Where the Blood Mixes

by Kevin Loring

a Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company and Belfry Theatre (Victoria, BC) revival production in association with The Savage Society (Vancouver, BC)

coopresented by the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad

Study Guide

THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES 2009-2010 SEASON

Peter Hinton
Artistic Director, English Theatre

This Study Guide was written and researched by Jane Moore for the National Arts Centre, English Theatre, January 2010. It may be used solely for educational purposes.

The National Arts Centre English Theatre values the feedback of teachers on the content and format of its Study Guides. We would appreciate your comments on past Study Guides, on this current one, or suggestions on ways to improve future Study Guides. Comments may be directed to Martina Kuska either by email at mkuska@nac-cna.ca or by fax at (613) 943-1401.
**Note to Teachers**

This Study Guide contains articles on *Where the Blood Mixes* and its background, as well as an interview with the writer, Kevin Loring, and some suggested activities for students in Drama or English classes. It also includes some information on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and on apologies made by churches and the government of Canada to the Aboriginal peoples. Teachers are expected to choose whatever topics they and their classes will find useful. The subject matter of the play may not be suitable for everyone. It is a good idea to do some research before seeing the play, so that you can deal sensitively with the issues that arise.

A backgrounder on Aboriginal Theatre in Canada may be found on both these NAC websites:
http://nac-cna.ca/pdf/eth/aboriginal_theatre.pdf and

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production Credits</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Word from the Costume Designer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Loring</td>
<td>2 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor General's Literary Awards 2009</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excerpts from an Interview with Kevin Loring</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Play</td>
<td>6 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Meaning of the Title, <em>Where the Blood Mixes</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the Play</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of the Play</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot summary</td>
<td>7 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Values</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excerpt from <em>Where the Blood Mixes</em></td>
<td>12 - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the Play</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Aboriginal Theatre in Canada</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Characteristics of Native Theatre</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Natural Setting</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Schools</td>
<td>18 - 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology from the Government of Canada</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Further Study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>23 - 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Etiquette</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Production Credits
Who Helped Put the Production Together?

Cast
Billy MERASTY as Floyd
Ben CARDINAL as Mooch
Kim HARVEY as Christine
Tom McBEATH as George
Jason BURNSTICK as the Musician
and
Margo KANE as June

Creative Team
Written by: Kevin LORING
Directed by: Glynis LEYSHON
Set Design by: Robert LEWIS
Costume Design by: Patricia SMITH
Lighting Design by: Itai ERDAL
Visual Design by: Carl STROMQUIST
Projection Design by: Jamie NESBITT
Original Music by: Jason BURNSTICK

Stage Management
Stage Manager: Joanne P.B. SMITH

A Word from the Costume Designer
Where the Blood Mixes is one of those little gems of a play that has taken on a life of its own.

At the beginning of the 2007/08 season, we [ie VPTC Production Dept.] were told that there was a possibility of workshopping a new play through a series of staged readings in the BC Interior, but only if the funding came through. The funding came through, and then some, and suddenly we had a full sixth show to design in a short period of time. Costume-wise, it came down to fit, shop, pack up the show, and push it out on the road in seven days.

Within those time constraints, I still wanted the show’s costumes to reflect both the characters and the deeper meaning of the play. These are clothes worn by people who lead lives without frills, whose daily lives are a struggle to reconcile past and present. Set in a small town where the two rivers meet, I thought the clothing should echo the tones and colours found there: salmon reds, greys, greens; the muted colours seen beneath the surface of the river; the tough, utilitarian fabrics of survivors.

Patricia Smith, Head of Wardrobe, VPTC
February 2010
Kevin Loring
Kevin is the recipient of the Governor General’s Award for English Drama for this play, his first, *Where the Blood Mixes.*

“What a joy to witness ... a genuinely great piece of theatre about our nation’s dark secret...” - Vancouver Sun

[Photo of Kevin Loring and Governor General Michaëlle Jean]

**Governor General’s Literary Awards 2009**
The Governor General's Literary Awards are given annually to the best English-language and the best French-language book in each of seven categories. Each laureate receives $25,000 and a specially crafted copy of his/her winning book.

**Biography**
Kevin Loring, writer and actor, is a member of the N’lakp’amux First Nation (Thompson Indians) in Lytton, B.C. He has performed in many plays across Canada, including Marie Clements’ *Burning Vision* and *Copper Thunderbird,* and played the title role of Michel Tremblay’s *Hosanna* at the Manitoba Theatre Centre. He played most recently in the NAC’s 40th anniversary production of George Ryga’s *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe.* He also starred in the 2007 feature film, *Pathfinder.* He co-produced and co-hosted the documentary *Canyon War: The Untold Story* about the 1858 Fraser Canyon War in his homeland. He stars in a new comedy series, *Health Nutz,* which premiered December 27, 2009 on APTN. Kevin will also be part of the closing ceremonies of the Aboriginal Pavilion at the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Kevin, who is currently one of three Playwrights in Residence at the National Arts Centre English Theatre, was the recipient of the 2005 Vancouver Arts Award for Emerging Theatre Artist, and was Artist in Residence at The Playhouse Theatre Company in 2006. *Where the Blood Mixes* has won the Jessie Richardson Award for Outstanding Original Script, the Sydney J. Risk Prize for Outstanding Original Script by an Emerging Playwright, and most recently, of course, the Governor General’s Literary Award for Drama. Kevin is a graduate of Studio 58, and the Full Circle: First Nations Performance Ensemble Training Program, and is working on a new play.
Excerpt from an Interview with Kevin Loring

Schooling
I grew up in Lytton. I went to Kumsheen Secondary School, and to university in Kamloops. An English class led me into theatre. I read Tomson Highway’s *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* and had to memorize and perform a monologue. That was a key fitting into a lock. I was hooked. I enrolled in an Introduction to Theatre class, did a year of that, and at the end of second semester auditioned for Studio 58. I loved it. People had a really hard time there but I loved it all.

I was one of the first members of the Full Circle First Ensemble training programme. It’s a very different type of training – specifically much more about working on ensemble and collective creation – so it had an improv element to it, working in concert with the other players.

