

The Dance Centre Podcast Episode 11: Jeanette Kotowich

SPEAKERS

Claire French, Jeanette Kotowich

Claire French

Hello, welcome to the Dance Centre podcast. I am your host Claire French, and I'm joining you from the traditional unseeded territories of the Musqueam. Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples also known as Vancouver, Canada. I'll be talking to dancers, choreographers and other members of the dance world here on the west coast to find out more about their creative work and practices and to discuss what it means to us to be dance professionals today. Thanks for joining us.

Claire French

I am here with Jeannette Kotowich, I am very much looking forward to this conversation, I hope with Jeanette we will talk about the many things that she's doing but we'll see what we can fit in. But for our audience, Jeanette is a multidisciplinary iskwêw independent dance artist, choreographer and professional Auntie of Nêhiyaw Métis and mix settler ancestry. Originally from treaty 4 territory, Saskatchewan she creates work that reflects the Métis cosmology, within the context of contemporary dance, Indigenous performance and Indigenous futurism fusing interdisciplinary collaboration decolonial practices and embodied research methodologies Jeanette's work references protocol, ritual relationship to the natural spirit world and ancestral knowledge. There is so much to talk about in there. And there is so much to find out about the wonderful Jeanette Kotowich so let's get started. Welcome, Jeanette. Welcome.

Jeanette Kotowich

Thank you.

Claire French

Let's start with the fundamental question. When, how and why did you start to dance? Today, as you want to tell us today?

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, I always think back to my childhood, and I grew up in a family of dance, and we were always putting on productions, me, and my siblings, we would make theatre pieces, make little dance pieces, we would do it at the cabin, we would do it in our basement. And we would charge admission to our parents to come and watch our shows that we would put on, you know, at a very young age, and I don't know, the admission would be a couple of rocks or whatever, you know, commerce we had also thread into our productions. So yeah, I was always, you know, of that mind and of that lens, and then just happened to be that, you know, my siblings also were in that was in that energy as well. So, we were yeah, we would put on productions. And then I think I started like formalized dance practice when I was about eight. And I actually started off with gymnastics at the age of like, four because my mother was a dancer, she came to dance a little bit late, whatever that means. But in her 20s, she started to take up dance, but she didn't want to be a parent that sort of like, forced her own interests on her children. So,

she thought, Okay, I'll put the kids in gymnastics. But I was actually a little bit too young for gymnastics at the age of four. And I've always had this thing where I fall asleep when I'm in cars. So, my mom would pick me up after school, and take me to gymnastics, and then she'd look in the backseat and I'd be passed out. So, she said, she thought like, what am I doing my kid, my kid needs rest. And so, so I didn't, I didn't do anything for a while there and then and then eventually came into doing dance. And I did you know the sort of studio-based dance practices. I did ballet, I grew up in a very structured ballet culture. We had a very disciplined instructor in Regina, Saskatchewan, where I grew up. And our instructors came from Brazil, so a quite old style of teaching, which we don't see too much of anymore. And so yeah, I did ballet, and then modern dance. And then that was my early early childhood and a lot of hours at the studio. I remember every weekend, you know, like in my, in my teens every weekend, I was at the studio every Saturday, every Sunday, body conditioning every Sunday morning. So, you know, it was it was a fully immersed experience in my childhood and also both my my, my closest siblings and age were also immersed in dance practices.

Claire French

So, at the same studio as you Yeah, they Yeah, yeah. I know, because I kind of, it's the same for me starting really young and being on the stage at like, three and four or five when it's too...it's kind of kind of too early. but then kind of also just the memories of that come in. Even now, you know.

I love the I love the idea of the rocks as kind of admission, because there's something about the pact, right? There's something about the contract that says, you know, you understand, we're going to give you an experience, and you are going to give us something that acknowledges that there's something about that trade and gifting and all of that stuff that's very early in that setup. I love that. So your training has probably changed, or maybe just, you know, kind of matured or kind of, you've become more discerning as you got older, but other key stages in your career, or maybe in your training or something that you'd like to talk about, like, maybe people that have influenced you, or, like types of dance or genres of dance that have shifted, when it shifted for you?

