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## **Forward with The Road Forward: A Conversation with Marie Clements**

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# Forward with *The Road Forward*: A Conversation with Marie Clements

by Peter Dickinson



Left to right: Corey Payette, Cheri Maracle, Russell Wallace, and Jennifer Kreisberg performing "This Is How it Goes," *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015. Photo by Tim Matheson, courtesy of red diva projects

On 28 February 2010, Marie Clements's *The Road Forward* was the closing performance at the Aboriginal Pavilion during the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad. Created and directed by Clements, the eight-minute live musical performance and multimedia installation featured an original composition by Jennifer Kreisberg, a sculptural set by Connie Watts, and choreography by Michael Greyeyes. The performers included Kreisberg, Michelle St. John, Leela Gilday, Pura Fé, Byron Chief-Moon, Kevin Loring, OsTwelve, and Evan Adams. Wanting to document the experi-

ence, over the course of the day's costume fittings and make-up tests, technical rehearsal, and the six consecutive evening stagings of the show, Clements shot more than four hours of video footage. She subsequently edited this into an award-winning ten-minute music video that screened at more than sixteen film festivals across the Americas. Meanwhile, with her company red diva projects, Clements began developing *The Road Forward* into a full-length "Aboriginal blues/rock musical," a workshop version of which premiered for one night only at Vancouver's PuSh International

Performing Arts Festival cabaret, Club PuSh, in 2013. After some further fine-tuning, *The Road Forward* was remounted for a three-night run at the York Theatre in Vancouver as part of the 2015 PuSh Festival, produced by red diva projects in association with Visceral Visions, in a co-presentation with the Vancouver East Cultural Centre and Touchstone Theatre. Clements is currently working with the National Film Board of Canada to develop a music docudrama based on themes of art and activism as created in this work.

*The Road Forward* is based on Clements's research into the archives of the Native Brotherhood (and Sisterhood) of British Columbia (NBCC), formed in 1931 and Canada's oldest active advocacy group on First Nations issues. In particular, Clements was astounded to discover and read through back issues of the NBCC's newspaper, *The Native Voice*, which became a powerful mouthpiece for and documentary record of Indigenous social justice activism—and not just along the coast of BC, but also across Canada and the Americas. Video projections of scanned pages from *The Native Voice* have appeared throughout the different performance iterations of the work, along with filmed footage from the Constitution Express, an important cross-Canada consciousness-raising event led by George Manuel in advance of the repatriation of the Canadian constitution.

Working with lead composer and musical director Kreisberg, Clements, as writer, director, and producer of *The Road Forward*, has turned this history into a series of nineteen songs that marry celebration and lament, resistance and requiem, all with a driving drum beat that announces unambiguously Indigenous presence, sovereignty, and futurity. As Selena Couture notes in her contribution to this special issue, *The Road Forward* is a work of “performative activism” very much rooted in its placed-based context of British Columbia, both past and present. To this end, alongside the celebration of *The Native Voice* as a mouthpiece for



Ostwelve performing “If You Believe,” *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015.

Photo by Tim Matheson, courtesy of red diva projects

**Marie Clements:** It was offered as a commission from the Cultural Olympiad. Then I just started researching, or reimagining, BC's history, and obviously I wanted to do something that was very specific to where I was, and where I grew up. I wanted to celebrate that in the work, and I also wanted to be conscious of where the Aboriginal Pavilion was, and to acknowledge parts of our society that we were still trying to bring forward. So, I just started reading, and doing that Google research that we do, and came across the Native Brotherhood. I found out that the offices were still in West Vancouver—the Fisheries Union. For some reason, just by chance, things started connecting, and one thing led to another. I ended up calling them and asking if I could come down and see what they had, and look at some of the newspapers. I think they were right in the middle of digitizing a lot of their files, but they still had a lot of hard copies. Everything else was going into another kind of archive form. Bill Duncan [Director of the NBCC] allowed me to go into one of the boardrooms and just sit with stacks of newspapers, of [copies of] *The Native Voice*. I didn't really have any one thing in mind, but you know how it is when you start reading—you get excited about something you've never read before. And, to be honest, I was overwhelmed by what I didn't know. I was really emotionally engaged that I had never known these activists, and what they had done—that activists had formed this newspaper, and that they had celebrated and exposed and given voice to moments in our history in Canada and the US. So that's where *The Road Forward* started to come from—out of this discovery of things I had lived right close by, but had never really known.