What are you working on now?
I’m writing a new play right now. It’s a play about the land issue really. And about a man who’s sort of in the middle of it all, the Scottish ethnographer, James Teit, who was married for a time to one of the women in our nation. He spoke our language fluently, lived with us and learned our traditions and customs and religions. Five First Nations depended on that one man to help them articulate their wants and needs to the Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. And today what they did is still incredibly important. The wants and needs haven’t changed. Also I’m the lead in a new comedy show on APTN called *Health Nutz*. The pilot airs December 27 [2009]. It’s a comedy about a goofy Mètis guy who inherits a health bar. It’s written by Jason Friesen. Also, I am in the closing ceremonies at the Olympics in the Aboriginal Pavilion – a beautiful snow globe. I’ll be singing. Of course, *Where the Blood Mixes* is touring five cities, and my company is doing the co-production with the Vancouver Playhouse.

The Governor General’s Award?
It was a huge honour, a dream come true. It’s a bit daunting now! My first play won the Governor General’s Award - so now what do I do next? (laughs) I see the power that my play has had in my community. It’s really been quite transformative. When I was back home recently, many people came up to me and said, “you make us so proud.” I feel my job is to shed light on our history, because even well-meaning people can be incredibly ignorant about the issues and the actual situations and the realities of our people. About the history and the context [of our current situations]. So part of what *Where the Blood Mixes* is about is trying to give context to our people’s situations. How did our Aboriginal communities get to the place where they are? It didn’t happen overnight. It’s conditioning that happened over the last 150 years, and particularly over the last 80 or 90 years with the residential schools. Lytton’s residential school closed down in the late 70s, but the last residential school closed down in ’96. We’re just still sort of crawling out from under that experience.
The residential school experience: I don’t put my characters there – I never thought I needed to. I just needed to touch on it in a few characters and set up what that really means. And it only happens a couple of times in the play. I don’t recreate it. I would only have to tip my toes in and it would make a big ripple. I think that was successful. It was a really big gamble when I wrote the residential school aspect of it though. I was terrified to do it but when I did it, it was so satisfying. It just made sense – the characters made sense all of a sudden.

The play
A lot of Aboriginal rituals are about death and rebirth – like the sweat lodge. A vision quest is a death and rebirth, it’s a cleansing that happens. You’re reborn, new. And the play’s about being reborn. When you acknowledge the pain and the source of the pain, and go through it, rather than holding on to it, that part of you dies a bit, and you can be reborn. They say ghosts hang on to this world, and they don’t let go where they’re supposed to go, and I think people can become ghosts, hanging on to their old pain, or things they don’t need any more. Until they let go they can’t grow – and Christine is the embodiment of that renewal. It’s the rebirth of the community.

You play with it. Mix elements.
I play with the idea that the spirit world bleeds into the living world all the time ... and so putting it underwater is a part of that. Also I’m trying to recreate legend, myth. What does the sturgeon mean? What is the sturgeon? The sturgeon is an ancient giant fish that lives on the bottom of the river – that’s a reality – I’ve fished them, I’ve caught them. They’re huge, they’re ugly, and, back in the day, the native people believed that they bridged the spirit world and the land of the living. In a play about suicide, particularly suicide in a river, you can’t get away from the image of traveling back and forth between the worlds, embodied in a giant fish that lives on the bottom of the river. The river dominates our landscape at home. It’s background noise. You always hear it. You spend half your time down there, fishing, or up in the mountains hunting. Or up on the lake fishing. Or in the mountains and valleys picking berries. Salmon are the lifeblood of our people. And the blood of the land, which is kind of the reason the Indians called our place the place “where the blood mixes,” because when the salmon run up the river it’s blood red when the runs are huge, and the big red spawners go through.

The railways are so close – were they an influence on you?
Totally. And people die on the train tracks all the time.

That scene where Floyd’s walking home, on the train tracks and the train comes is an echo of that, and you know, my family works on the railroad a lot, and I heard the trains every day, every hour. They cut through our whole nation. They’re very intrusive and they damage the river – they’re built right beside the river and they slough off the land. The salmon need little crooks and crannies along the river to get home, that’s how they get up the river, and what the railroad does is sheer the river bank so it’s like a level plain – rocks, but flat, so there are no crooks and crannies for the fish to dip in, and rest in, before they make their big push upwards. Creosote and pesticides are sprayed on the sides of the tracks and damage the ecosystem. Every once in a while these trains fall off the tracks and land in the river. That happened a couple of years ago, right at Lytton. Luckily the cargo was just coal. But eight cars went into the river. Right where the rivers meet, in town. The train was leaking creosote and oil, and they had to send divers down to vacuum up the tons and tons of coal that were in the river. Luckily, it wasn’t ammonium oxide or hydroxide or some of the other chemicals these really
noxious and poisonous tankers carry. I think there have been four or five derailments around Lytton in the past six or seven years. Pretty brutal. One of these days one will wipe out the whole town.

**The colours of the rivers where they meet...**

Yah, it’s pretty amazing. One river, the Fraser, passes over the top of the Thompson. A good part of the time the rivers are actually sandwiched, because the Fraser is warmer and the cold water is separated from the hot water. They don’t mix completely until a few miles down river. There are two different rivers – there’s a total temperature change...one on top of the other. Laminating currents.

**Your play shows women’s power, influence.**

You find it’s the women who are running the show. Any band office is populated mostly with women. We have a female chief back home and there are many female chiefs across the country. There are a lot of good men as well, but the women are the powerhouses. Nothing happens if there isn’t a woman around. (Laughs.) They’re the real power of our people.

**The live production?**

There’s a live musician through the whole thing, and he scores it. Jason Burnstick plays slide guitar and blues guitar, and he’s on stage the whole time, not hidden away. We had projections made, pictographs, using art that we commissioned from Carl Stromberg. He’s a carver and a painter. We digitized some elements of three of his paintings, and then used them as projections in the play. They add a whole other element to the piece. The play’s quite visual apart from that, too.

Ben Cardinal as Mooch
The Play

The Meaning of the Title, *Where the Blood Mixes*

The title comes from the name of the town, Kumsheen, the place where the Thompson and the Fraser Rivers meet. A more accurate translation is “the place inside the heart where the blood mixes.” Kumsheen, now known as Lytton, was the heart of the Nlaka’pamux Nation. The title also refers to a story about Coyote, the well-known Trickster character in Native mythology, and his tremendous battle with a transformer, a giant shape shifter who could transform the world. The transformer tore Coyote into pieces and threw his parts to the wind. Coyote’s heart landed where the rivers meet. It is said that Coyote’s intestines can still be seen along the canyon walls of the Fraser River.