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, well, I, you know, after high school, I just was, I'd always done dance, so I didn't really know what else I was going to do with my life. So, I moved to Vancouver. And that's when I did the Simon Fraser four-year training degree program. And I still was, at that time still didn't feel that called to try to pursue dance professionally, because, you know, there's so many barriers, there's so many challenges, I was still struggling with my identity, I was still, I struggled a lot with this idea of academic dance practices, just not, you know, it just it wasn't fully for me. And so, a really sort of important part in my journey was attending the, when the Banff Centre reopened their Indigenous dance training in 2009, I attended a national Indigenous choreographers Summit, still, in my early 20s, I met all these amazing Indigenous choreographers from across Canada and also including our relatives from you know, down south and from Australia and New Zealand. So that opened up this whole world to me for I don't know, community dance practices, healing based arts, cultural practices, that I think that if I didn't find that, I probably wouldn't have pursued dance. And in many ways, I don't really even feel like I drove myself into a professional career, I feel like it just kind of happened. And, you know, you just keep taking one step in front of the other and then you know, and in these last couple years have been very transformative for my my practice so but the people in my life that have been supporting me and have been mentoring me, obviously, Michelle Olson, of Raven Spirit Dance, I got connected with her shortly after that, that

summit at Banff, maybe about a year after and then have been part of the company, Raven Spirit Dance, performing Michelle's work for the past, I don't know, 11 years or 12 years or something like that. So, you know, that those kinds of connections being you know, our arts practices and our life they run beside each other. So, there's been so many experiences, births, deaths, you know, I don't know, divorces, all the things, you know, that you that you are partial to another person's life...

Claire French

Even happenstance... Yeah, and like serendipitous kind of, you know, events to you know, like, happy accidents, you know, all of that is kind of, almost like being ready and open or being at a place in your professional life when you can, you know, see it as opportunity or see it as a learning, you know, experience or something like insight, I think.

Jeanette Kotowich

Absolutely, yeah. And then I just want to name a few other folks in my life. So, I actually went to university with Starr Muranko. So, she's also been somebody that I've been following for many, many years, even before Raven Spirit Dance, and she has always encouraged me around writing grants and taking the next step and even when I wasn't ready, would always be encouraging me. So, there's a lot of women in my life, like female mentors, there's really, you know, strong Indigenous dance community in British Columbia, in Vancouver, and mostly all of its being held by women, Margaret Grenier of Dancers of Damelahamid has been also, you know, such a force in my life and has taught me so, so much. Yeah, so many dance practices, you know, have been running through me and so many different perspectives. And then another major mentor in my life is Charles Koroneho. who is a Maori artist... Yeah. So those are some folks that I'd like to name today.

Claire French

Wonderful. Thank you so much. So do you think you could pinpoint when dance became your professional calling, like, would you say that it's like as a dancer, I feel like it's been happening for over a decade with Raven Spirit and with your Métis, you know, performance and all of those things as an independent dancer or dance artist. But I feel like as a like to say that dance is a professional calling for you now seems very much about integrating different, all interdisciplinary perspectives, but also this idea of like your identity as a person influencing your art making, and then that becoming your artistry. And so, I feel now there's a place where I think it would be very safe for you to be able to say that you are, you have a professional calling, and you are a professional dance artist, and you make dance art. Do you would you say that's fair? And would you say that there is a point where you could say, when that calling happened for your own artwork really?

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, for my own artwork, I would say about when I fully stepped into it about two and a half years ago, but there's been different stages along the way, right? Like, when I, for many years, I was doing both my dance contracts and also working in the service industry, so stepping away from the service industry because I had too much arts work and you know, my heart is more in the arts work. So, like that was that was a step in my career of you know, not having a day job and really making my income from Arts and but at that time, it was still mostly, you know, being a company dancer dancing with the three major Indigenous dance companies in Vancouver. Dancers of Damelahamid, Raven Spirit Dance,

and V'ni Dansi so that kept me very, very busy for many years. And then, actually, I think I made my first like independent work in 2015. And that's a piece that I actually still perform, that's my piece *Step In* where I perform and share my my Métis dance practice as a solo. And that piece, yeah, it's still going. And it's still it's still very relevant. I actually performed it a week ago at the Toche in our Métis homelands, a big Métis festival. But these last two, two and a half years have been very transformative. And I feel like COVID also sort of accelerated this push in my life to You know, really dig into my arts practice and my perspectives and, you know, it's I needed to really return to my own body, my own perspectives, my own histories, my own land, because I've had so many different voices in my life that, you know, I, I think that incubation time of our period of isolation during COVID really helped me to, you know, look inside myself, and I think I was always going on that journey anyways, but I think it just kind of, like heightened the need to do that. Because, you know, we weren't gathering anymore, we weren't doing group work anymore. So, so it's been a huge gift actually, in my life, this, you know, this, this period of isolation that we've all been through, and, and also just the experience of how, how we relate to each other as humans. You know, having all experienced something so similar, that, yeah, it's just, it's been so transformative. I can't even say.