**PD:** So you had the commission, and then you went to do your research. When you were doing your research, how conscious were you—or were you conscious already—of the form that this piece would be taking? [MC shakes head no.] Okay, no. But, I'm still curious, was the platform of the Olympics at all in play here in terms of how you were conceiving the multimedia aspects and the musical aspects of the piece?

*The Road Forward came about from looking at these Native Brothers and Native Sisters and, artistically, from looking at my colleagues and asking them to come with me on this journey ... this strange musical journey.*

Indigenous rights, Clements uses the piece to mourn the Aboriginal women who have been murdered or gone missing along BC's Highway of Tears and in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and to indict all levels of government for failing to address the issue in any substantive way. This alone makes the work as relevant today as when it first premiered in 2010.

\* \* \*

**Peter Dickinson:** Which came first, your research into the NBCC, or the commission from the Cultural Olympiad's Aboriginal Pavilion? Or was it a case of you knowing you had a great story and deciding to apply to the Cultural Olympiad for a place to tell it to as large an audience as possible?

**MC:** No, because I'd never really written anything musical. I'd never even thought of writing a musical, or of telling a story that way. But I was incredibly conscious of wanting to celebrate our shared Aboriginal history—where we're standing. And I also wanted to celebrate the cutting-edge and sharp musical talent that we had. I mean, it would have made sense, I guess, for me to write a play. But it wasn't necessarily ... it was only supposed to be at most 20 minutes or half an hour. And the commission monies represented that (generously). So it was really about trying to find a gem that I felt could reawaken this idea of history and this idea of who we are—and that could smash ideas of what people thought we were and are today. And so *The Road Forward* came about from looking at these Native Brothers and Native Sisters and, artistically, from looking at my colleagues and asking them to come with me on this journey ... this strange musical journey. And it was a gift that they did come and that that they did bring their voices and their experiences and their histories to this project, this one song that was eight minutes. It's epic, it's an epic journey within that eight minutes. It took a lot to bring them here and to craft it in that amount of time.

**PD:** So just a little quick follow up on that—you're speaking of what is now the final song in the full-length piece, the title song, "The Road Forward," which served as the basis of the initial installation performance at the Aboriginal Pavilion during the Cultural Olympiad?

*The participation of the Four Host First Nations stated very clearly that the Olympics were on Coast Salish territories, and I love that it was with that kind of activism that we brought about a very clear showcasing of Aboriginal talent across genres and disciplines.*

**MC:** Yes, that's right.

**PD:** How many people in that original performance in the Aboriginal Pavilion stayed with the show all the way through? Did they all stay?

**MC:** No, they didn't. Leela Gilday and Pura Fé were [two of] the original singers who left the show. And we brought in Cheri Maracle. We had more movement in the original piece, and we also incorporated the visual craft of Connie Watts within the set. Byron Chief-Moon and Evan Adams and Kevin Loring were also in the original. So it did morph in this new creation.

**PD:** What was the experience of being in the Aboriginal Pavilion? You were the last show on the last day. What that was like? What was the feeling inside, and the reaction of the audience?



Left to right: Cheri Maracle, Jennifer Kreisberg, and Michelle St. John performing "Lady Marmalade," *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015.

Photo by Odessa Shurquaya, courtesy of red diva projects

**MC:** Obviously the Olympics had a super-charged expectation of brilliance everywhere you went, and everyone was excited. The whole world, it seemed, was excited—at least in the blocks that we were traveling from our rehearsal space to the Aboriginal Pavilion. There was an energy and anticipation of getting in there and doing the show. As in a lot of my performances, you'd love to be caught up in being worried about it; but there's just so much work to do that it becomes a practical challenge—everything is put towards the creation at a velocity of speed until the audience comes in. So there wasn't a lot of time for "Oh my god, oh my god"—just the sheer survival instinct of putting it together. There is a super-charged feeling knowing you will be presenting for your own people, and presenting to an international audience who maybe have never seen "real Indians," or whatever their conceptions are. We were under this beautiful globe, and had projections moving above us and it was otherworldly. And we had the performers moving around and within this beautiful set that Connie Watts had designed for us. So there was this feeling that we were "inside" of something, but also part of something that was bigger.

**PD:** Obviously the Vancouver context is so important there. You're on the plaza of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, and so in the heart of downtown. But you're also blocks away from the Downtown Eastside and that history is there. Did you get any reaction, any immediate feedback from the diverse groups who would have been represented in the audience?