Another reason for this title is that as the salmon come home, up the river each year, their bodies change to a brilliant blood red. It used to be said that you could walk across the river on the salmon, as their numbers were so abundant.

Introduction to the Play

During the 19th century, as Canada was being colonized, the Aboriginal peoples were moved from their traditional lands to less desirable locations, so that Britain could have the best land and resources for its own use. To solve land claim disputes, and “the Indian problem,” the Canadian government decided that they should assimilate the natives, and convert them to Christianity. They would begin by educating the children. D.C. Scott, Assistant Superintendent of Indian Affairs, declared that they should “kill the Indian within the child.” Newly established, white, Christian, Residential Schools took children away from their parents, by force if necessary, and forbade them their family, their language, their songs and ceremonies, their culture, for the ten years they were in Residential Schools. In these schools, children were often abused – punished, isolated, fed poorly, sometimes assaulted, taught an alien culture, allowed to visit their parents only in the summer. Children were taught, implicitly and explicitly, that they were inferior beings, “stupid.” At home, families lost their children, the heart of their homes, for two or three generations.

Of course the damage done to children, their communities, and the country was, and is, incalculable. Now that damage is being recognized. Native leaders have pushed these issues to the forefront since the 1980s, and in 2008, the Government of Canada made a long-overdue formal apology to Canada’s Aboriginals in the House of Commons. Some reparation is going on, as survivors of the schools are receiving a payment. How far the money will go to heal a people has yet to be seen.

In this Guide there is more information on Residential Schools (see pages 18-21), as well as sources listed on page 22 where you can find out more about the schools and their history.

Meanwhile, this moving, and often funny play lets us see into the lives and hearts of characters who experienced their childhoods in one of these institutions, and lets us see their present lost, dark times, the impact of past brutality, the burden of poverty and despair, and eventually, for some, a path of hope.
The Purpose of the Play
Kevin Loring says he wrote the play to expose the shadows below the surface of the community, and to celebrate its survivors. “The school still haunts my community [in Lytton, B.C.], the memories live deep inside those who spent their childhoods there, and for some the trauma has been passed on for generations,” he says. The Lytton Indian Band has torn down the old school, and built the new Stein Valley School there. The new curriculum includes traditional native culture as well as necessary provincial curriculum material. The people are trying to undo the damage wrought, and to instill in today’s children the self worth that was taken from so many at St. George’s Residential School.

Plot Summary
The play moves in scenes linked/separated by transitions, sometimes complex, with images, characters, and music, and sometimes brief, like the jump into the river. Action shifts from past to present, dream and myth to reality, laughter to tears.

As the play begins, a shining girl sings of being “born in the heart of her mother,” of her father, of blood, of the sturgeon. We see a pictograph of salmon, hear wind. This brief moment introduces us to the play’s characters, setting, imagery, themes.

The lights reveal George and Floyd in a bar. Floyd is working a pull-tab machine, trying to win money to pay his bar bill. Mooch enters, disheveled, having been hit by his partner, June. The old friends banter, Mooch asks for beer, they complain that the whites run everything – badly. We hear that the survivors of residential schools are to get a settlement, that Floyd refuses to talk about his past. George, the white bartender, disclaims personal blame, and tells Floyd, “you have to talk about it.” Floyd ignores him.

In a transition we see letters, salmon, hear the wind and voices of children: “I have these questions – do I have any brothers or sisters?” Floyd picks up one letter to read.

At the riverbank, Mooch and Floyd arm wrestle for the right to fish at Floyd’s spot. Mooch cheats and wins, saying 20 years at the sawmill have given him his great strength. Then he gets a cramp, which Floyd massages. They share Floyd’s lunch. Mooch tells his grandfather’s story of catching the sturgeon, a terrifying monster. We hear a train, and Floyd reveals his recent worry. “My kid wants to come home.”

Transition. Floyd dreams of a little girl who can’t sleep. In her dream some woman at the school wants to take her away. Christine [Floyd’s daughter]’s call wakes Floyd; she will visit in a week.

Transition. Into the bar. Mooch wins $20 and buys a beer for Floyd. June enters. In the ensuing argument over his stealing her money, June hits Mooch.

Transition. In an image, Floyd staggers home drunk, falls on the rail line and can’t get up. A woman in white, with a bundle, approaches him, and leaves, after a tussle.

Transition. Mooch and Floyd are at the riverbank. Mooch says he dreams that a house, an Old Man and lost friends are at the river bottom. He wonders about the drowned, like Anna, who was never found. Perhaps the sturgeon eats them. We hear the train.
Transition. Mooch leaps into the current, lands in the bar and says that he drank all June’s grocery money. Floyd arrives, cleaned up because Christine is coming today. Mooch is stumbling drunk. Floyd buys him a beer, because he needs one. Mooch says he loved Anna like a sister. He says “every day is every day,” and in a monologue, tells about his time in residential school. Once, after running away, he was caught on the bridge, and the priest brought him to the basement, starved, beat and raped him. June arrives, furious, and Mooch hides. Floyd tells her Christine is visiting today, and she hugs him. Mooch jealously attacks Floyd as Christine enters. As George ejects them from the bar, Floyd recognizes Christine, but does not acknowledge her. Christine pulls a tab, and wins the big prize, $500. She tells June she is an artist. She shows June a photo of Floyd, and June says Christine looks like her beautiful mother, Anna. June, leaving to fetch Floyd, meets Mooch outside. She tells him he breaks her heart, she means only beer to him, and she’s leaving him. As Christine passes, Mooch thinks she is Anna, and grabs her, saying he didn’t know she’d get hurt. She runs away.

Transition to Floyd’s house where he’s drinking whiskey. June enters, pours it on the ground. “That’s for Anna,” she says. She tells Floyd that he and Mooch act like kids. Floyd worries Christine won’t accept him. June says Christine has returned to give them all a second chance. Christine arrives. Floyd tells her to leave, and June takes her away.

