

ELEVATE: MANAAJI'IDIWIN

MEDIA RELEASE

By David McLeod
Directed by Herbie Barnes

WORLD PREMIERE OF *ELEVATE: MANAAJI'IDIWIN*
April 24 – May 17 | Preview on April 23
John Hirsch Mainstage

WINNIPEG, April 8, 2025 – Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (MTC) brings the world premiere of *ELEVATE: Manaaji'idiwin* to the Mainstage to wrap up the 2024/25 season. Written by David McLeod, it is the second play developed through the Pimootayowin Creators Circle to make it to the John Hirsch Mainstage. This fast-paced comedy, exploring reconciliation, takes us to unexpected heights without pulling any punches.

“When I started at MTC six years ago, the impact of being a theatre on Treaty One was significant to me, so in collaboration with Governor General Award-winning playwright, Ian Ross, the Pimootayowin Creators Circle was born,” says artistic director Kelly Thornton. “*The Secret to Good Tea*, by Rosanna Deerchild was the first script that made it to the stage and this spring it was produced at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and The Grand Theatre in London, ON. It’s incredible to know that what started here in Manitoba is going across the country.”

ELEVATE: Manaaji'idiwin is a provocative and funny portrait of two men, who find themselves in a chance encounter. On their way to the 33rd floor of Steadman and Whitaker, Tallahassee and Jonesie are suddenly trapped in an elevator after a surprise malfunction. Delayed for an important meeting the two men, stemming from settler and Indigenous backgrounds, must work together to escape their predicament. With rising tension, the shrinking space becomes a pressure cooker, as the men struggle to get it back up and running. Like the elevator stuck between floors their ability to escape is hanging in the balance.

Manaaji'idiwin, is an Anishinaabemowin word that means ‘to go easy on someone, in a reciprocal way’ commonly referred to as Respect, in the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Playwright David McLeod reflects: “One major element of Indigenous humour is teasing, often adjacent with extreme truth-telling. This action often transcends difficult situations. I hoped to stretch this element of Indigenous philosophy like a thin red thread throughout the play, allowing it to stitch scenes together where laughter connects with pain, loss, and most importantly, self-discovery. The elevator scenario places two individuals within a pressure cooker situation, where two characters ultimately have no choice but to face and witness each other’s truth. I hope this translates towards a sacred place sometimes called reconciliation.”

The play features a larger-than-life set with a kaleidoscopic city sky scraper design by William Layton, and an elevator that offers some show-stopping surprises. This captivating design also highlights the work of Indigenous mural artist Peatr Thomas that emphasizes the need for love in life.

ELEVATE: Manaaji'idiwin stars **Kevin Klassen** as Jonesie, **Melissa Langdon** as Sharon and **Nolan Moberly** as Tallahassee. The creative team features Director / Dramaturg **Herbie Barnes**, Set

Designer **William Layton**, Costume Designer **Amy McPherson**, Lighting Designer **Scott Henderson**, Sound Designer **Jason Burnstick**, Fight Director **Rick Skene**, Mural Designer **Peatr Thomas**, Assistant Director **Cali Sproule**, Assistant Lighting Designer **Monique Gauthier**, Stage Manager **Ridge Romanishen**, Assistant Stage Manager **Katie Schmidt**, Apprentice Stage Manager **Chance Sabados**.

In keeping with MTC's ongoing commitment to reconciliation, we're offering a 50% discount (excluding D section) to all performances of *ELEVATE: Manaaji'idiwin* for Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Tickets for *ELEVATE: Manaaji'idiwin* start at **\$29.50** plus GST. For showtimes and ticket information, call the Royal MTC Box Office at 204 942 6537 or visit RoyalMTC.ca.

About Pimootayowin Creators Circle

Led by Governor General Award-winning playwright Ian Ross, the Creators Circle supports the creation and development of new plays by Manitoba-based Indigenous artists. Pimootayowin is an Anishinaabemowin word meaning *journey*, a word chosen by Ross who explains: *"The creation of new art is often described as a journey, so too, our lives. In any journey, we often don't know what lies ahead but we can emerge enriched by them. I look forward to mentoring talented creators who have fascinating, relevant stories to tell."* Pimootayowin is dedicated to developing new voices for the theatre. All participants will receive an honorarium, as well as fees when the play is professionally workshopped in preparation for the public presentations.

The Pimootayowin Creators Circle is generously sponsored by **TD Ready Commitment**.

About Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre produces 10 plays on two stages, a regional tour, a wide range of youth programming and two festivals: Pimootayowin: A Festival of New Work and North America's second-largest Fringe, the Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival.

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B-roll will be sent to select media on **April 24** and is also available on request. A selection of photos will be available for download from our website on **April 23**. To access these photos, visit the MEDIA CENTRE at royalmtc.ca/mediacentre. USERNAME: media PASSWORD: Medi@24!

For more information, please contact:

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