/www/page.php

Thirza DeFoe
www.thirzadefoe.com/thirzadefoe.com