

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DanceWorks presents Toronto Premiere of Dancers of Damelahamid's
Striking Meditation on Matriarchal Legacy in
– *Raven Mother* –**

The Indigenous dance company's most ambitious work to date, Raven Mother represents the culmination of generations of artistic and cultural work

Toronto, ON — DanceWorks presents the Toronto premiere of Dancers of Damelahamid's full-length multimedia work ***Raven Mother***, on stage **November 29** at **12:15pm** and **7:30pm** at Harbourfront Centre's **Fleck Dance Theatre**. A celebration of the generational impact of matriarchs, *Raven Mother* is an homage to the late **Elder Margaret Harris**, co-founder of Dancers of Damelahamid in 1967 and mother to the company's Executive & Artistic Director **Margaret Grenier**. *Raven Mother* illustrates the vast impact Elder Harris imparted on the revitalization of Indigenous dance along the Northwest Coast, and the integral role of women in holding cultural knowledge.

"We are thrilled to feature the Toronto premiere of this vital work in our 2024/25 season," says DanceWorks Co-Executive Artistic Producer, David Norsworthy. "*Raven Mother* holds the gentle fortitude of a family dancing together and is also a direct action of cultural revitalization amidst ongoing colonial violence and erasure. Many Canadians may not be aware of the Potlatch Ban that outlawed Indigenous cultural practices, including song and dance, on this land for nearly 70 years from 1884 - 1951. The movement practices that ground *Raven Mother* were nearly lost, but are now experiencing a resurgence due to the strength and vision of Elder Margaret Harris."

Elder Harris (1931-2020) was a respected Cree Elder from Northern Manitoba who spent the majority of her life on B.C.'s Northwest Coast, where she trained under her mother-in-law, Gitxsan Matriarch Irene Harris, and later dedicated her life to the revitalization and teaching of Indigenous cultural practices, including song, dance, stories, and regalia making.

In *Raven Mother*, Harris' spirit lives on, not only in the embodied narrative, but in the dancers themselves, who carry their grandmother's vision forward for future generations to come. Performers include Harris' daughter **Margaret Grenier**, and grandchildren **Nigel Baker-Grenier** and **Raven Grenier**, as well as Margaret's niece **Tobie Wick** and daughter-in-law **Rebecca Baker-Grenier**.

In a series of narrative-based vignettes, *Raven Mother* shares the movement, song, regalia, masks, and sculptures of the Gitxsan people. The Raven crest, manifested in multiple forms throughout the piece, embodies transformation and the strengthening of culture, and breathes sustained life into a rich lineage of teachings.

Interwoven with striking multimedia projections by Indigenous artist **Andy Moro** and original music and live vocals by **Raven Grenier**, in collaboration with composer **Ted Hamilton**, the full-length work features the intricate work of Northwest Coast artists **David A. Boxley**, **David R. Boxley**, **Jim Charlie**, **Raven Grenier**, **Kandi McGilton**, and **Dylan Sanidad**, including a raven transformation mask, which opens to reveal several smaller interconnected human faces inside – each mask representing a generation of daughters inspired by their matriarch.

Also featured is a collection of elaborate regalia expertly crafted by designer **Rebecca Baker-Grenier**, including a raven cloak made of feathers and representing a traditional Gitksan piece that has not been danced for many generations.

Raven Mother's Toronto appearance is part of a cross-country tour made possible by several Canadian dance presenters – The Cultch, Danse Danse, National Arts Centre, Public Energy Performing Arts, and Dance Victoria. The work was supported by the CanDance Network Creation Fund, through an application spearheaded by DanceWorks' Founding Dance Curator, Mimi Beck, in 2022.

"*Raven Mother* is a culturally significant work that bridges generations, and speaks eloquently in the present," says Beck. "I have boundless respect and admiration for Executive and Artistic Director Margaret Grenier and her family, who have preserved, revitalized and advanced First Nations' culture through story, dance, and song."

Under the direction of Grenier, Dancers of Damelahamid has developed seven full-length works which have toured internationally. The company last performed for Toronto audiences in October 2019, with their penultimate multimedia dance work, *Mînowin*, also presented by DanceWorks.

The matinee performance of *Raven Mother*, on November 29 at 12:15pm, is open to the public and school groups, and will offer a 60-min. version of the presentation, as well as a 15-min. post-show artist talk. The evening performance on November 29 at 7:30pm will feature the complete 75-min. full-length work.

This year, DanceWorks is piloting a Pay-What-You-Can ticket pricing model with tickets for *Raven Mother* ranging from free to \$48.

For tickets and further information, visit: danceworks.ca

About DanceWorks (danceworks.ca)

DanceWorks is an artist-centered choreographic presentation platform based in Tkaronto, colonially known as Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Established in 1977, and led by Founding Dance Curator Mimi Beck until 2023, the organization's artistic vision is now stewarded by Co-Executive Artistic Producers, Dedra McDermott and David Norsworthy. We curate vigorous and intentional choreographic performances that weave skillful physicality with a dedication to artistic practice and research; foregrounding a diversity of thought and expression.

LISTING INFORMATION

DanceWorks presents Dancers of Damelahamid's *Raven Mother*

Dates:	November 29 at 12:15pm* & 7:30pm *Condensed performance open to the public and school groups with artist Q+A.
Ticket Prices:	From Free-\$48
Address:	Fleck Dance Theatre 207 Queens Quay West, 3rd Floor

Box Office: danceworks.ca

Website: danceworks.ca

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