Claire French

Yeah, I think there's something about, you know, kind of one giving themselves permission, like, like to give yourself permission in that time, when you have that to, to go there. You know, and I think it has to be kind of on the precipice, or has, you have to be kind of, like, okay, now's the time, you know, you have to get to know what it is you're trying to reflect upon, to be able to do anything, so yeah.

Jeanette Kotowich

Totally. And I generated so so much. And one of the things that I really, I think also helped was like, I worked a lot in the unrefined and sharing unrefined process, like, you know, turnarounds were like, quite quick, because everyone was always like, scrambling, right, like, oh, I have this money. And then there's this opportunity. And like, can you do it online? And you're just like, wow, I've never done it. But let's try it. No, I think that that also really helped is, you know, our work is so sacred, but not always to be that precious about the process to just share the share the steps, you know, whatever's happening for you. So, there's a beautiful archive in that way to have the journey, you know, through COVID and all the new skills.

Claire French

Yeah, I was gonna say, I think you were teaching me a few things about Instagram at one point, we just sat in the theater auditorium. Like the distancing and yeah, yeah, I seem to remember that. Okay, this is really great. But I feel like then, obviously COVID has been a really big it's had a big impact on how you've been able to kind of tap into your artistry and, and also kind of connect to processes and approaches that you've learned along the way maybe even inherited, but that you've also kind of kind of starting to prioritize ways of working for yourself. And I wonder what the biggest, or what are the greatest challenges that you've found, you've talked about some of them in a way, but now, yet, maybe not quite now, because I think you're in a really great place. And challenges are maybe not there for you at the moment. But you have overcome some. And so, you know, on the way, what would you say have been the greatest challenges?

Jeanette Kotowich

I think, you know, it the thread from what I was just saying before, yeah, stepping, making space for myself, and stepping into that, because I've been for so many years in the service of other people's vision, other people's arts practice, and that is so fulfilling. And such an important part of, you know, our community, any kind of community is to give back, and but now, like, it's like, I can't really go back. Because now I also have the fulfillment and satisfaction of what it feels like to be a leader in my own way, and to be sharing my artistic voice, which is also so fulfilling, and I'm still in a, you know, a fresh stage of what that feels like, you know, but I guess it's been, my greatest challenge, I think, is to step into the vulnerability of, you know, my own arts practice of sharing my arts practice, because you know, how it is, it's it is vulnerable.

Claire French

Yeah. And also stepping into the vulnerability of leading.

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, leading.

Claire French

You know, leading, I mean, leadership is a vulnerable, it's a vulnerable place to be to put oneself. And could talk maybe a little bit about that, like, challenges, partnership, and challenges of shared practice? Because you and I have had conversations around this a little bit, and we've only just started, but do you see them as challenges? I do right now, in a beautiful way, in a beautiful way. I feel like they are the kind of challenges I want, you know, in my life, I want to feel the, I want to feel the questions of it and I want to feel, and I want to feel the stuckness I want to feel how I can't quite get to those things I'm trying to get to like, what what's that space that feels challenging, but in a good way? And productive way?

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, it's like the curiosity, right? Why are you coming back? Why you keep coming back to the questions you're asking. And, you know, I've been I've been phrasing my work lately as creative research. So that's my way of positioning my work as, as as a work in progress, basically, you know, is that it is a continual thing, just like our identity is constantly shifting and evolving and our experiences, so so is our practice. And I think the challenge is time, I'm not always very patient, I want to get there, you know, and artistic relationships and leadership and, you know, sharing perspectives and co-shared spaces, it takes time to establish a language, trust, communication, and there's so many different styles of how we relate to each other. And so, I would say, I'm still quite fresh at it, but I'm just, I'm always looking for my own personal healing, I'm always looking for to put us as humans first, and then artists so that people are cared for in their basic needs. And then, you know, I really feel like we can't be good artists, unless if we're, well, humans, unless we're well in our lives, you know. And that's a process all the time, that's, you know, we're not always, we're not always, you can always show up to the circle or the studio or the space and feel all put together. But then that's also part of it is to give space to our fractures and give space to you know, our ways that we're disconnected and trying to search for that connection. And so those continue to be my curiosities, and a lot of how I try to work with that as

intuition. You know, what does the group need? What do I need, you know, if it is we need to grab a coffee before we start, like, that's totally cool. So, I don't know if that question, but,

