



**Contact:**

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**New Native Theatre's Latest World Premiere Gives A Native Perspective On Higher Education**

For the third show in its Tenth Anniversary Season, New Native Theatre produces a story that examines how college life factors into a Native American existence. *Wounspe Wanktya - A College Education*, follows the story of Tashina and Tiffany, two Lakota freshmen in college, when they decide to sew a sacred dress to help them get through their four years of school as they experience the good, the bad, the funny, and the spiritual. Written by Lakota playwright Alex Hesbrook Ramier, New Native Theatre produced a version of this play at their Third Annual National Native American Ten Minute Play Festival. Now, audiences can witness the story in its entirety at the world premiere!

*Wounspe Wanktya - A College Education* touches on crucial and relevant topics that Native people face today. Hesbrook Ramier has a Theatre & English BA from Colorado College and a Fiction MFA from Oregon State University. She's also Cheyenne River Sioux. To walk in these two worlds is something in which Hesbrook Ramier is well-versed. She says that her inspiration came from "music -- both Indigenous and classic rock, as well as my own college experience -- both in undergrad and grad school. But the play is not autobiographical. It is a combination of what I saw in college, what others went through and what I imagined."

"In undergrad, I didn't fully understand my isolation or being away from a Native community," Hesbrook Ramier says. "I didn't feel the same in grad school," she adds. "I was always reminded that I was distinctly different. I experienced everything from exoticism to tokenism to racism, but I never want that to truly define my writing. And I was grateful for the opportunity to learn -- I did become a better writer -- and be challenged. Sometimes learning what you don't want to be or who you don't want to be... is more valuable than learning who you can become."

Hesbrook Ramier's approach to writing Indigenous stories also draws inspiration from her time as a production intern at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Illinois. "I heard a lecture by some African American actors who said that we had to stop writing for white audiences or telling stories about the brown or black experience, and instead write stories about love or war or anything that just happened to have brown or black people in it. Because of this I have spent most of my artistic career creating art and writing about what I know, but also writing the stories, and in this case the play, that I wanted to see," she says.

Ultimately, Wounspe Wanktya - A College Education becomes a story that's universal to all audiences. "I want Lakota and other Natives to get something from my stories that others may not... Working with New Native Theatre has been a true honor. Rhiana Yazzie and her company have taken my play and truly made it a magical experience for me. I am so excited to see my words leave the page," Hesbrook Ramier says. The play offers a glimpse into the struggle of balancing Native identity with a predominantly non-Native academic setting and how there is no single path to such a reconciliation. It's a journey of hope, tragedy, humor, and spirituality.

Performances begin Wednesday, March 6th, at 7:30 PM and run through Sunday, March 24th at 2:00 PM. Wednesday through Saturday performances start at 7:30 PM while Sunday performances start at 2:00 PM, all taking place at Dreamland Arts, 677 Hamline Ave N, St Paul, MN 55104.

All tickets at the door are Pay-What-You-Can. Advance tickets are \$25. Group tickets are available. For ticket sales please contact Dreamland Arts, (651) 645-5506, [www.dreamlandarts.com](http://www.dreamlandarts.com).

New Native Theatre is a new way of thinking about, looking at, and creating authentic Native American stories for the stage. Based in the Twin Cities, it is the only and longest running professional Native American theatre company in the Upper Midwest focusing exclusively on Native American playwrights, actors, and directors. For more details or questions, please contact New Native Theatre at (612) 367-7639 or through email at [info@newnativetheatre.org](mailto:info@newnativetheatre.org). Visit [www.newnativetheatre.org](http://www.newnativetheatre.org) for details.

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