**MC:** Some people wouldn't leave their seats—they just kept watching the show over and over. They had ushers herding people out, but they'd just come back and sit. I think they were a bit stunned by it. I'm hoping that the power of the performances, content, and the visceral effect had them—that it got inside them [and made them] a witness. I think that seeing these eight extraordinary performers and their sheer beauty and their strength was an emotional feeling—to see them claim that space, to take it, and to have the kind of currency of power and guts and not be apologetic for everything that we are. There was a huge buzz; people were whispering and people were rushing in, and it started to get more and more crowded each time they went on to perform.



Wayne Lavallee performing "Baby, You Got it All Wrong," *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015. Photo by Odessa Shurquaya, courtesy of red diva projects

**PD:** So it was this kind of loop of people lining up to see the show. How much of a break did the performers get between each of the six iterations of the performance?

**MC:** Maybe ten minutes. We had a very grassroots creative process. We couldn't find rehearsal space and we couldn't really afford it. So we begged and borrowed and we rehearsed in the upstairs artist loft over an old steel company in the Downtown Eastside. And it was cold, and there was all this drama within the drama. But I loved that it had this kind of industry and craft element to it, and then when our performers were dressed formally—when the men put their suits on, and the women put their heels and dresses on—it became this other thing.

**PD:** I just want to switch tracks a bit before coming back to the piece and its development since 2010. Can you give me your thoughts, as a working artist in Canada, about what the Olympics did, if anything, for arts and culture in this country? I'm thinking in particular of the Aboriginal Pavilion as a showcase for Indigenous arts and culture in Canada. Was it a good thing? Was it tokenistic? Do you see any material legacies from the initiative, and did it help you, specifically, in any way?

**MC:** I think what we witnessed at the Olympics here in Vancouver was historical in the inclusion of Aboriginal artists and political leaders. The participation of the Four Host First Nations stated very clearly that the Olympics were on Coast Salish territories, and I love that it was with that kind of activism that we brought about a very clear showcasing of Aboriginal talent across genres and disciplines. So that was a pretty extraordinary experience and the first time in history that it had been done to this extent. I think it speaks highly of our province and highly of our First Nations political leaders that this was even possible. Otherwise, I don't think our presence would have been integrally woven into the experience of the Olympics. So for me that was a great thing to witness. I will not forget that feeling of pride—not just for the artists. That we were culturally integrated into the Olympic machine made it that much more extraordinary.

I also had *Edward Curtis* as part of the Cultural Olympiad, alongside the commission of *The Road Forward*. As an artist, to be supported to develop work that is larger in scale, to develop work that encompasses bigger ideas, a longer artistic process, is a gift. It allows for bigger thinking, and for far-reaching ideas to manifest, and to encompass more people within the process—which as artists is something we want to do.

**PD:** I saw *The Edward Curtis Project* at Presentation House [in a co-presentation with the PuSh Festival]. That must have been a very different experience, presumably with a different audience. Was there crossover between the two pieces, including cross-marketing? What was it like for you to be in two different spaces creatively?

**MC:** I don't think there was any cross-marketing. But there was, generally, a pretty big buzz around both pieces, and *Edward Curtis* did well on ... whatever they call it ... the Richter scale.

**PD:** I've had some conversation with other artists about the epic, byzantine contracts they had to sign with the Cultural Olympiad folks, presumably as dictated by representatives of the IOC: what they could and couldn't do, and what they could and couldn't rep-



Nyla Carpentier dancing to "Come and Get Your Love," *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015. Photo by Tim Matheson, courtesy of red diva projects

resent. Did you experience any of that? Was there any discussion or interference around content? Were there parameters you were given, apart from the length of the piece?

**MC:** I don't usually worry about parameters. There was language in the contracts, but I can't remember that it caused me any concern. Usually I have a vision and I simply pursue it.

**PD:** You were doing your own thing in your unheated loft rehearsal space. I'm assuming there wasn't someone hanging over your shoulder. But how many of the Cultural Olympiad suits did you see, and how often?

**MC:** Not many and not often. There were a few issues where I needed to interface with official folks. There were a lot of challenges; it was an ambitious piece. So I was just concentrating on surviving the process.

**PD:** Norman Armour [Artistic and Executive Director of the PuSh Festival] expressed something similar to me—that his biggest concern was access to equipment and space and production crew. This machine that was coming and everyone needed resources. It sounds like everybody was in a similar boat.