Claire French

Well, again, it's more like, like you say, it's more about kind of a conversation around creativity and around being artists and around, you know, and being adaptive, even in this conversation to the fact that, you know, we're not holding each other to the things we're saying as a truth necessarily, you know, that there'll be different challenges at different times. And the, the feelings are kind of fleeting, because something happens that can ground you in a moment and then unground you, unground that, uproot you in a moment and so I think there's something just aren't being able to embrace that and, you know, as a human artist, like, not? Yeah,

Jeanette Kotowich

I think it's also so beautiful that people that come into our lives, right, like I've been, as you know, like, from our time, the last our time together last, you know, six months or whatever is like inviting other people in and, and taking a chance to because you know, like, not every person in your community is going to be a deep connection. Right. But but, you know, it's I do also want to invite people into my development and my growth and my learning and my experience. So, you know, I have been in a process to of inviting other folks that I have not been in connection with, you know, in, because I've been doing all this other work. Yeah, the last decade, right. But now I'm in the process of finding different ally ships. And just also, you know, wanting to have shared practice as well with just artists that I feel drawn to the way that they're working. And that you know that there's is a language and trust.

Claire French

Yeah, I'd love to talk more about the work and that's leading up to that you've been doing recently your own work, but I just want to go back to this idea of the challenge of time, because I have a burning question for you around your time now, and how busy you are touring currently, so maybe you could talk about the projects, you're literally, you know, between shows right now. And then your time with Raven Spirit, which I know is always maturing and that relationship is very special and extremely rich, and constantly growing. And then your own work. And that's taking off as a leader of your own work, not just your solo work, but also your group work. And that to me sets off and I have the same thing, like time becomes a challenge, just because everything demands time. But there's not...and so you have to shift your priorities. But it doesn't mean you're choosing one, one's more important than the other.

Jeanette Kotowich

Time and capacity, right? So, it's like, there's only so many hours in a day. And as, as the demands get more and more great. As I continue to do my own work, as the there seems to be more demand. It's like, I'm still just one person, I still only have the same capacity, I only have so much capacity. Right. So that is definitely a challenge. And I've been bumping up against that for the last year for sure. So, you know, there's there's ways to sort of work towards offsetting that, but it's hard. It's hard. You know,

Claire French

I think that there's something really beautiful about you being able to fit it all in and not abandoning, you know, kind of not abandoning one for the other there's a kind of...

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, definitely trying. Yeah, and trying to stay well, right. That's the thing is I try to stay well, because I want to also, you know, be living a good life to not just only devoted to practice, but it is vocational, like it's it's so intertwined. Like it's so intertwined. So, I'll let you know what I'm up to right now. I am on tour with a play written by Tai Amy Grauman. Called, *You Used to Call Me Marie*. And it's been produced by Savage Society. And right now, we're on a month long, or maybe almost a five week-long tour in the prairies. So today I'm in Smoky Lake, Alberta, which is very close to old settlement called Métis Crossing. So, we have three shows there, the last couple of nights. And before this, we were at Batoche, which I already mentioned, which is a huge Métis Festival, which also has a lot of history there, which is a location where the Battle of Batoche and there was the yeah, anyways, it's it... There's lots of history there. I'm not the best historian. But it's a monumental place for the Métis resistance and the early, you know, government that was being established. And so, we were there last week. And it was actually the 50th anniversary, I guess, of the Batoche, back to Batoche days. And my family was able to join, and it was a huge, I don't know, just amazing experience amazing festival and I used to go there as a as a girl, we went, we went, we would go and camp and so it was really awesome to be back. And obviously the festival hadn't been happening the last two years. So, there was a really great turnout. And I had friends there from Toronto. I don't know it's so fascinating Métis folks, because our history has been, we've been disenfranchised, right like for so so many years. So, there's such an amazing spread of where meet Métis people are all across, you know, Turtle Island, really. So, it was a beautiful experience to be there. And yeah, so that's that's what I'm up to right now. I'm on tour. And it's great to be also on this land, you know, the skies, and I've just been having, I have never felt like I wanted to move home to Saskatchewan. But now, you know, I'm getting into, edging towards, you know, my late 30s. And I'm like, oh, well, maybe, maybe I would want to have a quieter existence at some point.