Transition. Christine and June are at the singing bridge. June says, “this place is Kumsheen.” One river is brown and dirty, the other is blue-green and clear. They unite here. June tells of Coyote who was torn apart here, and says “this place is the heart of our people.” Christine asks about the log bridge, and says falling off meant you were gone forever. June gives her Anna’s necklace, and says that Floyd loves her. June’s monologue - the heart of the play - tells of their people’s sickness caused by the residential schools, the feelings of worthlessness, the consequent violence, drugs and alcohol. June’s own anguished memories of residential school were released one day through her grandmother’s love, and the power of the returning salmon. She never drank again. When she sees the salmon now, she says a prayer of thanks. She tells Christine that Floyd doesn’t know how to start over. The osprey plunges into the water.

Transition. Christine forces Floyd to hear her story: the loving, white family, her self-doubt about why her father gave her away, her need to find him to quiet the voice screaming inside her. Floyd says nothing. She starts to leave, but he says this is still her home, her scribbles still on the walls. He loved her, but felt forced to give her up as he believed others could do more for her. After, his life was over. She asks how Anna died. We hear that she jumped off the bridge. Floyd, drunk, screeched at her and she left. Floyd knows it was his own fault. “I just let her go.” Floyd breaks down, finally facing the truth. They embrace, he gains her forgiveness, grace. They look at each other’s photos. Christine sees that she looks like her mum, and she shows Floyd her five-year-old son. Her parents help raise him. Floyd says he’ll meet them some day. He thanks her for coming home, “Kookstum.” Daylight illuminates the room; Floyd can begin again.

Lights come up on Mooch and June in the middle of the bridge, watching the rivers meet. Mooch tells June that Anna jumped right here. He had the child with him, so could only watch, helpless. Anna never resurfaced. June says Anna gave up, but June is here. Mooch says “my name is not Mooch.” “Edgar,” she says. He has regained his identity. When June tells him to jump then, Mooch realizes why she worries so much, and says, “I cross the bridge every day.” The opening song gets louder, Mooch leaves, June sees the salmon. Underneath the bridge the sturgeon waits, as it always will.
Characters
Kevin Loring tells of actor Gary Farmer’s first reaction to his play: “Drunk Indian? So what??” This play IS about “drunk Indians.” And “so what??” It is an explanation of the layers inside that “drunk Indian,” a play of entwined relationships, guilt, shame and lost possibilities, and it brings with it tears, laughter, redemption and hope.

Floyd is a Native in his mid-50s, who hangs around the bar, in his own purgatory, and drinks. A survivor of the residential schools, his pain has paralyzed him; he has lost the family he loved, his wife, Anna, and his child, and with them any self respect or identity he had left. He is a friend of Mooch, with whom he has shared a tough past he refuses to discuss. He looks after Mooch as much as he can. He is bitter, full of guilt, loves to fish and hunt. He is upset when the play opens, as he has heard from his long-gone daughter and is afraid of what she will think of his worthless self.

Mooch, a friend, also a Native in middle age, is the clown character, funny, but living with his own pain and shadows of the past. Like Floyd, he carries within him the guilt of Anna’s death, a further burden. He finds relief — perhaps — in drink. He uses the people who love him. He takes advantage of Floyd and steals from even June. But he is affectionate, a bear of a man. He suffers, remembers Anna, and the lurking sturgeon at the bottom of the river. He is often at the centre of the bridge. By the end of the play he has found his self again: “My name is not Mooch,” and he lets us know of his inner strength: “I cross this bridge every day.”

June, strong and passionate partner of Mooch, is a middle-aged Native woman, a loving, mother figure. She has been able to overcome the pain caused by the residential school, and her subsequent alcoholism, and now she makes daily sacrifices to live with Mooch, supporting him. She loved Anna, and is delighted to see Christine, believing she brings them all a second chance at happiness. She is the voice of understanding and deep compassion, the uniting force in the play, effecting change. She comes into her true strength when she leaves Mooch.

Christine, in her 20s, is the daughter of Floyd and Anna. She looks like her mother. Very young, she was sent to live with foster parents, who are good to her. She has had a “happy life,” although she has had an emptiness inside her. She has a five-year-old child and has come back to find her father, and her self. She is good luck. Her strength lets her recognize and accept the truth, and forgive Floyd, giving everyone that second chance.

Anna, Floyd’s lost wife, and Christine’s mother, died before the events of the play, but is a central character.

George is the token white man in the play. He cares for the Aboriginal characters and denies blame for the pain inflicted upon them. Kind enough, he is ineffectual, a weak character on the sidelines, but he makes his living providing alcohol to people who cannot tolerate it.
Symbolism
Symbolism is a big part of the play. Loring’s symbols have to do with the relationship of the people to the land – the bear, the sturgeon, the salmon. While there is a huge concentration of First Nations in BC, and each is unique, a connection to, and reverence for ancestors, animals, and spirits is common to all the nations.

The sturgeon at the bottom of the river is a monster, huge, bone white, grey, and connected to ghosts. First Nations people believed it could ferry a person to the land of the living or the dead. Kevin Loring used to dream of the Old Man in the play, at the bottom of the river. The Old Man is the human manifestation of the sturgeon.

Characters relate to the rivers. The Fraser is warm and brown, like Mooch. The Thompson is clean and cold, blue-green, like Floyd.

June is a bridge between Floyd and Christine.

The osprey hovering over the bridge is Anna’s spirit soul.

Mooch is a bear – a hurting, friendly, pilfering, bear.

The train is an inevitable force coming home, like the ghost of Anna when she brings the bundle (Christine as a baby), wherein the whole thing unravels between Christine and Floyd.

Christine and her baby represent children, rebirth, a future. She is like the salmon coming home.

The pull-tab machine in the bar is a lure or temptation for gamblers. People pull on the tabs all day.

Kumsheen (the town) is the place in the heart where the blood mixes. The river is red when the salmon come.
Humour
“Humour bridges worlds.” Humour is liberally used in the play. The easy, intimate relationship between Floyd and Mooch lets them often insult each other. At the most poignant moment in Floyd’s story as he embraces his daughter, his smell comes up again, his “moontime.”

Setting
On stage, a town: George’s bar, the river bank, riverbed, the bridge, Floyd’s home.

Themes
1. Reconciliation, the possibility of rebirth. You must find your identity in order to claim your life. Rebirth can happen. Suffering can end. Each of the four main characters has a story arc that takes them from internal conflict and self-doubt through growth, courage and recognition to a better world.

2. Men can learn from women how to bend and not break. Men are unable or unwilling to change. The women are the life force, strong and adaptable, although Anna is breakable. June comes into her strength as she leaves Mooch. Christine brings rebirth.

