

**redsky**  
Sandra Laronde, Artistic Director



# the GREAT MOUNTAIN

## STUDY GUIDE

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# LIVE THEATRE IS AN ACTIVE EXPERIENCE!

## THEATRE IS A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE:

Actors are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the theatre. However, please be considerate audience members. Talking, whispering and excessive movement during a live performance is distracting for the actors and disruptive for other audience members.



## ENHANCE YOUR VISIT:

Encourage your students to look at different aspects of the production. Before the show, identify tasks for your class. Have one group of students focus on the set, another listening for the music and sound effects, a third watching the lighting and a fourth, the costumes. Compare notes after the show about what they observed. Your students will be more informed and they'll be surprised by how much they noticed. Ask them to prepare one question to ask the actors after the show during the Q&A. Brainstorm with them about possible topics to get the most out of the experience!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE STUDY GUIDE .....	3
THEMATIC OVERVIEW	
STRANDS AND CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS .....	3
THE COMPANY.....	3
THE CAST	
CREATIVE TEAM	
SYNOPSIS .....	3
GLOSSARY .....	4
NOTE FROM RED SKY'S FOUNDER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SANDRA LARONDE .....	4
INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT, TRACEY POWER .....	4
UNITS OF STUDY .....	5
CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS	
PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS.....	5
PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES .....	5-6
ACTIVITY #1: MYSTERY LEADER	
ACTIVITY #2: GROUPTHINK IN ACTION	
CULMINATING ACTIVITY: CHANGE THE CHANT	
POST-SHOW QUESTIONS.....	6
POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES.....	6-8
ACTIVITY #1: TO CHANGE OR NOT TO CHANGE?	
ACTIVITY #2: TABLEAUX - SCULPTING CHANGE	
CULMINATING ACTIVITY: PLANNING CHANGE	
REVIEWING A PLAY .....	8
JON KAPLAN'S INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT REVIEWERS	
APPENDIX A.....	8
CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE TABLEAUX	
APPENDIX B.....	9
OUR YOUTH ACTION PLAN	
APPENDIX C.....	10
THE CYCLE OF CHANGE	
SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	11
RESOURCES .....	11
WATER-SAVING TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	

## THE STUDY GUIDE

### THEMATIC OVERVIEW

Inspired by the Northern Plains story of *Jumping Mouse*, this action-packed play focuses on young people's capacity to address current pressing environmental issues. The main character, Nuna, has inherited the ability to hear the "voices" of nature. In response to the cries of the Great Mountain, Nuna must summon the power to heal the grieving environment in order to change her world.

As part of our 2011/12 season's focus on the power of young people, *The Great Mountain* invites young audiences to recognize their own capacity to make a difference to the future of our planet. Too often, youth feel unable to address contemporary environmental concerns, because the process of inciting change can be so overwhelmingly daunting. Truly, it takes a great amount of confidence and drive to break patterns that are deeply entrenched in society.

This guide aims to promote both a reflective and a practical response to the central issues and questions in the play. The suggested units of study encourage young people to recognize and consider their own potential as agents of change. The pre-show unit focuses on breaking established patterns, particularly by examining the influence of dominant leaders and groups. The post-show unit asks students to think about the process of change in their own community and culminates in a group action plan, with the purpose of ensuring the positive future of a local site. It is hoped that, by working through these activities and by attending *The Great Mountain*, students may better appreciate their own potential to positively affect the world.

## STRANDS AND CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: Social Studies, Environmental Education



CHARACTER EDUCATION CONNECTIONS: Perseverance, Responsibility, Co-operation



THEMES: Respect for Nature, Courage, Physical Storytelling

## THE COMPANY

### Created and Produced by Red Sky Performance

Renowned for its artistry and innovation, Red Sky Performance is Canada's leading company of world Indigenous performance in dance, theatre and music. This award-winning Toronto-based company was founded by Artistic Director Sandra Laronde in 2000. Red Sky creates, produces and tours original work for adult and family audiences on local, national and international stages. Since its inception, Red Sky has captured and ignited the imagination of close to 360,000 people from 8 countries on 4 continents. Our work highlights the originality, promise and potential of what is possible within Indigenous contemporary performance in Canada and around the world.