Claire French

And it's a shift, right? It's a shift. It's a shift of perspective. And it's an opening up to a, and it becomes an it's different inspiration to like, as a human being, like, like you were saying about the wellness and about, you know, what is it? What is it you need? What is it you need? It's so beautiful. It's lovely, because it's like, hypnotic, like, kind of, you know, and it's and it's in your world, and when do we get the opportunity to, you know, have a conversation that goes, you know, can go there? We don't.

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, it's like, present, past and then like future because I know that's where we're going to inch up towards. It's like, you know, what's next for me? And then what's, what's next? So

Claire French

yeah, and you've got this kind of marker in your brain about alright, yes, I'm talking about this. You know, we've gone back, but there's no reason why we can't go back to go forward. We talked about that all the time. It would. That's what we do. So

Jeanette Kotowich

So maybe I'll share I'll share about KWE maybe.

Claire French

Please. Yeah, yeah. And then we'll move on to the one that I wish I could pronounce but I can't pronounce I keep trying. Kisis... Kisiskâciwan. I don't think I'll say that. Right.

Jeanette Kotowich

So in Nehiyaw, and Cree, Ks are pronounced like G's, so it's Kisiskâciwan, which is kind of like Saskatchewan. Kisiskâciwan? Yes, I guess Kisiskâciwan? Yeah, it's tricky, even for me. Because

Claire French

I see. Yeah, okay. Well, we'll get we'll get there. Yeah, what am I saying KWE right. Okay, let's talk about KWE

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah. So that's been, I guess, talking about the shifts in my practice. And, you know, that's been that's been the piece that I've been learning about leadership and ensemble work and directing other artists. So, the that work has come about quite quickly. And it's, you know, been quite a force it. I started working on that piece last August, so just about a year ago, and I had some, oh we were gonna talk about Raven Spirit, too so don't let me forget. We'll go back to the will go back to Raven Spirit. Yeah. So, I had a commission by the National Art Centre, and I had a little residency, summer residency with them. And so that's how quickly as an ensemble started in the development, and then shortly after that, I had the idea for KWE in about February of last year, and then I did some research as a solo artist. And then I decided, you know what, like, the next step for me creatively would be to try ensemble work. And so, I wrote a grant around my ideas. And then I got this National Art Centre commission. And so, and then shortly after I found out that I received my funding, and so I had had an invite from the Dance Centre to be involved in Dance In Vancouver, I was so fortunate because I had like, basically a two week long theatre residency, because the because Dance In Vancouver was going to be digital that year, last year in 2021. And so, there wasn't the usual programming, you know, and it's usually more festival style, where you get half a day or whatever to tech. So, I was so fortunate to have that, and I shared a workshop development with what I call the digital offering of a live stream. And if you've been following my practices, last couple years, I've been working and exploring and experimenting with dance for film, it's very much, you know, an intuitive process. I don't really have any technical training or anything. But what was great about that is I did I just experimented, and I just explored and I, I had, you know, a whole camera set up and operators and I looked at the cameras as part of the choreography. And so, it was really amazing experience was so hoppy and felt so satisfied with the outcome. And then the next step to KWE was presenting it live. So that was a process after, you know, sharing live, live stream. And then I had about four or five months to sort of let it simmer and regroup and then performed a live work in February of this year 2022 at Matriarchs Uprising, also at the Dance Centre. So that's, I mean, I can't go back now that it's been performed live like it's like, oh, gosh, like, I love the live stream. But like, I watched the live stream after we had shared the live performance and I was just like, oh my goodness, we've developed so far past that. So, and now that piece pieces resting a little bit

again, I do wanna continue... I looked at the the time that I worked on that, I think it was, for both experiences in in its entirety I worked 10 weeks. Like, creatively in studio 10 weeks, obviously, there's so much work that goes outside of it. But you know, as a dance maker like that is a really fast turnaround. So that's why I say came with such force. Like, it just, it's just, it's just come so quickly. And also, I think, what's been inspiring to me is working with other artists, because we all put our heads together, right? We all that energy of the collective really has helped to, you know, help it be so quickly, I don't know, in such a way that it's been so quickly shared. And yeah,