3. The healing power of storytelling. “That whole truth-and-reconciliation [commission] thing is a storytelling endeavour,” says Loring. “We’re going to tell this painful story about our past, about what was done to us — that’s truth and reconciliation.”

4. The consequences of repression, loss of culture and outside dominance: pain and loss of identity for individuals, families, and nations. The social problems caused by alcohol and violence spread from self to family to community.

5. The importance of nature and the land to survival. The whole story is intertwined with nature, with sturgeon, the rivers, the osprey, the salmon coming home.

6. You are where you come from: in nature – bear, osprey, salmon, sturgeon, wind, rivers, horse – the very objects are your world. We shape our consciousness and our beliefs around our physical world. We are also our past. That is also where we come from. “Every day is every day.”

Production Values
The play uses mixed media, projections, art, pictographs, and original live music.
Excerpt from *Where the Blood Mixes* (used by permission of the playwright)

FLOYD is sitting on his stump on the riverbank, fishing rod in hand, as MOOCH enters

FLOYD
You have to fish here? This is my spot.

MOOCH
You don’t own the river.

FLOYD
I showed you this spot.

MOOCH
So.

*They stare at each other for a beat.*

FLOYD
Arm wrestle?

MOOCH
What?

FLOYD
Arm wrestle for it! I win, you get the hell out of here. You win, you can stay. Come on, you were a logger. You think you still got it in you, or what?

*Mooch flexes one of his biceps.*

MOOCH
You want a piece of this?

FLOYD
Come on.

MOOCH
You want a piece of this?!

FLOYD
Maybe you’re chicken shit?

MOOCH
I’m not chicken shit!

FLOYD
Alright then! Let’s go!

MOOCH
If I win, I get your spot!

FLOYD
Deal! I win and you don’t fish here the rest of the season!

MOOCH
Bullshit! The rest of the season?

FLOYD
C’mon, chicken shit!

FLOYD and MOOCH place their elbows on one of the stumps and lock wrists.

FLOYD
Ready, set. GO!

*Floyd wins the first match.*

MOOCH
You cheated!

FLOYD
No I didn’t!

MOOCH
Best of three!

FLOYD
Alright then!

*They lock wrists again.*

MOOCH
You said it last time! My turn now! Ready.....Set.....GO!

*Mooch wins the second match, but just barely.*

MOOCH
(triumphant) Whoooooo00000!

FLOYD
Ah bullshit!

MOOCH
Do or die now!
They lock wrists for a third time.

FLOYD
Ready. Set....GO!

It’s a back and forth battle until:

MOOCH
OVER THE TOP!

MOOCH changes his wrist position so that his fingers curl over FLOYD’S fist, giving him the “Over-the-top” advantage. MOOCH is victorious!

MOOCH
I win! I am the winner!

FLOYD
You cheated!

MOOCH
I won, goddamn it! I won!

FLOYD
You cheated!

MOOCH
No way. You got licked. Admit it. Admit it!

FLOYD
Whatever.

MOOCH
C’mon, say it.

FLOYD
What?

MOOCH
Say it!

FLOYD
You...

MOOCH
Say it...

FLOYD
Alright!
You won.

MOOCH
You’re goddamn right I did. Look at this.

He flexes his bicep again.

Look at it. That’s logging! Twenty years of packing a chainsaw all over the countryside. Right there, boy! Right there! Ow.

FLOYD
What’s the matter?

MOOCGH
Ow!

FLOYD
What?!

MOOCH
Cramp! Cramp! My arm! Shit! My arm! Ow!

FLOYD
Stretch it out! C’mon, stretch it out!

MOOCH
I can’t!

FLOYD
Stretch it!

MOOCH
I CAN’T!!

FLOYD massages MOOCH’S arm

MOOCH
Ow. Ow. Oh. Oh.

FLOYD
Better?

MOOCH
Oh yeah, oh yeah, that’s better. Oh that feels good. Oh.... much better

They look at each other. FLOYD recoils from stroking MOOCH’S arm.

MOOCH
Well, I guess we know who’s tougher now, eh.

FLOYD
Ah bullshit.
MOOCHE
Should have been a logger instead of a railroader, maybe you’d be tough like me.

FLOYD
Yeah, right. I got a pension; what the hell you got – a bad back. In–it?

MOOCHE
I got your fishing spot is what I got.

MOOCHE sets up his gear in FLOYD’S spot. FLOYD is not happy as he moves to a less advantageous spot. Once he sets up, he tosses his line in, and they sit.

Interior Salish Chiefs

L-R: Kevin Loring, August Schellenberg, and Lisa C. Ravensbergen in The Ecstasy of Rita Joe

Sturgeon
History of the Play
This play started as a monologue, *The Ballad of Floyd*, 12 minutes in length, written as a school assignment. It contained flashbacks of a man and his daughter. Kevin Loring played all the characters. He performed it in Vancouver in 2001 and decided to expand it.

In the new one-act version, about a man trying to cope alone, Kevin used the image of a man locked in purgatory within a bar. The man kept waking up there, until he decided to leave it all. When Kevin workshopped the play at Factory Theatre in Toronto, actor Gary Farmer threw his script down, and said at the first rehearsal, “so, 25 years of acting – I’m still playing a drunk Indian - so what?” Kevin didn’t touch the script again for two years. He knew Gary Farmer was right. The real issues, *why* the alcohol, what could *change*, hadn’t been touched. Later he created a poem about a sturgeon, and the river. The poem would be important. He met and became friends with playwright Sharon Pollock. They worked on a new draft together. The play changed. Now the poem became the world of the play, a town and not a bar. Kevin renamed the play *Where the Blood Mixes*.

The play has been produced twice so far. After readings and workshops it toured Kamloops, Trail, and Lytton, and played in the Talking Stick Festival in Vancouver during the winter of 2008. After this tour, more rehearsals at the Kay Meek Centre in West Vancouver allowed the design of a full set and lighting, and the creation of projections.

*Where the Blood Mixes* played at *Luminato* in Toronto, to a warm reception, before its western premiere at Magnetic North Theatre Festival 2008 in Vancouver. At this time the federal government was working with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the residential school experience. The day the play opened at Magnetic North was (magically enough) the day that the Government of Canada apologized to Aboriginals in the House of Commons.

