



**DANCE  
WEST  
NETWORK**

*connecting artists and  
communities in motion*

3rd Annual Re-Centering/Margins Creative Residency  
Culminating Residency Showing

**April 20, 2022 @ 7:30pm**

*co-presented with SFU Woodward's Cultural Programs*

PROGRAM

**JENNIFER AOKI**

*In the Woods*

Choreography & Dancer: Jennifer Aoki  
Composer & Musician: Cait Nishimura  
Costume Design: Laura Fukumoto  
Costume Construction Assistant: Caeley Boehm  
Creative Consultant: Shion Skye Carter  
Mentor: Mariko Tanabe  
Writer: Carolyn Nakagawa

This work is a window into a transformative journey of two Japanese Canadian artists collaborating remotely on Turtle Island as they deepen their relationships with nature, with each other, and with themselves. As settlers and guests on these lands, they reflect on the cultural significance and privilege to recreate outdoors in these spaces. The seeds of inspiration for this work are their experiences with forest bathing, also known as Shirin-Yoku in Japan; from these initial explorations and discoveries in the woods, the piece evolved into its current form.

As the artists immersed themselves in nature and processed their experiences together through dance and music, they encountered symbolism between natural elements and aspects of their shared ancestry: mushrooms on the forest floor as a symbol of interconnectedness, renewal, and regeneration; trees rooted in ancient earth representing the passing of time and complex history, including intergenerational connections and trauma. Layered within the creative process, Jennifer and Cait have also reclaimed aspects of their identity through their shared experiences, and have found belonging in the in-betweenness of the mixed-race community.

This iteration of the work acts as an invitation into the various realms of the forest, and ends with a moment of meditation during which audience members are encouraged to reflect on their own relationships with nature, community, and identity.

## **SOPHIE DOW**

### *parasol chapter x character q*

Choreography & Interpretation: Sophie Dow  
Text & Sound Design: Sophie Dow  
Mentors: Cole Alvis, Olivia C Davies  
Ancillary Companion Writer: Robyn Grant-Moran  
Contributing Mentors: PJ Prudat, Philip Geller, Julia Sasso  
Film Director & Editor: Vitantonio Spinelli  
Projections: Connie Oreamuno & Fezz Stenton  
Past Collaborators: Duan Parchment, Nic Szekely, Rebecca Trainor, Jaymee Turner

meet character q. Overtaken by passion, lust and desires from the fullness of a life just lived, q circles through a purgatory system. A journey steeped in metaphoric memoirs, identity, historical inklings - preparing for death of body and era - symbolizing individual experience and hinting of a larger continental genocide.

Steeped in metaphor, identity and historical inklings, this chapter activates reflection on how far one is willing to go in obtaining certain statuses, releasing sets of attributes and preparing for the death of a body and an era.

#### Special acknowledgements

Maarsii for the generous support for research, mentorship and work-in-progress offerings from:  
Nightwood Theatre - 2021 Ontario Arts Council Recommender Grant  
O'Dela Arts - Matriarchs Uprising Harvest Moon Showcase  
Raven Spirit Dance Collective Choreographers Residency Program 2021

## **NICK MIAMI BENZ**

### *Pluma*

Music: Jezebel by Sade  
Mentor: Sparkle Plenty  
Writer: Jeanette Kotowich

This is a piece with three separate dance works, and spoken word inspired by feathers:

### *Elephant*

Music: Ndidi Onukwulu - Maybe the Last Time

This piece is a prayer to prepare my body, my voice, my mind and the energy of the space inspired by Elephant spirits.

Fun fact: Pampas Grass was once planted as a secret signal to passers by that "swingers" live here.

### *Chameleon*

Music: Sade - Jezebel

This dance is focused on more of a traditional approach to Burlesque. Inspired by the chameleon and their transparent light refracting skin the movements are medicine in the face of a mental health crisis.

Fun fact: The orange robe is a maternity gown and the colour was chosen by a contentious vote.

*Hyacinth Macaw*

Music: Beyoncé - Find Your Way Back

More Joy less intellectualising dance. This piece looks to the big blue bird to celebrate life and the cultures that have built my dance vocabulary.

Fun Fact: Hyacinth Macaw is the largest flying parrot species.