Claire French

it's also the intensity, but the level of experience of your dancers and you and the people coming into the space, like, and so, you know, the content is already extremely rich, you know, in what you're working with, so the questions can be rich, you know, and that speeds up the process and as in a strange way, like, but you had two, you have two products, you know, I don't like that word, but you have two products from that process. And for creative research, that's, I mean, absolutely amazing. Like to have both those full, you know, experiences, presentations,

Jeanette Kotowich

Then you can be critical too right about your practice and what, what, where I want to direct it next. So, I will be I will be wanting to work on that piece again, next year, next year as creative research. So

Claire French

yeah, well, I mean, it was a privilege for me to just come in, you know, a couple of times and be part of that, just like it was for you to come into, you know, my kind of creative research. Yeah. For a little minute. So that feels really special. I do just want to say, I think we can still access that live stream though.

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, I have my Vimeo, I think it's, it's on my Vimeo too. And if, okay, if anyone does want to witness it, they can just reach out to me or to The Dance Centre

Claire French

And we can find it for you. Yeah, yeah, I think you'd be great. Yes, it was. It was so fun. I felt like it was research, but it was very, it was it was respectful, you know, in terms of how it was, you know, presenting something to the audience. So, thank you for that. And all of your collaborators. Great.

Jeanette Kotowich

Oh, I'll just I'll just speak about Raven Spirit. So right now, I'm in artistic residency at Raven Spirit, and I have been for this whole year. And it's the first time that Raven Spirit has ever given out resources for an artistic residency. So, I'm sort of their inaugural, like, let's try out this pilot of what it means to support an artist. So, I'm so so grateful. It's it has, you know, relieved some of the pressure of what were the challenges of time and capacity and demand, just to have some real consistent resources, you know, and when I remember when, I think maybe it was Starr that told me that her and Michelle had been chatting and that they wanted to offer me this and I kind of got freaked out right away. I was like, no, like, I don't, I don't, I don't want to I'm like, I'm tired. I don't have time for like to do anything else. And

then then they're like, no, no, you don't have to do anything. We just want to support you. And that's it. You don't have to like do anything. Anything more than what you're already doing.

Claire French

It's because of what you're doing. Yeah, it's not Yeah. But yeah, right away. No, don't give me extra work. Don't give me extra things to do. You know, like, don't give me extra support. What? Okay, yes, thank you. That thought process I can just imagine you doing that.

Jeanette Kotowich

So that's the next step though with Raven Spirit is you know, for so many years I've been a company dancer, I've been working on Michelle's works primarily working with her, working beside her and you know, and then and this next phase has been them supporting my work. And, you know, it's been, we've been on so many journeys, as I said, with each other and so I feel I've always felt like I've received so many opportunities from Raven Spirit and, and to now be supported in my own practice feels very healthy and, and again, like back with this thought of time, these cycles, and, you know, now now kind of Michelle, Michelle is doing another journey in her life. She's, you know, you know, in school and getting your masters and so there's, you know, there's also a need in in what their demands and capacity are for, for emerging voices. And, you know, I would say I'm, I'm also established, but I'm emerging in my, in my, in my experience of direction,

Claire French

And we're all emerging in something, right? If we're, if we're looking for new opportunity, then we're emerging in something. And if we're not, then we're doing the same thing we've always done. And I wonder how much we can benefit from that. And the world can benefit from that. But But I think there is a, also what's beautiful about this as the evolution of an organization, and the, you being part of that process, and you actually being able to support their evolution, because you have something to offer them in order to support that process. You know, like, Yeah, that's great. It's lovely, that build of trust, and how that trust can actually expand possibility is beautiful. I think it's a beautiful case study for that. Yeah. Yeah.

Jeanette Kotowich

And the relationship is so reciprocal, right? It's so dynamic and reciprocal, like the ways that you know, the ways that we are supporting each other. Yeah.

Claire French

That's amazing. So, what's now we've talked about a little bit, I think there was a bit more with your solo. Yeah. And maybe we can talk about, I'd love to talk about that, after the listeners to know about that. And then what's next? I think there, it's, well, I guess we can all kind of.