### THE CAST

#### Meegwun Fairbrother

Grandfather/Business Man/Conductor/Fisherman/  
Boy/Mika Jr.

#### Nicole Joy-Fraser

Young Mika/Grandma Mika/Business Woman/  
Great Mountain

#### Allyson Pratt

Nuna/Grandmother Nuna

### CREATIVE TEAM

#### Playwright Tracey Power

Director/Dramaturg

Creative Direction

Co-Choreographers

Lighting Designer

Sound Designer

Set & Prop Designer

Costume Designer

Mask Designer & Builder

Alan Dilworth

Sandra Laronde

Carlos Rivera & Sandra Laronde

Steve Lucas

Marc Meriläinen

Jung-Hye Kim

Jeff Chief

Silvie Varone

Inspired by the traditional Northern Plains story of *Jumping Mouse*

## SYNOPSIS

Young Nuna has started to hear unusual sounds. Realizing that this young girl has inherited the ability to hear the spirits of rushing rivers and soaring mountains, Nuna's grandmother helps her to set off on a journey toward the place where a great mountain weeps. Does Nuna have the power to answer the mountain's cry? In this retelling of the Northern Plains traditional story of *Jumping Mouse*, a young girl discovers the transformative power of nature and the importance of courage.

## GLOSSARY

<b>Agent</b>	A person or thing that exerts power or produces an effect
<b>Cohesion</b>	The act or condition of sticking together
<b>Group Dynamic</b>	Interacting forces within a group of individuals
<b>Groupthink</b>	Rationalized conformity; exhibited by group members to minimize conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analyzing or evaluating ideas
<b>Inherit</b>	Receive or acquire from someone else
<b>Lapse</b>	Fall back into a previous state
<b>Sustainable</b>	An action or process that can be maintained or kept going

## NOTE FROM RED SKY'S FOUNDER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SANDRA LARONDE

*The Great Mountain* is an adventure story inspired by the traditional story of *Jumping Mouse*. Originating from the Northern Plains people, it is a profound story of courage, sacrifice, and vision. We can all relate to *Jumping Mouse* as we are all fearful of change and the unknown. In our own lives, we all have a metaphorical mountain to climb.

Recently, I was admiring the beautiful spine of Rundle Mountain as I strolled along the bend of the Bow River in Banff, situated in the heart of Blackfoot Territory. The story of *Jumping Mouse* kept springing up

into my creative brain as I wondered about Red Sky's next production for children and their families.

As I admired the mountains and the gushing waters of the Bow River, it became clear to me that this story was timely, relevant, and an important one to tell. So, I approached playwright Tracey Power with the idea of *Jumping Mouse* as the point of inspiration for a new stage play.

This action-packed play focuses on young people's capacity to address pressing environmental issues and recognize their own ability to make

a difference to the future of the planet. Truly, it takes a great amount of confidence and courage to move a mountain, and to break the patterns entrenched in our society.

I hope that you will enjoy this adventure story about the transformative power of nature, and the courage it takes to see the world with new eyes.

Truly, imagination is the muscle that we all need to flex in order to realize a more compassionate world.

Sandra Laronde

## INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT, TRACEY POWER

**What inspired you about the original story of *Jumping Mouse*?**

What inspired me most about the story of *Jumping Mouse* was the character's courage and strength to face his fears and venture into the unknown. *Jumping Mouse* has never left his patch of woods where he lives, but the sounds of the rest of the world are calling him and he must follow his heart. We are always being asked to do things, large and small that we may be afraid of; but we are all born with the courage and strength to accomplish great things for ourselves, for each other and for the world we live in. We must always remember that. This is what makes courage such an important and universal feeling and why it inspired the story of *The Great Mountain*.

**Why is learning courage such an important element of Nuna's journey?**

Courage is so important in Nuna's journey because she is being asked to follow a cry for help that she doesn't understand. No one else can hear it and she doesn't know where it comes from. She knows someone needs her help and she is willing to face her fears and make sacrifices to do so. She makes a decision to do things and to go places she has never been or seen before, and this takes enormous courage.

**What is your favourite part of *The Great Mountain* and why?**

My favourite part of *The Great Mountain* is when Nuna meets Boy and he decides to help her with her quest. *The Great Mountain* is about taking care of each other and where we live. I think that children now are learning so much more about caring for our planet than I ever did in school and a million times more than my parents did; there just wasn't the awareness that there is now. As the new generation grows up and continues caring for the environment, I think there will be great changes to how we live which will result in a healthier planet. I like this scene in the play so much because this is the beginning of Nuna and Boy's journey to create change.

