

## CDF 2026 bios

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### **Cedar Woman**

Cedar Woman is a prayer in a long line of prayers. It is s̓x̓wəḥ̓wəyem', a Coast Salish story of ancestral resilience and hope, honouring our relationship with these lands and a legacy of matriarchs spanning all the way back to a cedar tree. Through song, dance, and ceremony, Tasha Faye Evans and her ensemble call upon Cedar Woman, one of our first grandmothers who faced The Great Flood with fierce love. In this collective vision of hope for the future we remember our sacred responsibility to all our relations and protecting what we know from the depth of our soul to be sacred.

### **Chesha7 iy lha Mens**

Chesha7 iy lha mens translates as “the mothers and daughters,” which represents this group as they are a family of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters. They continue their journey to learn their culture through songs and stories and to become confident in speaking their language. Their cultural ties are woven between Skwxwu7mesh, Sto:lo, Tsimshian, Hawaiian, and Swiss peoples. Chesha7 iy lha mens represent and share their cultural songs and dances in the best way to teach and revitalize their culture for the generations to come.

### **Chinook Song Catchers**

The [Chinook Song Catchers](#) are an Indigenous dance group that descends from the Squamish and Nisga'a nations. This dynamic dance group has been representing their heritage at major venues in Vancouver for over fourteen years. Performing at multi-cultural festivals and art celebrations; and conducting welcoming ceremonies for international guests to Vancouver. The Chinook Song Catchers have traveled to international events as ambassadors of our respected nations, traveling to Japan, Taiwan, Switzerland, Italy, and Turkey.

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### **Tsatsu Staqayu**

Tsatsu Staqayu (Coastal Wolf Pack) is a young group of Coast Salish singers and dancers coming from across the Coast and throughout the lower mainland. They have members in their group from

Musqueam, Nanaimo, Kuper Island, Cowichan, Tsartlip, just to name a few, which brings them all together to sing and dance and share a small part of their Coast Salish culture. Performing for the people brings happiness and joy to their hearts as they sing dance and pray for each one of us.

### **Dakhká Khwaán Dancers**

The Dakhká Khwaán Dancers are a National Award-winning Inland Tlingit dance group based out of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, lead by Marilyn Yadultin Jensen. They focus on reclaiming their languages and traditional values through their inherent art form of singing, drumming, dancing, and storytelling. Since forming in the community of Carcross in 2007, they have grown significantly including dancers from the Inland Tlingit communities of Teslin and Atlin. Together, they have danced across Canada, the US, New Zealand, Taiwan, the Vancouver 2010 Olympics and the Pan Am Games in 2015. The group received the 2014 National Aboriginal Cultural-Tourism Award and were nominated for an Indigenous Music Award in their collaborative work with DJ Dash for their album, Deconstruct Reconstruct in 2018.

### **Dancers of Damelahamid**

The Dancers of Damelahamid is an Indigenous dance company from the Northwest Coast of British Columbia with a rich history of masked dance that inspires a compelling performance. Through dramatic dance, captivating narrative, intricately carved masks, and elaborate regalia, the Dancers of Damelahamid transform time and space and bridge the customary with a living practice.

The Dancers of Damelahamid will share and excerpt of *Raven Mother* at the Signature Evening Performances, which is their newly choreographed dance work in honour of late Elder Margaret Harris (1931 – 2020). *Raven Mother* illustrates the vast impact Elder Harris had on the revitalization of Indigenous dance along the Northwest Coast. *Raven Mother* illuminates the profound leadership of mothers, their essential contribution in this resurgence, and the force and transformation of this awakening.

### **Git Hayetsk**

The Git Hayetsk Dancers are an internationally renowned dance group led in partnership by artist and carver Mike Dangeli (Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Tsetsaut Nations) and Dr. Mique'l Dangeli (Tsimshian and Tlingit Nations), Assistant Professor of Indigenous Arts in the Department of Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Victoria. Git Hayetsk means "people of the copper shield" in Sm'algayx. The copper shield is the highest form of ceremonial wealth shared among their people. Their dancers are bonded by their connections to the Sm'algayx speaking peoples. Since 1999, they have shared their songs and dances at ceremonial and public events in urban and rural communities through Canada, the US, and abroad including Austria, Malaysia, Germany, and Japan.