Kevin says the most important moment for him was the performance at Lytton in front of his community and the people he was portraying. When they saw their own story, they cheered. “For me that day wasn’t about theatre, it was about something deeper. That day we were family. That day we were all in the place inside the heart where the blood mixes.”

Kevin has now received the Governor General’s Award for Drama for his play. A remount of the production, in association with his own company, The Savage Society, is scheduled for a national tour as part of the 2010 Cultural Olympiad. It will be playing Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Toronto.
History of Aboriginal Theatre in Canada


**Some Characteristics of Native Theatre**

- Native theatre’s roots are western theatre and traditional stories and structures: the native traditions of ceremony dance, character, lore, mime, mask etc.
- The oral tradition and storytelling are everywhere. Kevin Loring says that he grew up with stories like the ones Mooch tells.
- Native plays are written by Natives and acted by Natives. They tell Native stories. Subject matter is Aboriginal: the land, belief in reincarnation, the power to make changes because you don’t have to deal with ugliness.
- Native art will have a spiritual root – a connection with the past, an exploration of the future. Objects in nature have a spiritual essence, e.g., a tree, a rock, a river.

![The Fraser River photo R. Moore](image)

- The belief in the land is important. The land is the unifying force, that which connects us. The land will sustain us.
- There is often a circularity in the structure of native plays. The work of Marie Clements is a good example.
- The Trickster/Nanabush character is part of many Native plays. He is a clown character, and has different guises, such as coyote, raven. He is half hero, half fool, both male and female, creator and destructor. He transforms things. Many objects are created through his folly. He also represents the Native ability to laugh at oneself. He plays tricks and is always in trouble.
- There is much of humour in Native plays.
- Through ritualism, spiritualism is kept alive and connects us with the Great Spirit.
The Natural Setting

“We are where we are from” - Kevin Loring

**Lytton or Kumsheen**

Lytton is closely linked to the Thompson and Fraser Rivers that converge here. The First Nations people called this merging of two great rivers “Kumsheen” which means "the forks." For more than 10,000 years they lived near the rivers, relying on them for food, transportation, as corridors for their footpaths.

Archaeological sites show that the winter homes, pit houses, of the First Nations people were constructed on benches above the river, always within easy access of the water. Hundreds of sites have been identified beside the Thompson and Fraser. The present site of Lytton was used continuously for almost 10,000 years.

a pit house frame in Saskatchewan

In 1808 Simon Fraser and his men descended the river which was later named after him. He was the first recorded European to contact the First Nations people in the Interior. When he arrived at Kumsheen, more than 1200 Interior Salish Indians came to greet him.

Simon Fraser portaged most of the river from 160 km upstream to 100 km downstream of Kumsheen.

The Thompson River is a tributary of the Fraser River. From early days to the present, the majestic Thompson and Fraser rivers have nourished, helped, and inspired their people.

bridge at Lytton over the Thompson river in 1876
Residential Schools

Residential Schools are part of Canada’s past. They were part of colonizing, a way of taking land and “Indianness” from Canada’s Aboriginal people. By 1920, residential schools were law for native communities. The schools were erected across Canada. Children were herded into wagons, or later, on buses, even planes. The schools were in the communities often, but the children were not allowed to leave the school and see their families. Children were taken at the age of five and supposed to stay for ten years. Catholic and Protestant churches were hired by the state to run the schools. Viola Thomas, who is a second generation survivor of the Indian residential school era, and works with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission tells us, “my mother worked ten hours a day. Boys and girls were not allowed to mix. Boys worked at shops and agriculture, girls at domestic duties.

St George’s School in Lytton, above, was one of the most notorious residential schools.

“The emphasis in the schools was on strictness - it was prison-like. The children were child labourers. There was no food - children learned to fight, to lie, and competed so they could eat the nuns’ leftovers. They would stuff their pockets with scraps. Survivors still often hoard food.

“Children were denied the right to dance, sing, worship. Communities were left with no children, in a joyless home. The federal government’s medical superintendent, Dr. Bryce, and other non-Aboriginal educators sent letters of protest demanding that the schools be closed, but were ignored. Children died in the thousands, of tuberculosis, influenza and abuse. Not being fed properly, they were weak. The government policy created multiple and collective and historic trauma for a whole people.”

Eminent Native playwright Tomson Highway has said that residential school was good for him. He learned to play classical piano there. Children were used to make money for the schools. He also acknowledges the schools’ abuse, however. Some schools were better than others, but overall the damage was overwhelming.
Timeline

1847 Egerton Ryerson produces a study of Native education at the request of the assistant superintendent general of Indian Affairs. Ryerson recommends that domestic education and religious instruction is the best model for the Indian population. The recommended focus is on agricultural training and government funding will be awarded through inspections and reports. His findings become the model for future Indian residential schools.

1860 Indian Affairs is transferred from the British Government to the Province of Canada, after the Imperial Government shifts its policy to one of assimilating Aboriginals through education. For over 100 years Residential schools exist in Canada, and white Christian churches, paid by the government, attempt to assimilate Aboriginal children.

In 1920 it is made compulsory for the children to attend the boarding schools.

1986 The United Church of Canada formally apologizes to Canada's First Nations people.

1989 Non-Aboriginal orphans at Mount Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland make allegations of sexual abuse at the school. The case paves the way for litigation for residential school victims.

1990 Phil Fontaine, leader of the Association of Manitoba Chiefs, meets with representatives of the Catholic Church. He demands that the church acknowledge the physical and sexual abuse suffered by students at residential schools.

1991 The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate offers an apology to Canada's First Nations people.

1993 The Anglican Church offers an apology to Canada's First Nations people.

1994 The Presbyterian Church offers a confession to Canada's First Nations people.

1996 The Gordon Residential School, the last federally run facility, closes in Saskatchewan.

1997 Phil Fontaine is elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

January 7, 1998 The government unveils Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan, a long-term, broad-based policy approach. It includes the Statement of Reconciliation: Learning from the Past, in which the Government of Canada apologizes to those who experienced physical and sexual abuse at Indian residential schools, and acknowledges its role in the development and administration of residential schools. St. Michael's Indian Residential Schools, the last band-run school, closes. The United Church's General Council Executive offers a second apology to the First Nations peoples of Canada for the abuse incurred at residential schools.