**MC:** Yes, when you're a super-small company with no resources, space becomes a luxury when really it's just a basic need. You end up asking for favours and doing what it takes to make it happen.

**PD:** You've touched on this a bit already, but I'm wondering if you could comment more on how conscious you were of this

global stage you were provided through the Aboriginal Pavilion and the Cultural Olympiad programming. You said this already: you wanted to tell a local story, a story about BC focused on Aboriginal activism and social justice. And that included addressing a contemporary and ongoing crisis, namely the epidemic of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. Can you talk a bit about that fit?

**MC:** I was very conscious of the controversy surrounding the Downtown Eastside, and what that represents here. The big Olympic machine came in and had a lot of money and influence. It's always a gift to be supported to create work. But you also have to be responsible to the story you are trying to tell and how you can include different voices within that representation. For me, with the Pavilion a couple of blocks from the DTES, I wanted to showcase a certain strength and pride in who we are in the history of this country and the reality of this province. But I didn't want to leave behind things that, jointly as a society, we are still struggling with. That was incorporated in the song—to be inspired by what has been done, but also that part of our legacy as Aboriginal peoples is to continue to fight and bring forward those that have been left behind. So that's how *The Road Forward*, creatively, inspired me, and continues to through each development.

**PD:** That's a great segue, because I want to turn now to the afterlife, if I can call it that, of the piece. When did you and Jennifer [Kreisberg] and your other collaborators decide that this had to become something other than this one-time installation? For

example, I know you shot a video—I believe it was even during the tech run.

**MC:** Yes, we only had two hours for tech, and we brought in a camera and just let it roll all the way through tech, and all the way through the performances.

**PD:** So was that already with a mind toward the fact that the footage would become this short film that would tour across the continent?

**MC:** I was hoping it would, but because our time was so short anything could have happened during the rehearsal and performances. What ended up happening was that we had enough beautiful footage to cut together the performances, and also footage from our studio rehearsals in the artist loft downtown, and put that all together into the mix of the film. So then we cut that and it toured to at least sixteen film festivals across the Americas. After that, I was just left with the fact that there was still so much information based on my research that I could tell years of stories. So I decided that what I wanted to do was continue the process of creation around the Native Brotherhood materials, building what we had done into a bigger piece. This allowed me to take some stories further, and also develop stories I couldn't tell within the space of the original installation performance.

**PD:** At a certain point, did you call up Norman at PuSh? Or did he call you? How did the programming of that first Club PuSh show come about?

**MC:** We had been developing the full-length version of the show for about a year. And then I called up Norman and said, "Hey, guess what, I have a little show."

**PD:** Little!

**MC:** [Laughing] It was at that point that we started talking and he began to support the project—in its workshop phase.

**PD:** I know you don't generally worry about form—in your words, the story chooses the form. But at a certain point, the piece became proscenium-style, with live musicians. There were these stories being told in each song, but the whole piece has this kind of epic rock concert feel—fused with narrative storytelling, almost like a concept album played live. Was that always in your head?

**MC:** I had always envisioned something on a large scale. But my company [red diva projects] is really small. Even large companies aren't doing works this big. So then it became a question of: will this piece ever be seen, because will it ever be produced? And then there was the question of how can we create a theatrical form that is a musical driven by voice and take that in a new direction that is unhindered by the realities of theatrical staging?

**PD:** And obviously you wanted to preserve the work's multimedia aspects, including the projections, etc.

**MC:** Yes, that was inspired by the [Native Brotherhood] archives, and by the thousands of pictures I saw, which are extraordinary.

**PD:** You were workshoping it, and pitching it to Norman, and presumably knocking on a few other doors as well. I just have a question about whether or not that was easier as a result of its original Cultural Olympiad slot. Could you use that as a calling card? Did that mean something to people?

**MC:** I think it did mean something to people, but to be frank it's Aboriginal performers on stage, and more than one of them—in fact, quite a few of them. And it's not a Western musical. That's still a hard sell with most institutions these days. It's a hard sell just to get in the door, never mind asking if seventeen of your friends can come in. And can you give us resources and space? To be real about it, I didn't want to worry about these issues. What I needed was to collaborate with these artists and envision another way.

**PD:** In terms of the evolution of the piece, the extra research that you did, the creative team that you assembled, can you talk about some of the logistics of that? For example, in moving from eight

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performers to seventeen, how did that work? Did you just phone people up and say, "Hey, come with me"?