Recycle Competition:

Many classrooms already have recycling barrels next to the trash can, but you can start a competition with your hall to see which class can save the most newspapers, soda cans, water bottles or any other recyclable item.

## UNITS OF STUDY

### CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

#### Start a garden:

Use the compost to fertilize a class garden. You can grow vegetables or flowers, and let the students sample what you grow.

#### By participating in these activities, students will:

- Demonstrate the social skills required to work effectively in groups and develop positive relationships with their peers
- Demonstrate teamwork skills that achieve positive results
- Apply living skills (i.e.: decision-making, assertiveness, refusal skills, etc.) in making informed choices
- Analyze the effects of group mentality
- Understand how their choices and behaviours affect themselves and others, as well as how factors in the world around them influence their own and others' health and well-being

## PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

- What habits/patterns have you “**inherited**” from your family or friends?
- What patterns do you want to break in your own life?
- What patterns of others would you want to change?
- Why is it difficult to break entrenched patterns and habits?
- Why are people resistant to change?

#### Compost heap:

If your school isn't willing to start composting, you can create a mini-compost bin outside your classroom to get rid of some of your garbage, though it's probably a smart idea to make sure it's cleared with the administration and fire codes.

## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY #1: MYSTERY LEADER

#### Materials:

- No resources necessary. Students will need space to sit in a circle.

#### Objective:

Through this activity, students will better appreciate **group dynamic** and **cohesion** and will recognize the factors that make pattern change both challenging and achievable.

#### Directions:

- Have students sit in a circle.
- Appoint one student to be the “detective”.
- Have this student leave the room or face away from the group.
- Silently select a student to be the “leader”.
- The leader will start a simple action (i.e. clapping) that the rest of the group will copy. At their own pace, the leader will then switch to a new action. Each time the leader switches to a new action, the group switches too.
- Have the leader begin and then invite the

detective back to observe the group.

- The group's goal is to switch actions without revealing the identity of the leader to the detective.
- The detective can take up to three guesses as to the leader's identity before it is revealed.

#### Teacher Prompt:

You may encourage students to watch the person across from the leader, as it will help them to vary their gaze.

#### Debriefing Questions:

- What helped the group to stay in sync and to change patterns together?
  - What prohibited the pattern-switching from being fluid and seamless?
- (The following questions can be applied both within and beyond the context of this activity.)*
- Why are some leaders particularly effective at prompting pattern-change?
  - As a leader, why might you doubt your own ability to affect change?

### ACTIVITY #2: GROUPTHINK IN ACTION

#### Materials:

- No resources necessary. Students will need space in which to move.

#### Objective:

Through this activity, students will consider what causes people to sacrifice individual behaviours in order to join a dominant pattern. They will also explore what makes certain group behaviours attractive and alluring.

#### Directions:

- Divide the class into three groups.
- Have each of these groups establish a simple physical or verbal pattern that all members can replicate in unison and that can easily be repeated (i.e. a chant, a clapping pattern, etc.).

#### Recycle technology:

If you're lucky enough to be getting new computers this fall, invite your kids to join the Goodwill and Dell Reconnect program, which recycles computers and other electronics.

- One at a time, have each group demonstrate their chosen pattern.
- Then, have all three groups demonstrate their pattern at once.
- Students are encouraged to switch patterns if they feel that another group's pattern is more interesting or appealing or if they want to join the emerging majority of students.
- The goal is for one group's pattern to eventually dominate the space.

**Debriefing Questions:**

- What made one group's pattern so appealing?
- How did it feel to change patterns?
- How did it feel to be a part of the dominant group?
- If you tried to stick to your original pattern, how did it feel when you became part of a small minority?
- What makes particular leaders or groups effective at changing people's patterns of behaviour?

## CULMINATING ACTIVITY: CHANGE THE CHANT

**Materials:**

- No resources necessary. Students should be seated in a circle, either on the floor or in chairs.

**Objective:**

Through this activity, students will have the opportunity to consider both what makes people resistant to pattern change and what may make it possible to disrupt established behaviours and habits.

