



To our community,

Thunder Bay Theatre, Inc. is a year-round, non-profit theatre and performing arts organization committed to providing consistent, high-quality productions, educational opportunities, and additional arts and cultural events utilizing a professional company augmented with volunteer talent. The purpose of our organization as outlined in our bylaws in no particular order is: cultivating and educating young artists, with a focus on Michigan talent; pursuing professional standards and expectations; engaging the community; embracing creativity; and exploring, educating, and discussing topics of diversity and inclusion.

Today we want to talk about that fifth element of our purpose: **exploring, educating and discussing topics of diversity and inclusion.**

Art is an expression. When an artist puts a brush to canvas, that artist puts part of themselves into that piece. When an actor delivers a line on stage, they portray that character through themselves. Art is ultimately an expression of self. Put another way, art is someone's personal story. As a performing arts organization, we strive to always be more inclusive and diverse. It is the intention of Thunder Bay Theatre to highlight and include all types of people and stories. Storytelling is a very powerful tool when wielded properly, and at its core, theatre is storytelling.

Theatre has the power to tell these stories: stories of those who are different than us, stories of those who have been oppressed. At Thunder Bay Theatre, we work to use theatre as more than entertainment— but as a way to open a dialogue on these important topics through our mainstage and educational programming. With recent events, it is more important than ever to ask ourselves: are we fulfilling our purpose to explore, educate, and discuss topics of diversity and inclusion? How can we do better?

Some of the questions we are asking ourselves: How can we elevate the voices of people of color? How can we increase hiring of black artists, directors, designers, storytellers and performers? How can we increase our educational programming on these topics? How can we encourage continuous dialogue on these topics for people of all ages? At Thunder Bay Theatre, we pride ourselves on being a leader of change within our community. We are proud that many of our alumni and the artists that have worked on and off our stage share that commitment. With that comes an enormous responsibility. We acknowledge that our leadership, both staff and board, comes from a position of privilege and work in a community that is 97% white. We acknowledge that the work we have done has not been perfect. We are committed to continuing these conversations within our community, elevating voices of people of color and creating meaningful, thoughtful programming that engages with these topics of diversity, race, and privilege. We acknowledge that we can do better and we are committed to putting in the work to do so.

At our Board of Directors meeting next Tuesday, June 9th, 2020, we will begin the conversation about how we will take action at this time because we know that we have a responsibility to be a force of change. We need to do more than talk. We need to take real, concrete action to ensure diversity, inclusion and proper representation on our stage, to ensure that we are elevating and honoring the voices, experiences and stories of black people in a thoughtful and authentic way especially when we are uncomfortable. We know we have work to do. We see you. We hear you. We stand with you. Black voices matter. Black stories matter. Black lives matter.

In love and solidarity,
Artistic Director, Lucas Moquin & Thunder Bay Theatre Board of Directors