**MC:** [Laughing] Yeah, pretty much!

**PD:** But these people weren't just coming from BC—they were coming from across Canada and the Americas, and presumably they had pretty full schedules already. As a producer, how did you coordinate this ship?

**MC:** It is a big cruise ship, and it has a lot of moving parts. And the thing about working with musicians and singers, their livelihood depends on their ability to tour, and so it's a bit different from your standard theatrical production. We're not spending four weeks together in a rehearsal studio, doing a week of tech, and then doing our performances. That would be a nice rehearsal schedule! ... Their windows are shorter. And with musicians it's just a different process of creation—which is exciting, but it also has its own challenges. To scheme and strategize how to bring seventeen people together for ten days, or two weeks, it's a lot of chess play. You have to be very flexible and crafty.

**PD:** When it premiered in 2013 at Club PuSh, the full-length work felt huge. The space [at Performance Works] is relatively small, cabaret-style, designed for more intimate performances. But the scale of your show, and the epicness of the story you were telling, my reaction was: "One night! This is outrageous!" The next day did you call Norman again? When did that conversation begin, about it coming back?

**MC:** A few months afterwards. We had a really successful and muscular workshop of the piece. And so my next thought was, where do we go from here? How do we premiere the piece in a way that is integrated with the ongoing creation process and the goals towards that end? So we were already in a creation cycle plotting towards that. And then it was a question of deciding what that would take, and how could we raise this money, and face the challenges artistically. ... The workshop production [at Club PuSh]

was one of those miracles; it was learning sixteen songs in ten days, with over ten or twelve musicians and vocalists who had never played together before, in a basement rehearsal space, and having a multimedia department beside us, all within 800 square feet. We were very close and we worked extremely long hours, reworking songs and rewriting lyrics, and putting together the 3D images, and editing footage. It was electric. I think that the extraordinary gift was that the artists came and were wholly invested. No one is ever under the illusion that it's going to be easy, but it is still always a shock at how much work it takes to come together and to sync together as a unit. I don't believe that the workshop production was polished, but it had the guts and hopefully the vision that could propel it forward.

**PD:** So did you see those two years between 2013 and 2015 as that period to refine and polish the piece? Any specific adjustments that you made that you were conscious of after the workshop production—okay, I want to change this?

**MC:** There were a couple of songs that we didn't get to, because we ran out of time. There's a certain excitement and terror when you hear something for the first time, and you know it's extraordinary, and the performer knows it's extraordinary. To perform that in front of a live audience for the first time, when you've had so little time—there's a kind of crazy energy to that kind of creation. And then there's the aspect of going back and listening to something again and understanding what I felt in my body and mind when I heard it and sang it, and now I want to go back and craft it. Those things are huge in a process. It's like carving—you can bring out the details and the specifics to the creation and you understand what it is and how it should live so you can manipulate it

**PD:** Were you and Jennifer going back and forth about this in terms of crafting the lyrics and the music? How did that work?

**MC:** We would meet and talk through songs and I would say: "This is what the story is and this is what the lyrics represent and this is the sound I hear." For example, "1965"—I always loved those Stevie Wonder storytelling songs. So we would go back and forth, with me listening to the sound and then [Jennifer] would take it and we would go "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

**PD:** Were you doing that in the same city?

**MC:** Sometimes in the same city. We had a workshop in New York City, which was inspiring. Jamie Griffiths [the show's visual designer] came and met us there and we workshoped for six days in a really sexy loft. It's always been a really alive process and one where we're constantly going back over things and saying this has got it, this doesn't. It's always about the repetition involved in getting to a really clear vision of that song, or what that song represents, both visually and harmonically, musically. Those are the kinds of things we've tried to put together as layers to the story.

**PD:** This was evident with the participation of the elders in all three productions, but I was very conscious in the 2015 production—with the three generations of Nahanee women on stage—of the intergenerational dynamic of the piece. I'm assuming that was a key aspect of the story you wanted to tell—that this story of survivance was a generational story.

**MC:** Definitely. It was a conscious decision to include those levels, because those are very real things in our lives as artists and activists moving towards change.