**Directions:**

- Have students learn the following line from the play: *I got business to do. I got business to do. I got biz, biz, biz, business to do.*
- Have students practice chanting this line as a whole group.
- Then, select two students and have them learn this line from the play: *Yes. The time? What's the time? Yes. The time? What's the time? The time, the time is what I need to know.*
- This time, after the rest of the group begins the "business to do" line, the two appointed students will, at a time of their choosing, begin their separate chant.

**Debriefing Questions:**

- How did the **cohesion** of the group change when the two students begin their separate chant?
- What helped the group to remain focused?
- How might the **group dynamic** be different if only one student had intervened with a separate chant?

**Teacher prompt:**

You may also wish to divide the class more randomly or so that the two groups are facing each other, rather than sitting side by side. This way, students can compare the effects of physical space/surroundings on **cohesion** and **group dynamic**.

**Debriefing Questions:**

- How was the group focus affected differently than in the previous scenario (with only two students doing a separate chant)?
- If you changed the physical configuration of the groups, was the **group dynamic** different when the two groups were facing one another rather than interspersed? If students remained sitting in a circle, imagine how the **group dynamic** might have changed if the two groups had faced one another.
- How might these differences be representative of **group dynamic** and pattern change in the "real world"?

## POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

- What challenges does Nuna face on her quest?
- What motivates Nuna to continue her journey despite the obstacles she faces?
- How might Nuna ensure that the efforts she makes have long-term success?
- What stops people from creating change in their own environments?
- What excites people about creating change?

Plan an end-of-the-day room check: During the last few minutes of the day, have your children make sure all the water faucets are completely turned off, blinds are closed, lights are off and windows are closed. You can give different groups a checklist for each part of the room.

## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY #1: TO CHANGE OR NOT TO CHANGE?

**Materials:**

- Chart paper
- Markers

**Objective:**

Through this activity, students will explore the inevitability of change and discuss barriers preventing positive change in local settings.

**Directions:**

- Divide the class into groups of approximately 5 students each.
- Give each group two pieces of chart paper.
- Invite each group to choose a place frequently used by members of the school or local community (i.e. a local park, the school, a library, etc.).
- Have students take the first piece of chart paper and brainstorm some qualities of the site as it currently exists.
- Have students take the second piece of chart paper and divide it into three columns using a marker.
- Have students imagine their chosen site in 10 years time. In the first column, have each group list positive improvements that they could envision for the given setting.

- In the second column, have each group list negative changes that they would like to prevent from happening.
- In the third column, have each group list what they imagine for the 10-year future of their site if these negative changes were to occur without any of their proposed interventions.
- Have each group present their ideas to the class.

**Debriefing Questions:**

- Is change inevitable?
- Does doing nothing mean that things will stay the same?
- What obstacles might make the proposed positive changes difficult to achieve?
- What might help enact the envisioned changes?

## ACTIVITY #2: TABLEAUX - SCULPTING CHANGE

**Materials:**

- Space for students to form tableaux
- Tableau Checklist (Appendix A)

**Objective:**

Through this activity, students will have the opportunity to practice “sculpting the future” of local sites, thus transforming negative possibilities into hopeful futures. They will begin to recognize their potential as **agents** of change.

**Directions:**

- Have students work in the groups established in the previous activity.
- Invite each group to form a tableau depicting the chosen site as it presently exists.
- Then, have each group form a tableau illustrating the chosen site in 10 years time (if the negative changes were to occur).
- Have each group present their 2 tableaux to the rest of the class.
- As the tableaux are presented, audience members can volunteer to intervene and re-sculpt the second image, so that the negative vision transforms into a positive one.

- **Extension:** If some groups are particularly quick to decide on their tableaux, they could be encouraged to include a third one to depict an intermittent image of the site in 5 years.

**Teacher Prompt:**

The Tableau Checklist (Appendix A) can help students to create interesting and effective tableaux.

**Debriefing Questions:**

- What would it take to create these positive outcomes in “real life”?
- What stops people from intervening and creating positive change?
- What motivates people to make change?
- What can students do right now to contribute to the future of these sites?