### **Git Hoan**

[Git-Hoan](#) (People of the Salmon) was founded in 1996 by David Boxley, internationally recognized Alaskan Tsimshian Artist and Culture bearer. The group is composed of family and close friends from the Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Haida nations. The songs and dances are presented with an energetic and proud style that, while different from most contemporary dance groups, is based on ancient traditions that

belong to all coastal tribes. The Git Hoan Dancers showcase the magnificence of Tsimshian art, resurrect the practice of the culture, and educate the world that Native culture is diverse and a “living” art and culture. The Git Hoan performance is through song and dance sharing legends of the ancestors.

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### **Lax Kxeen Tsimshian Dancers**

The Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen dance group is a cultural expression of the Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) people from the northwest coast of BC. For over 20 years, Christine Smith Martin has led the Lax Kxeen Ts'msyen dancers— now based in Vancouver—to gather, uphold, and carry Ts'msyen culture with pride. The name Lax Kxeen carries deep significance, as it is the Sm'algyax name for Prince Rupert—a place in which each group member holds strong ancestral lineages, keeping them rooted and connected to their home territories. What they share for others to witness is Ayaawx brought to life through song and dance. Ayaawx is the ancient Ts'msyen laws that continue to govern spiritual, social, and cultural ways of being. We thank you for witnessing and honouring these living teachings with us.

### **Rainbow Creek**

*tuul gundlas cyaal xaada* | Rainbow Creek Dancers were named after a creek that runs behind the village of Massett on Haida Gwaii. The dance group was formed in 1980 by brothers Robert and Reg Davidson. Most of the early songs and dances were taught to Robert and Reg by their grandmother, Florence Edenshaw Davidson. The Rainbow Creek Dancers seek to bring meaning back to the songs and dances of their ancestors, performing them as they were taught by their elders, while also creating new songs and dances that build on the cultural foundation of their ancestors. Today, the Rainbow Creek Dancers dance masks created by Robert, Reg, and Ben Davidson in Haida Gwaii and throughout the world.

### **Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska & Lawra Somby**

Sara Marielle Gaup grew up in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino (Northern Norway/Sápmi) and is a traditional and modern juoigi (yoiker/sámi singer), an artist and a mother who also works with sámí crafts (duodji). She has been a central profile on the music scene and has been a full-time juoigi for over 17 years. She is most known for being the vocalist and composer in the internationally known music groups Adjágas and Arvvas. Sara Marielle also collaborates with several artists, musicians and filmmakers in short-term projects and does workshops and traditional luohiti-concerts (yoik, only voice).

Lawra Somby, born in 1981, was taught the great gift of yoiking from his father, Ande Somby. Lawra started performing on a variety of stages in 1997, and he has performed his music both solo as well as with his father Ande, making him an experienced singer with a strong stage presence.

### **Sarah Hunt**

Sarah Hunt / Tlalilila'ogwa is a Kwakwaka'wakw writer, scholar, and activist. For more than two decades, Sarah has sought justice for Indigenous Peoples and communities. Her writing and research are grounded in queer feminist analysis and an ethically 'undisciplined' approach to scholarship spanning legal geography, political ecology, gender studies, and Indigenous politics. With roots in community-based anti-violence activism, Sarah's work focuses on relationships between, on the one hand, intimate and embodied scales of Indigenous life and, on the other hand, governance of lands, waters, and relationships across natural and supernatural worlds.

## **Spakwus Slolem**

[Spakwus Slolem](#) are members of the Squamish Nation. The group presents a glimpse into their culture through singing, drumming, dancing, and audience participation. Spakwus Slolem is pleased and honoured to present songs and dances of yesterday, as well as today, and feel very honoured to represent their people in a good way as their Ancestors had intended. Spakwus Slolem has performed across the world, including Taiwan, Japan, Hawaii, and Europe.

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## **‘Yisya’winuxw**

The ‘Yisya’winuxw Dancers are a professional, adult and youth dance group whose members represent many of the 18 tribes of the Kwakwaka’wakw. Many members live and work in Alert Bay, BC. They come together to ‘share’ traditional knowledge by invitation or special arrangement for private events. Although, ‘Yisya’winuxw is the most recent formed dance group of the Kwakwaka’wakw, many of their members have ‘shared’ professionally for over 20 years. Each of the ‘Yisya’winuxw dancers are initiated in their Potlatch ceremonies. The dances and songs they use in their performances are owned by the members, and families within their group.