September 19, 2007 A landmark compensation deal for former residential school students comes into effect, ending what Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine calls an 150-year "journey of tears, hardship and pain — but also of tremendous struggle and accomplishment." The federal government-approved agreement will provide nearly $2 billion to the former students who had attended 130 schools. Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl says he hopes the money will "close this sad chapter of history in Canada."

June 11, 2008 Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologizes to former students of native residential schools, marking the first formal apology by a prime minister for the federally-financed program. "The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history," he says in a speech in the House of Commons.

April 29, 2009 Pope Benedict XVI expresses "sorrow" to a delegation from Canada's Assembly of First Nations for the abuse and "deplorable" treatment that Aboriginal students suffered at Catholic Church-run residential schools. (Excerpts from www.cbc.ca)
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Mandate
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 2008. It hopes to guide and inspire Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. Its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. The Commission will document the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience. Indian Residential Schools are a part of our shared history, a history that is not well understood by many. Canada's relationship with Aboriginal people has suffered as a result of the IRS system. Healing and repairing that relationship will require education, awareness, and increased understanding of the legacy and the impacts still being felt for everyone involved in that relationship. The goal of the Truth Commission is to find the truth, find ways to nurture those impacted by the experience and to reconcile all Canadians.

Difficulties
It is very difficult for Canada’s Native peoples to come to terms with their history. One hundred fifty thousand children went through the schools, where they were taught to believe they were inferior. In 1990, Chief Phil Fontaine, began to change things by telling of his abuse. The last residential school closed in Saskatchewan in 1996. There are 90,000 survivors of the Residential Schools living today, many in Saskatchewan. The painful results of the Residential School experience are obvious in Native communities. Pain leads to violence against self, family, and community. There are high rates of suicide amongst Aboriginal peoples, and many Aboriginals are in prison. Like the non-Aboriginal population, most Aboriginal children today are unaware of the past existence of the residential schools. They need to be informed, so that they can understand their heritage and their parents and grandparents.

Today
In the Kootenays, Aboriginals have converted the residential school into a four-star hotel and interpretive centre. In Kamloops, the space is rented out to learning activities, so that the space can honour the people who were there.

Despite residential schools, Native people still live on the land, pick berries, fish, and hunt. These activities are a huge part of native culture. Food gathering still goes on in Lytton. There are still grouse, salmon, deer, mushrooms, and trout fishing.

It is important that the general population of Canada also learn about the residential schools. To learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, go to: www.trc.ca and watch the short webcast, Witnessing the Future.

The Commission can help schools arrange to have a survivor of the school system go into classrooms to talk about their experiences, if they are asked.
Apology from the Government of Canada
The Government of Canada made a formal apology on June 11, 2008. Online you can read apologies from the churches who ran the schools: the Anglican, United and Presbyterian Churches. In 2009, Pope Benedict issued an apology on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Read the full story at: http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/06/11/harper-apology.html

Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine, in headdress, watches as Prime Minister Stephen Harper officially apologizes for more than a century of abuse and cultural loss involving residential schools. (Tom Hanson/Canadian Press) 2008

Stephen Harper stood in the House of Commons on Wednesday (June 11, 2008) to say sorry to former students of native residential schools — in the first formal apology from a Canadian prime minister over the federally-financed program.

"Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools," Harper said in Ottawa, surrounded by a small group of Aboriginal leaders and former students, some of whom wept as he spoke.

"The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history.

"Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country," he said to applause.

"The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language," Harper said.

"While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities."
Resources for Further Study

Native Theatre
Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing, Tomson Highway, 1989, a play.
The Rez Sisters, Tomson Highway, 1986, a play.
James Reaney’s work about Native NWDT Theatre Company and Northern Delights
Jason Burnstick, musician and composer in Where the Blood Mixes:
www.myspace.com/jasonburnstick.

Native and Canadian History
Taking Back Our Spirits, Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing, Jo-Ann Episkernew.
The relationship between political policy, Native peoples, and literature, trauma studies and (post) colonial/settler colony studies.
Canada’s First Nations. A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times. Dickason, O. P.
Canada in the Making Website: http://www.canadiana.org/citm/index_e.html.

West Coast Native Life
Canyon War: The Untold Story, a documentary of the First Nations people along the Fraser River and the 1858 Gold Rush (Kevin Loring’s people). Kevin Loring co-wrote, acted, produced.

Residential Schools and After
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: www.trc.ca. Witnessing the Future. First Nations and Métis survivors and their descendants from across the country tell their stories in a ten-minute clip. Or the DVD, 78 minutes.
Assembly of First Nations Website: http://www.afn.ca/.
Website http://www.anglican.ca/rs/history/schools/st-georges-school-lytton.htm
for a history of St. George’s Residential School, run by the Anglican Church. Includes its 2003 apology.
The United Church website: http://www.united-church.ca/aboriginal/relationships/apologies.
The CBC also has information about this chapter of Canadian history at:
http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/truthreconciliation/ and
Rabbit Proof Fence – a movie about Australia’s indigenous peoples and state control.

To ask to have someone who has been through the residential school system speak at your school, write: info@trc.
Activities

Pre- or Post-play

1. In groups, or individually, choose one of these topics, and research the history of the First Nations people in Canada: The Indian Act, the land, the different Nations, the gold rush, Native beliefs, the reserves and reserve conditions, governmental policies. Present it, in any way, creative or formal, and discuss the issues that are presented.

2. Research “Colonialism”. What is it? Who practised it when, where, why? What were the results?

3. Research the way European people thought about their children in the 19th century – think of nannies, boarding schools in England and Canada, read about the policies of the government toward mentally challenged adults in Canada in the 1960s, and think about the meaning of “manifest destiny.” Try to understand how residential schools could have happened.

4. Watch the movie Rabbit Proof Fence on DVD, a prize-winning film about Australian Aboriginals. Compare Australian policies toward its Aboriginals with Canadian policies toward its own. Discuss what should happen now.

5. Read the material on residential schools in this Study Guide (pages 18-21). Invite a survivor of the residential schools into your class, and listen to her/his story.

6. Read Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown (or watch the DVD) and/or watch the documentary the Canyon Wars: The Untold Story. What did you learn about the First Nations, the British, the Americans?

7. Read some Native myths and legends on http://www.angelfire.com/ca/Indian/stories.html. What is your understanding of the Aboriginal relationship to the land? Read http://www.angelfire.com/ca/Indian/BearLostTail.html. Make up your own myth to explain some element in Canadian nature. Read it out loud to the class, or have your group act it out.

