WOMEN OF THE FUR TRADE

BY Frances Koncan
DIRECTED BY Yvette Nolan

GRADE RECOMMENDATION
9+

CONTENT ADVISORY
Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

SYNOPSIS
The time is eighteen hundred and something-something. The place, a fort somewhere along the banks of a Reddish River in Treaty One Territory. Outside the fortified walls, men in military uniforms and Métis sashes are vying for power over the vast territory. Inside, three women work, gossip and argue about Métis leader Louis Riel. Will he establish an independent nation for the Métis people? Can he protect them from the encroaching colonial powers? And is he really the hottest guy in the territory?

Winnipeg playwright, Frances Koncan’s Women of the Fur Trade brings to life the vibrant, (extra)ordinary women of our shared history, represented by three unforgettable female protagonists: Marie-Angélilque, a Métis Taurus, is such a Riel fangirl that she’s been wooing him with coquettish letters while Ojibwe Sagittarius, Eugenia harbours doubts about the rebellion. Meanwhile, pregnant British Virgo, Cecilia is more worried about her missing husband—not so much that she can’t pine for local heartthrob (and Irish Capricorn) Thomas Scott who’s secretly intercepting Marie-Angélilque’s letters to Riel.

Koncan’s rollicking satire rescues these pioneering women from their inaccurate historical depictions as passive, stay-at-home wives and mothers. The real women of the fur trade were active participants of a rapidly changing economy and culture. They cooked, grew food, made clothing and dressed and cured skins, skills that were vitally important to the survival of their families and communities.

Koncan’s play is more than a hilarious interrogation of “official” history as it is told in books and taught in classrooms. By weaving in contemporary slang and cultural references, Koncan reminds audiences that many historical Indigenous issues remain unresolved. It is also a moving testament to the power of female friendship. In a time of rapid change and upheaval, as men battle to redraw the lines on the map, these three women vow that, “no man, no land, and no government shall ever come between us.” Part rom-com, part Canadian Heritage Moment, pure comedy gold, Frances Koncan’s Women of the Fur Trade is an uproarious satire of survival, the male gaze and our shared cultural inheritance.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
- Global Competencies: Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
- Grade 9-12
  - The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
  - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies
  - Canadian and World Studies
  - English
- Grade 11-12
  - Social Sciences and Humanities

THEMES
- The Art of Resilience
- Collective Agency and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Activism
- Colonialism and the War on Indigenous Peoples
- Cultural Inheritance
- Friendship
- Historical Satire
- The History of the Fur Trade, Louis Riel and the Métis
- Language as Culture, Identity and Power
- The Power of Storytelling
- Rebellion and Resistance
- The Role of Humour in Navigating Racism, Trauma and Systemic Oppression
- Truth and Reconciliation
DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you already know about Louis Riel?
- What role do you think humour plays in exploring difficult issues such as colonialism, racism and discrimination?
- The story is purposefully anachronistic, incorporating current pop culture references and contemporary vernacular. In your opinion, why might the playwright have made this choice?
- If you were to reimagine a particular historical event from a different perspective, which event and perspective would you choose and why?

STUDY GUIDES

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD

BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS

STUDENT MATINÉES

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Tuesday, July 11th
- Friday, July 14th
- Wednesday, July 19th
- Thursday, July 20th
- Wednesday, July 26th
- Thursday, July 27th
- Friday, July 28th

WORKSHOPS & CHATS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

SOCIAL MEDIA

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