**PD:** You have a way with timing. Your work always seems to open at propitious moments. In 2013, the premiere of the workshop version of *The Road Forward* coincided with a wave of Indigenous activism across the country as a result of the Idle No More movement. And you captured that in the live tweets that scrolled across the drum face on stage. In 2015, the remount happened in the midst of the growing chorus of voices across the country calling for a national inquiry on murdered and missing Aboriginal women. I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about the contemporary social relevance of this piece. You are recovering this history of social justice activism by the Native Brotherhood, as represented in this important newspaper, *The Native Voice*. But it seems to me, and you've talked a little bit about this already, that the work is so much about today as well. When you're making those adjustments for 2013 and 2015, how much are you incorporating what's in the air into the piece?

**MC:** I think as artists we're very conscious of what's going on today. And people involved in the piece are very active in different movements, whether they're marching on Burnaby Mountain or whether they're conscious of the last murdered and missing woman. That's just part of the process—what affects us today. It gets into the work, into our conversations, why we're even doing this song. There's no room for fatty ideas. We're here to say something. Idle No More was such a huge movement, and we were in the mix of that; we were a part of that in our minds and in our hearts. We took this to the stage—that as artists we were standing up and doing these songs together. To have the Twitter feed and see all these great reactions that joined us on stage created such a synergy of ideas and beliefs. We're very conscious that the murdered and missing women is an issue that has to be resolved—hopefully in our lifetime. This was more of a focus in the 2015 production because of the feeling that the momentum was coming to figure out a way to reclaim our humanity. ... This is what we are constantly thinking and feeling.

**PD:** What I love so much about your work, and this piece in particular, is that it's political but also formally audacious. You have



Latash Maurice Nahanee welcoming the audience to *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015.  
Photo by Odessa Shurquaya, courtesy of red diva projects





Cheri Maracle performing "My Girls," *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015.

Photo by Tim Matheson, courtesy of red diva projects

a message, but you also want to craft an amazing work of art—something beautifully composed, that works on its own terms. I like your phrase—there's no fat.

**MC:** I'm working with literally some of the best artists of my time. And I wanted to represent that—that there is great beauty in what we've created and who we are. There are also hard things that should be taken account of. Music is very much a transformer. It allows other cultures in and other beliefs that don't have to be your own to have a rhythm—so much so that you find yourself tapping your foot, and being moved by the combination of lyrics and voice. It seemed fitting for what we were trying to accomplish.

**PD:** Can you talk a little bit about the next fork in the road for *The Road Forward*?

**MC:** We're in development with the National Film Board on a feature-length musical doc called *The Road Forward* that looks at art and activism. It encompasses the music and the performers and brings voice to the topics we're currently engaged in. We're in pre-production right now [April 2015] and are hoping to go into production in June [of 2015].

**PD:** One final question, which brings us back to the Olympic framework of *The Road Forward's* genesis. It has to do with figuring out this idea of what is the Olympic legacy for Vancouver art and culture. Do you have some thoughts about that generally, and, more specifically, in relation to Indigenous cultural production? I myself see the ongoing life of *The Road Forward* as a pretty amazing cultural legacy, and I wonder if you agree.



Left to right: Wayne Lavallee, Cheri Maracle, Marie Clements, Katrina Dunn (Artistic Director of Touchstone Theatre), and Jennifer Kreisberg at a talkback following a performance of *The Road Forward*, by Marie Clements, PuSh Festival, Vancouver, February 2015.

Photo by Tim Matheson, courtesy of red diva projects

**MC:** I do think the piece is definitely a gift of that time. With the arts it's hard to conceive of what the tangible effect is because we don't have an ice rink, and we don't have a new swimming pool that we can rally around and say, "Hey, a new swimming pool was built for the Olympics and it's still here." We don't have that landmark bricks-and-mortar structure to say this is our legacy and we are inside it, using it. We have ourselves ... and the experience is still alive inside me, in creation. I definitely wouldn't have created this piece without the Olympics as a jumping-off point. As for bricks and mortar ... we're still looking for rehearsal space! Same struggle, different day.

## About the Authors

Marie Clements is an award-winning performer, writer, director, and producer who has worked in theatre, film, radio, television, and new media. She is the author of more than a dozen plays, including *The Age of Iron*, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, *Burning Vision*, *Copper Thunderbird*, and *The Edward Curtis Project*.

Peter Dickinson is a Professor at Simon Fraser University, with a joint appointment in the Department of English and the School for the Contemporary Arts. He is also Director of SFU's Institute for Performance Studies and an Associate Member of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies. His most recent books include *World Stages*, *Local Audiences: Essays on Performance, Place and Politics* (2010) and, as co-editor, *Women and Comedy: History, Theory, Practice* (2014).