

I'd like to articulate just how important and how powerful it was to witness Srathmore High School and the Siksika Drummer's production of *New Blood*.

Of course, we're all aware of the rift that exists between First Nations Peoples and the rest of Canada. It is a rift born of abuse, disregard, and misunderstanding that has lasted generations now. It is a blight with consequence no less serious than the rift in Ireland between Catholic and Protestant.

What is so wonderfully important about this production called *New Blood* is the fact that its creation is the story of a gifted Professional Choreographer/High School Dance/Drama Teacher following the inspiration of First Nations elders and Artists toward an expression of honesty about the difficult story we hold together because of our own culpability in it. What is so remarkable is the fact that White and First Nations participants in a high school setting performed a story that honours a people we have not honoured in the past. And because of that coming together on the stage, an audience of First Nations and non-First Nations people sat together to marvel at the expression that was created, and in that marvelling many of us were brought to tears - not only at the beauty of it, but in visceral recognition of the pain caused.

And it was an astonishing creation. To witness high school students participating with precision and clarity in a story of such relevance and import stirred me toward a kind of optimism that I suspect must in some way parallel what South Africans might have felt about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission led by Bishop Desmond Tutu. Coming together is actually possible. It's actually possible to create a cross-cultural expression. First Nations drummers and dancers and poets and artists can inspire young Canadians to a place of awe and respect for a culture they know little about. To watch these young people come together under Deanne Bertsch's direction to speak healing into the audience that attends is most relevant. In fact, I left the theatre feeling like I had taken part in one of the most important pieces of theatrical art I had ever witnessed. And it was created in an arena which not only sewed relevance into the audience, but into young Canadians - First Nations and White that had created it together.

The staging is imaginative and unusual - putting together imagery and story that pulls committed performances from everyone involved. The sound of First Nations drums filling the theatre with rhythms that shook a person to the bone; authentic First Nations voices lifting up and out of the Peter Gabriel music that was utilized throughout; dancers expressing themselves fully; young voices singing in rhythms and sounds that evoked the authentic voices of their First Nations mentors; the art of George Littlechild projected onto silks that became teepees, sky, and more ... all adding up to more than the sum of its parts.

Such events are the prophetic utterances that artists long to be a part of. This show really matters. And because it does, Rosebud Theatre is going to invite its patrons to Calgary to see it as part of its *Rosebud Presents* series. This is a show not to be missed!



Artistic Director - Rosebud Theatre