## CULMINATING ACTIVITY: PLANNING CHANGE

**Materials:**

- Action Plan Template (Appendix B)
- Writing Utensils

**Objective:**

The process of completing a plan of action and reviewing this plan will empower students to work together to make positive changes in their world. Students will recognize the steps needed to begin the process of change and, most importantly, will appreciate the efforts and actions necessary to see the process through.

**Directions:**

- As a class, have students choose one change that they would like to see in their school or community environment (they can refer to the previous activities for inspiration).
- Using the Action Plan Template (Appendix B), have students plan the steps toward making this change and ensuring that it is **sustainable**.
- Before doing so, invite students to consider the definition of **sustainable**.

Adopt a...  
 This project works with any unit you're teaching. Your class can adopt a rain-forest, a whale, a block on your street or any other place where you want to make a difference.

- Discuss as a class what makes a practice **sustainable** and brainstorm necessary considerations in devising a **sustainable** Action Plan. Think about issues, such as the depletion of or damage to natural resources, the financial costs of such a plan, the value of diversity, the implications of certain social issues, as well as the necessity of longevity.

**Extension:**

Have students examine the “Cycle of Change” (Appendix C). This cycle represents an individual’s journey toward making a change in his or her own life. Invite students to think about the definition of **lapse** and discuss why there might be so many **lapses** indicated on the chart. Why might “action” not be the final step in creating change?

**Debriefing Questions:**

- How can we keep each other motivated on our course of action?
- What might stand in our way?
- Why might we need to alter or amend in our action plan?
- When should we review our plan and make appropriate amendments?
- How will we know if our action plan has resulted in a positive change?

*YPT would love to receive copies of these completed plans to put on display here at our theatre!*

## REVIEWING A PLAY

### JON KAPLAN’S INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT REVIEWERS

Theatre is, for me, an art form that tells me something about myself or gets me thinking about the world in which I live.

Whether going to the theatre as a reviewer or simply an audience member, I think that watching a play is an emotional experience and not just an intellectual one. I always let a show wash over me, letting it touch my feelings, and only later, after the show, do I try to analyze those feelings.

That’s when I start to think about some of the basic questions you ask when you’re writing a review – what did I see (story, characters, themes); how did I respond to what I saw; what parts of the production (script, performances, direction, design

and possibly other elements) made me feel and think what I did; why was I supposed to respond in that fashion?

When you go to the theatre to review, take a few notes during a show if you feel comfortable doing so, but don’t spend your time writing the review during the show; you’ll miss what’s happening onstage.

Writing a review doesn’t mean providing a plot summary. That’s only part of the job; you have to discuss your reaction to what you saw and try to explore some of the reasons for that reaction.

I don’t believe that there’s any such thing as a totally objective piece of criticism. We are all individu-

als, bringing our own backgrounds, experiences and beliefs to a production. In some fashion, every one of us sitting in the theatre is a critic, no matter whether we’re writing a review or not; we all react to and form judgments about what we see on the stage.

When I go to a production, I always keep in mind that the people involved in putting it on have worked long and hard – weeks, months, sometimes years – getting it onto the stage. Even if I have problems with the result, it’s important to respect the efforts that went into the show.