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah, it's all kind of the same question. So, I have a very full fall planned for myself. And, you know, as I'm here on tour, I'm still planning my own tour. So, I yeah, and it just keeps getting more and more full. So, my solo work that we were speaking about, Kisiskâciwan is going to be premiering in multiple cities. And I'll be kicking off sort of sharing this work, which is a piece that I've been developing over many

years, it, it's sort of this testament to how busy I've been, I think, because, you know, I probably started sort of like formally digging into this piece in, oh, I don't even want to say what year but it's been a number of years. But because I was always so busy with other people's practices, I could only slot in two weeks here and there. And, you know, so that's sort of why it's taken, taken such a long journey. But I'm actually so grateful that I have taken this amount of time with this work, because having had the experience with KWE and directing other artists. Now I'm using all the tools that I've developed to direct myself and I also feel like this work has needed, it's needed me to mature in a way I think, if I would have performed it and shared it three years ago, or like I was supposed to premiere just before COVID or like during COVID. And so that obviously didn't happen. But my, I think it would have been a very different piece if I shared it two, three years ago, then what it will be now and I'm feel very comfortable with, you know, the expression that it's that it is now and how it's sitting in my body and how it's sitting in my journey, that I feel like it's been waiting for me to mature to get to this place of maturity, artistic maturity, or like personal maturity, to share to share, I think what what the piece wants to be a fully realized work. So, but yeah, I'm kicking off at Tanzmesse in Germany, I'll be doing an open studio showing for the Arts Market there. So that's obviously a huge opportunity for me, you know, that'll be huge international exposure. And I feel so grateful to have been included in you know, how dance will be represented from so called Canada. And so that'll be the first thing that I'm doing. So that's late August. Well, it's right on the bridge to like the last day of August and the first four days of September. So So right after this tour, I'll be back in Vancouver and getting prepared for that.

Claire French

Heading to Dresden, right or Dusseldorf, going to Tanzmesse and Dusseldorf with, with...so The Dance Center is taking a group of people over, and then more people are represented on the digital on a digital stream, too. So, it's wonderful that there are a few of you able to go over and do present live. I think that's great. So yeah, well, yeah, fantastic, and great.

Jeanette Kotowich

I just don't even know I've never done anything like this. So, I'm just keeping an open mind and an open heart and I'm just gonna go you know, and just share who I am. And just try to you know, just be exactly who I am. And, and

Claire French

That's it and that's so fortunate, and they're so fortunate that you're gonna do that and they're gonna meet you so and then where's next?

Jeanette Kotowich

So then after that, I come back to Vancouver and that's where I'm gonna have my official premiere have been working towards this, you know, premiere with The Dance Centre for quite a while and extended residency at the Dance Centre just because of COVID. So, I'll premiere and the Fars theatre. I'm going to do two shows.

Claire French

So that will be on September 30. And October 1st?

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah. And then I'll just say right now that I'm going to have a little party after on October 1, you're going to have a little social and so everyone that comes to see the show is invited because that's also a very important part to my practices, social dance and you know the freedom that we get from dancing on how our bodies want to dance to, you know, music that we love.

Claire French

That's how the other piece started the group piece started with that sense. Yeah. Did you end with it as well, on any of the nights? Did you continue into the the audience with KWE? Yeah, at the end of the any of the evening shows did you?

Jeanette Kotowich

No, it was still to COVID times

Claire French

Yeah, yes.

Jeanette Kotowich

The restrictions just got lifted the day before, like, because I had had because you know, what's been up and down with if we don't have restrictions now, but we I had a limited capacity of like, I think 40 or 50. And then just the day before it had lifted, so it was still COVID times

Claire French

Well, that's nice. We get to dance with you. This next one as well. Yeah.

Jeanette Kotowich

So that will be my Vancouver premiere. And then after, like a week later, I'm heading to Edmonton, and I'll be sharing the work with Bryan Webb's Dance Company. And then I go to Montreal to Tangente and it'll be have a four four show there. I'm on a mixed bill. So that's I think, November, November 3, fourth, fifth and sixth. So, four shows there. And November 4, my birthday, so I'll be dancing. Yay. And then I just found out that I'll also be sharing the work at Weesageechak festival right after that in Toronto for native earth so I've got a four city tour happening.

Claire French

Oh, that's wonderful. That's so great. Yeah, congratulations on that. It's from what I've seen...I love the humor in it, as well as the there is a wisdom. There's a wisdom in it. And there's a space, wisdom, and humor. Like you've got it all. Colour and texture. Yeah, you've got it all in there. Yeah.

Jeanette Kotowich

And not many people have seen what I've been up to. So, you're you're...you've been the invited

Claire French

That's all I'm saying, but I but yeah, but I'm sure you're still working on it. And you're working with your collaborators on all of those things. And I you know, look forward to its evolution. Its evolution. So, we

did get to Raven Spirit, didn't we? We did talk about what you had wanted to talk about with Raven Spirit. That's lovely and have you been back to Banff? Have you have you had the opportunity to go back to Banff? Have you gone back and had an Indigenous thing again?