8. Do you see any separation or discrimination between groups around you at school, work or home? What causes it? Discuss ways to improve it.

9. Write, or improvise in pairs, a scene or story of two different people arguing over a simple issue, like who is first in line. Have them come together during the scene.

10. Communities near Ottawa were lost in 1958 when the government flooded nine villages and hamlets along the St. Lawrence River to create the St. Lawrence Seaway. Across the river a Native community became polluted. Look at the material in http://www.lostvillages.ca/ and http://www.ghosttownpix.com/index.html, a site dedicated to lost communities in Canada. Imagine you were a resident of one of these villages. Tell your story.

11. Read Tomson Highway’s The Rez Sisters or Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing. What do you learn about modern-day Native life on the reserve?

12. Go to the movie theatre to see Avatar. In what ways can you compare the events, characters and theme to the story of a colonized native people?
**Post-Play**

1. What feelings were you left with after seeing the performance of *Where the Blood Mixes*? Write a journal entry, or discuss with the class.

2. Read the sections in this Study Guide on residential schools in Canada (pages 18-21). What impact of the schools do you see on Mooch? Floyd? Christine? Did June escape?


4. Be Christine. Describe her dream, living with her new parents soon after she is adopted. Or write a story for June, after she leaves Mooch. Or analyze the character of Floyd, and his relationship with Anna, and then write his monologue after he hears of Anna’s death. Or analyze George. Write a scene for George, as he tells his family what he saw in the bar. Or write the scene that happens when Mooch returns to the bar with the baby, Christine, but without Anna, and tells what happened to her.

5. Note the traditional narrative line of the play, and the story arcs of each main character. Identify the less-traditional elements of play structure and production. Write a review.

6. Kevin Loring wrote a poem that later became the world of his play. Write about your world. Is nature a part of it? In what ways do you realize that nature is important to you? Does our insulation from much of nature today have anything to do with our environmental problems?

7. At the centre of much Native mythology stands the Trickster, a being for whom existence is a joyous celebration. He is half hero, half fool, both male and female, creator and destructor, a clown, who laughs at himself. In laughing at the Trickster, people laugh at themselves... and can laugh off their disappointments or failures. Read about the Trickster. Tell why he is such a popular character. What cultures have a lot of Trickster stories? Why?

8. “Contemporary Native authors skillfully employ subversive humour both to heal from and to understand historical and personal trauma, and to fight the adversity they face.”- Mirjam Hirch, “Subversive Humour,” *Me Funny*, p. 104. In class, discuss the statement. Apply it to the play.

9. Create a series of tableaux of dramatic moments to represent the play. Add meaningful music. Perform the piece.

10. Storytelling is part of native culture. What different stories are told in the play? Why is each told? Why do you think people teach through stories? Tell your own story to teach something.

11. Read the script excerpt provided (pages 12-14). In groups of three, one person directing, explore this scene. What makes it funny? Warm? What do the characters need from each other? How do they get it? Show that although they are in conflict, Floyd and Mooch care for each other. Try playing the scene being worried, angry, resigned, caring, boastful, hungry, anything else. Add an animal. Rain. Try it with different physical actions. Choose your favourite way - tell why? Perform it in class.

12. How do you think this play, and perhaps other Native plays can influence society in Canada?

13. Ask your grandparents what they miss about the home they used to know. Ask them for some stories. What do you learn about history? About your family?
Theatre Etiquette

Please take a moment to prepare the students for their visit to the National Arts Centre to explain what good Theatre Etiquette is, and why it will enhance the enjoyment of the play by all audience members.

1. *Where the Blood Mixes* will be performed in the Studio of the NAC. Matinées at the NAC are for students and the general public. It is important for everyone to be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance, so that others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play.” Do not unwrap candy, or play with zippers, or your programme. Unlike actors in movies, the actors in live theatre can hear disturbances in the audience, and will give their best performances when they feel the positive involvement of the audience members. The appropriate way of showing approval for the actors’ performances is through laughter and applause. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others during the show may be asked to leave the Studio.

2. Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you. If someone needs to pass you in the row, it is courteous to stand and allow that person to pass you. Do not climb over seats. Avoid wearing scented products such as perfume or cologne or aftershave, as many people are sensitive or even allergic to these.

3. If you plan to make notes on the play for the purpose of writing a review, please do not try to write them during the performance. Seeing you do this can be distracting for the actors. Wait until intermission or after the performance is finished to write your reflections, please.

4. It is important that there be no electronic devices used in the Studio so that the atmosphere of the play is not interrupted and others are not disturbed. **Cell phones, pagers, and anything that beeps must be turned off.** Cameras and all other recording devices are not permitted in the Studio.

5. Seating in the NAC Studio is open, so those attending may select their own seat. Teachers may wish to pass out tickets before arriving at the entrance to the Studio.

6. Programmes may or may not be distributed at this student matinée. Information on the artists who put this play together, however, can be found in this Study Guide for those who wish to use it in writing a review. Some programmes can be made available to teachers if desired as a teaching aid, to show how a programme is put together.

7. The running length of the play is estimated at **1 hour and 20 minutes, with no intermission.** It is advisable to make a trip to the washroom before the performance starts, as anyone leaving while the play is in progress runs the risk of not being allowed back into the Studio.
National Arts Centre programmes for schools made possible in part by

**The National Youth and Education Trust**

supported by Founding Partner TELUS, Sun Life Financial,
Michael Potter and Véronique Dhieux,
supporters and patrons of the annual NAC Gala,
and the donors of NAC Foundation’s Corporate Club and Donors’ Circle.

**Give a Hand**

**National Arts Centre Foundation**

**Thanks** to Barry Karp, Viola Thomas, and Al-Lisa McKay for their help, interviews and information for this Study Guide.

*Where the Blood Mixes* was co-developed by the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company, Luminato, Toronto Festival of Arts & Creativity, The Savage Society (Vancouver), and Western Canada Theatre (Kamloops, BC).

The **NAC English Theatre Playwright in Residence program** is made possible with assistance from the Theatre Section, the Aboriginal Arts Secretariat and the Equity Office of the Canada Council for the Arts.

[Logos for the Canada Council for the Arts and Conseil des Arts du Canada]