**Jon Kaplan is senior theatre writer at NOW Magazine, where he’s worked for the past 30 years.**

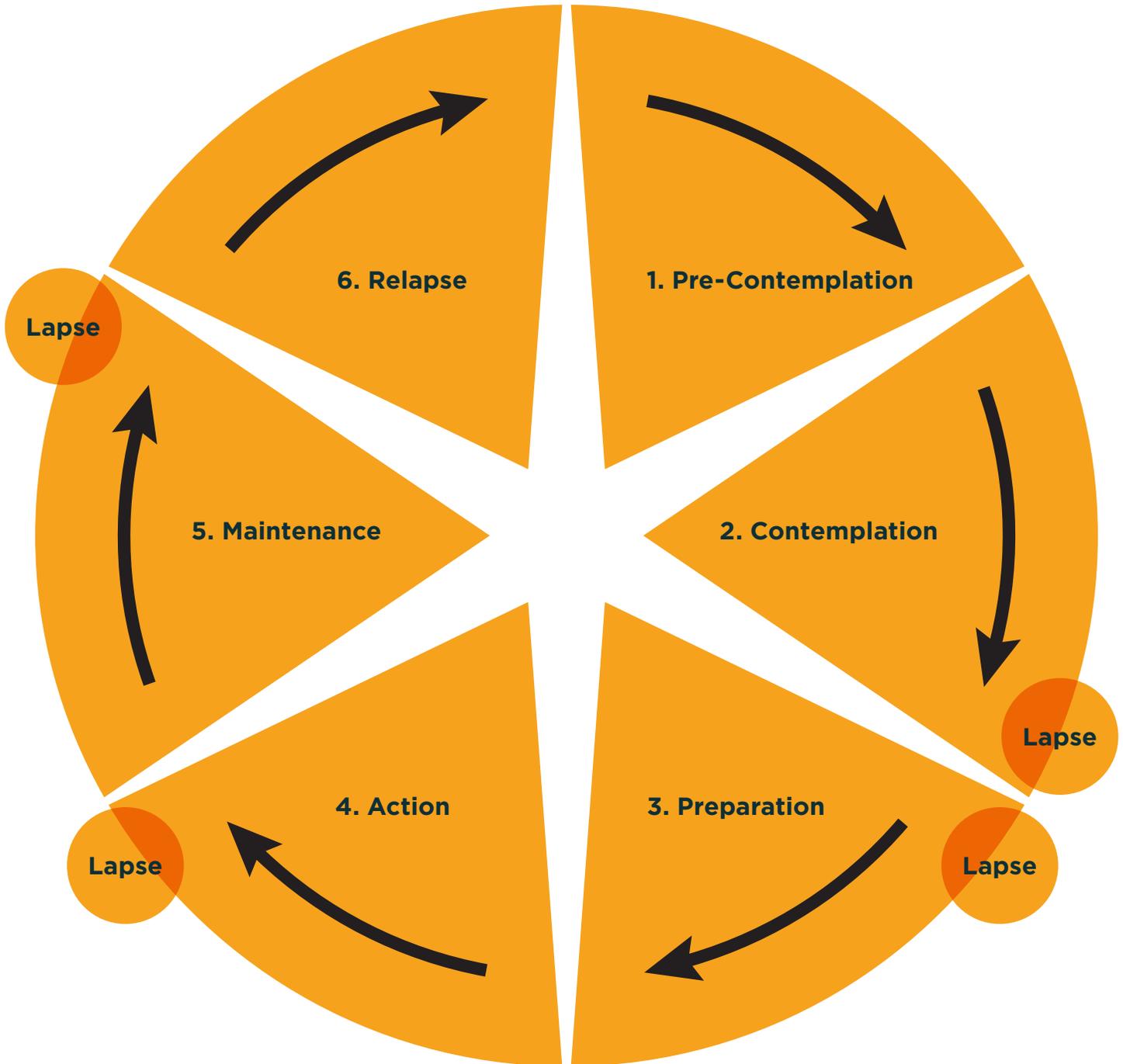
## APPENDIX A

### CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE TABLEAUX

- The positioning of the actors gives the audience a clear understanding of what is happening in the tableau.
- The facial expressions illustrate the characters’ thoughts and emotions.
- Every part of the picture serves a purpose to the whole tableau. (Teacher Prompt: Think good visual composition.)
- The tableau, including the gaze of the characters, is completely frozen.
- There are one or more distinct focal points in the tableau.



## APPENDIX C THE CYCLE OF CHANGE



Retrieved from <http://localenterprise.wordpress.com/2008/06/25/cycle-of-change-prochaska-and-diclemente-and-enterprise/>

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## RESOURCES

### WATER-SAVING TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- When brushing your teeth, rinse the brush in short bursts of water instead of leaving the water running. This can save a LOT of water.
- Even a little drip can waste lots of water. When you are finished using the sink be sure that you REALLY turn off that tap. (This also helps you develop those muscles!) If the tap leaks, ask your mom or dad to replace the washer. (The washer is a little seal inside the tap that keeps it from leaking.)
- When you take showers, make sure they are short ones (less than 8 minutes). Taking a short shower can use less water than taking a bath. However, taking a shallow bath uses less water than taking a long shower.
- Next time you take a shower, time yourself and try leaving the plug in the drain and see just exactly how much water you are using. If the tub looks like it might overflow, that's WAY too much!!!!
- Walk over to the toilet and listen to the tank. Do you hear a hissing sound? If you do, you have a leaky valve that needs to be fixed! A leaky toilet can waste hundreds, even thousands of gallons of water.
- In the summer, instead of running the tap for a long time until the water gets cold enough to drink, keep a nice cold jug of water in the fridge. (Ice cubes cool off a drink quickly too!)
- While waiting for tap water to get hot, catch it in a jug or bucket to use for watering plants.
- If you like to play in the sprinklers in the summertime, do it only when your parents are going to water the lawn anyway! Better yet, fill up a wading pool to cool off instead and use the water on the garden or to wash the car afterwards.
- It uses less water to wash the car with a bucket of soapy water than with the spray from a garden hose. Just use the hose for your final rinse.
- To clean your driveway or walks, sweep them instead of spraying them down with a hose.