Event hosts and moderators for the post-performance conversation:  
**ALYSSA AMARSHI, ANGELA COOPER**

*May 4 from 2pm-3:30pm*

*You are invited to join us for an online showing & conversation, free  
For details, please check: **dancewest.net***

**Re-Centering/Margins Creative Residency, 3rd Annual**

**APRIL 20th 2022**  
**7:30pm**

Photo by Scott Reid  
**Nick Miami Benz**

Photo by Thom Hooper  
**Sophie Dow**

Photo by Yvonne Cheu  
**Jennifer Aoki**

**CREATIVE RESIDENCY SHOWINGS**  
**3rd Annual Re-Centering / Margins**

**DANCE WEST NETWORK**  
CO-PRESENTED WITH **SFU WOODWARD'S CULTURAL PROGRAMS**  
Free Event. \$10 Donations Welcome Tickets at [dancewest.net](http://dancewest.net)

**DANCE WEST NETWORK**  
**SFU WOODWARD'S CULTURAL PROGRAMS**  
**BC TOURING COUNCIL**  
**BRITISH COLUMBIA ARTS COUNCIL**

*Re-Centering / Margins* Creative Residency increases opportunities and professional development for emerging dance artists of colour to create contemporary works with mentoring support.

This project also supports Dance West Network's mission by strengthening emerging contemporary dance artists in Vancouver for future engagements locally and provincially.  
[dancewest.net](http://dancewest.net)

### **Residency Support Team**

Co-Project Leads: Alyssa Amarshi, Angela Cooper  
Project Coordinator, Juolin Lee  
Stage Support: Erika Mitsuhashi  
Promotions: Debora Gordon  
Admin project support: Dawn Briscoe, Nicole Lamb  
Produced by Jane Gabriels, Ph.D., Executive Director

### **Thank you to funders**

RBC Foundation, City of Vancouver's Art, Culture and Community Services Department, BC Arts Council, and BC Touring Council.

### **Recent article with artist interviews:**

<https://www.createastir.ca/articles/dance-west-network-re-centering-margins>

### **Dance West Network: connecting artists & communities in motion**

The roots of Dance West Network (formerly Made in BC - Dance on Tour) connect BC through dance.

Our new name allows the work to reach even further by supporting our efforts to be more inclusive, to facilitate connections between communities and dance artists sharing vibrant practices and experience, and to create collaborations that work towards greater equity for historically excluded/equity seeking dance artists and audiences, offering opportunities for people from all over BC to learn about the arts, express themselves creatively and celebrate a shared humanity through dance. [dancwest.net](http://dancwest.net)

## **ARTIST BIOS**

North Vancouver-born **Jennifer Aoki** (she/her) is a settler of Japanese ancestry who is inspired by the infinite possibilities of human movement, and strives to build meaningful connections through her creative work. Her work celebrates the intersectionality of her identities and is influenced by her ongoing research into heritage and relationships with nature. Jennifer's choreography has been presented across Canada, as well as in Seattle, Amsterdam, and Berlin, including *Dancing on the Edge*, *Nah Drahn*, *12 Minutes Max*, *Vines Arts Festival*, and *Fringe Festivals*. She has had the privilege of working with innovative choreographers including Jenn Edwards, Tomoyo Yomada, Meredith Kalaman, *Body Narrative*



Collective, and Machinenois. She is Artistic Co-Director of Voirelia, and holds a degree in Dance from Simon Fraser University.

Photo Credit: Michelle Moore

Cait Nishimura (she/her) - Jennifer Aoki's musical collaborator - is a Japanese Canadian composer based in Waterloo, Ontario. Known for writing nature-inspired, programmatic music, Cait has established herself as a prominent voice in the concert band community. Her music has been presented at MusicFest Canada, The Midwest Clinic, and numerous other international conferences and festivals. Cait is passionate about empowering others through art, and strives to set a positive example for future generations of musicians through her creative work and her dedication to mental health awareness and environmentalism. She is an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre and holds degrees in music and education from the University of Toronto.

### **Nick Miami Benz**

**Nick Miami Benz** shapeshifter, storyteller, self. A dancer at heart with their practice centred on how Afro, Indigenous and Latinx cultures express themselves kinaesthetically. Liberation exists in fearless expression of one's self allowing storytelling to be medicine for the mind, body and community. Nick specializes in holistic exercise coaching, using Pilates, Gyrotonic(R) and Yamuna(R) Body Rolling.