Jeanette Kotowich

No, no, I haven't gone for the residency. I have gone for other residencies with I think I've been probably there twice, at least with the Dancers of Damelhamid, you know, working on developing work in the theaters there. I would like to go for KWE. Yeah. That's my my vision would be to spend a couple of weeks there with the with all my collaborators and just incubate and marinate. So that's that's my goal for that. But I haven't been back to the residency program because I'm always touring in the summer.

Claire French

Yeah, well, I was thinking as well. It won't be long before you may be invited to lead on that. Yes. Yes. You know, that's coming down the pipeline, right? Because that's where you auditioned. Shouldn't say pipeline. That's that. That was controversial. Controversial choice of words right there. But, but it is, you know, on the trajectory for you. Yeah. You know, potentially. Would you like to just mention your collaborators for the for the solo? I have some here.

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah. So, Deanna Peters I've been working with for many years. She's also been a mentor and, you know, artistic confidant in my life and offers me such amazing guidance. So, she's, she's my creative producer, were co-producing the work essentially, I felt pretty, you know, I felt pretty strong that with this, like, I don't know, I feel like this is going to be my signature, you know, solo work that I wanted to self-produce. So yeah, Deanna is my creative producers, she helps in so many ways and also is supporting me as artistic eyes. So, it's such an integrated experience, how we work together, you know, if we're talking about website, if we're talking about press material, if we're talking about talkbacks or, you know, whatever, it's just so integrated. So there's many roles that she's been supporting me with over the years and as we inch closer to the fall, we'll be will be a lot more in contact and connection. And then James Proudfoot is going to do my lighting we have not worked together before, so I'm really excited to work with James and yeah, obviously he's you know, the heavy hitter for lighting in Vancouver, and I'm just so excited because I you know, you know, me I like color and, you know, intensity and all that. So, I'm very excited to work with James

Claire French

And concept, like conceptual stuff, I think. Yeah, yeah.

Jeanette Kotowich

Yeah. Really, really into that together. I'm excited by that. And then and then I have, you know, sound folks that I've been working with over the years. Wayne Lavallee, who we haven't been working together the last few years, but we'll touch base here but he he's my sound design has already been, is quite evolved because it's up until this point have mostly been working with sound and dance. So Wayne Lavallee's my sound designer, and then my good colleague and friend who's here on the tour with me, Kathleen Nesbitt, who's a fiddle player and singer songwriter has produced some tracks that

are embedded in the sound design. And then I've been working with Brady Marks as a media consultant. And I don't know where things are going still yet with the media, but we're gonna have some chats and some visits together. And just even if media doesn't make it into the work, I still want to discuss the concept of it.

Claire French

Yeah, I think that's what's so great. And I think that's what's that's the integration that you were talking about. And also, this, the conversations, right, so regardless of whether or not that art form makes it into the final piece, there's something about being able to have those conversations at a certain level, which is going to and just informs the work and your process and the practice itself, that kind of with you, you know, they'll be with you when you perform

Jeanette Kotowich

Definitely. And then that sort of full circle for like, this whole conversation is like the time that it takes for artistic relationships like to not only be valuing the product, so like, anytime with Brady or any collaborator is very meaningful, even if it doesn't result in some product that audience sees, you know.

Claire French

Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Jeanette, this is great, thank you with our kind of focus on time. And the fact that you're going off to another city to a town to perform right now, I will just say, thanks so much. It's so interesting to start, we'll probably be talking again, I'm sure. Yes. Many, many other things we could talk about that. Thank you for taking the time with us. Bye for now. Okay,

Jeanette Kotowich

And thank you, Claire. enjoyed that. Okay, take care. Bye bye.

Claire French

Thank you so much for listening. We would love for you to subscribe, rate and review wherever you get your podcasts as this will help other listeners find us and help us to grow our dance audience. We'll be back next month. In the meantime, you can follow us on Facebook at The Dance Centre, Twitter at dancentre and Instagram at thedancentrebc. And if you'd like to support our work, please consider making a donation. Just go to our website at thedancentre.ca where you'll find extensive information about our upcoming programs and events. The music for the Dance Center podcast was composed by James B. Maxwell, always a pleasure to connect with you through dance. Until next time.