Retrieved from <http://www.city.stratford.on.ca/naturally/envtipw.asp>

## ABOUT RED SKY PERFORMANCE

Internationally renowned for its artistry and innovation, Red Sky is Canada's leading company of contemporary world Indigenous performance in dance, theatre and music. This award-winning Toronto-based company was founded by Artistic Director Sandra Laronde in 2000. Red Sky creates, produces and tours original work for family and adult audiences on stages across Canada and the world. Since its inception, Red Sky has captured and ignited the imagination of close to 360,000 people from eight countries on four continents. Red Sky highlights the originality, promise and potential of what is possible within Indigenous contemporary performance. To date, we have collaborated with artists from Indigenous cultures around the world, including Mongolia, China, Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico. Winner of a 2011 Smithsonian Institute's **Expressive Arts Award**, a 2010 **Dora Mavor Moore Award**, and two awards at the Canadian **Aboriginal Music Awards**, Red Sky recently opened the 2011 **National Aboriginal Achievement Awards** which aired on **Global TV** and the **Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)**, reaching over 30,000 million viewers. Red Sky's worldwide success continues as the company recently returned from a tour to **Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts; Minzu University; State Theatre Opera and Ballet** in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and will continue to tour to Michigan, Minnesota, Kansas, Texas, Montana and Washington State.



**Sandra Laronde**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CO-CHOREOGRAPHER/ CREATIVE DIRECTION

Founder and Artistic Director of Red Sky, Sandra Laronde is an award-winning director, producer, choreographer, performer and creative leader. Sandra's vision for Red Sky is to create a leading international company that shapes contemporary world Indigenous performance, and to make a significant contribution to the artistic vibrancy of Canada and the world. Currently, she is also the Director of Aboriginal Arts at The Banff Centre, a globally respected arts and cultural institution. She divides her time between Toronto, Ontario and Banff, Alberta. Sandra is originally from the Teme-Augama-Anishnaabe

(People of the Deep Water) in Temagami, northern Ontario. In July 2011, Laronde was awarded the Smithsonian Institute Expressive Arts Award; and in June 2011, she was recognized for her high achievement with an Honorary Degree from Trent University. She was also awarded the Ontario Good Citizenship Medal that pays special tribute to those whose lives exemplify excellence and achievement; and the Paul D. Fleck Fellowship in the Arts from The Banff Centre. She was one of 225 Canadians chosen to participate in the Governor-General's Canadian Leadership program, which celebrates promising leaders who are making a significant impact on Canada. In the same year, Laronde was also the recipient of Toronto City Council's Aboriginal Affairs Award for her contribution towards improving the quality of life for the Aboriginal community. Sandra has toured extensively with Red Sky, and has performed in numerous projects with other companies throughout Canada, the United States, Cuba, Mexico, Europe, Australia, China, and Mongolia. Currently, Sandra is a member of the National Executive Committee for the 2012 Governor-General's Canadian Leadership Conference, and sits on the Aboriginal Advisory for the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto.

**red Sky**  
Sandra Laronde, Artistic Director

### RED SKY PERFORMANCE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR	<b>Sandra Laronde</b>
MANAGING DIRECTOR	<b>Jackie McAlpine</b>
ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE AND REHEARSAL DIRECTOR	<b>Carlos Rivera</b>
ASSOCIATE ARTIST	<b>Jacob Pratt</b>
ASSOCIATE ARTIST	<b>Meegwun Fairbrother</b>
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	<b>Deidre Budgell</b>
BOOK-KEEPER	<b>Roger Francis</b>