Photo Credit: Kristine Cofsky



### **Sophie Dow**

Winnipeg-born **Sophie Dow** is a multidisciplinary creative, inspired by dance, music, collaboration and Métis- Assiniboine + settler roots. An avid adventurer, Sophie has a passion for busking, yoga and traveling on top of holding a degree in Dance Performance and Choreography. With a unique list of credits deeply impacting personal process and vocabulary, Sophie's had the great fortune of working with some of Turtle Island's wonderful dance innovators, including Chimera Dance Theatre, Kaeja d'Dance,

O.Dela Arts, Carol Anderson & Jeanette Kotowich.

Photo Credit: Raham Isador

## Hosts and Facilitators of post-perf conversation

### Co-Project Lead Bios:

**Alyssa Amarshi**- Having parents from Tanzania, and of Indo-Ismaili heritage, **Alyssa** has always been interested in diverse types of cultural expression, especially movement and intermodal art. Her passion for performing and expressing grew while she was working with Bollywood dance companies as a preteen. In high school, her friends from the West Indies exposed her to Dancehall and STEP (a form of percussive dance), both of which she continued to explore while completing her BA in Psychology at McGill University. After moving to Skwxwú7mesh (**Squamish**), Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (**Tsleil-Waututh**) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (**Musqueam**) lands (colonially known as Vancouver), she trained with *SOULDiers Dance Company* and *Ketch Di Vybz* where she further fortified her understanding in street dance and love of Dancehall. She has graced the stage with artists such as *A Tribe Called Red*, *Kimmortal*, and *Nanya Music*. She has also creatively directed, choreographed and performed in pieces for Vines Festival, Indian Summer Festival, and Vancouver International Children's Festival. Alyssa has also sat on panels for the City of Vancouver and the Reach Gallery. Her vision, through her collective "Her Tribal Roots" is to create more opportunities for artistic expression, rooted in symbiotic collaboration, compassion, and play.

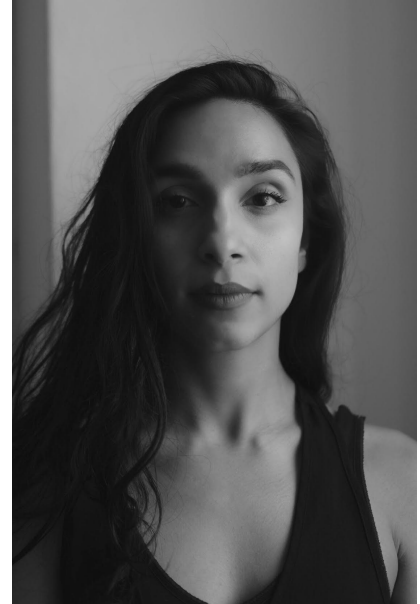


Photo Credit: Emmanuel Etti

**Angela Cooper (Poundmaker)** - I am a fourth-year student at Royal Roads, completing my Bachelor of Arts in Professional Communications. I am a working actor and performing artist. As an Indigenous student in the academic field, I value the opportunities Royal Roads has offered me to empower and strengthen my voice as an Indigenous woman in the communication field.

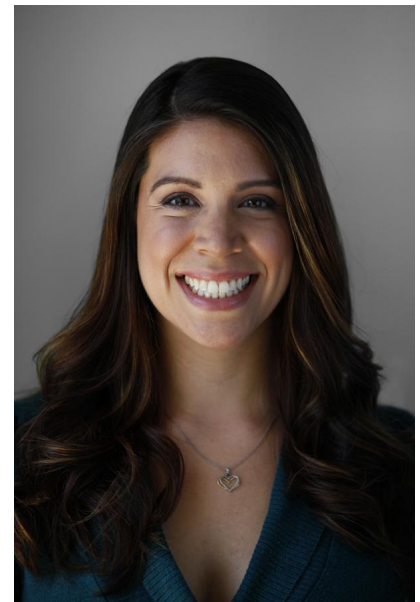
As an actor represented by Premier Talent Management, I value the support and recognition that my brand has given to Indigenous representation. As a minority, I work hard to create equity and diversity in places where BIPOC members do not feel seen, heard, or safe. I believe any opportunity granted me is an opportunity to shine light and support back to my community.

I value storytelling and authenticity. I believe that empathy is our greatest resource in places of work and play; and listening to understand is more valuable than listening to speak next.

My latest passion is building my intercultural communications. I value empowering holistic dialogue and interaction between cultures. As an Indigenous visitor on unceded Musqueam territory, I believe we are all Treaty people, and we will grow exponentially together when we call each other in compassion, integrity, and honor.

My hope is to recentre the margins and democratize the arts. Everybody create!

All My Relations,  
Angela Cooper



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[www.dancewest.net](http://www.dancewest.net)