Who is Dancing Earth?

DANCING EARTH is an ensemble of intertribal performance artists under the direction of Director/Choreographer Rulan Tangen. Dancing Earth has represented onstage more than 21 First Nations community members as cultural artist ambassadors, including Kainai, Metis, Tarasco, Pueblo, Pima/Maricopa, Seneca/Cayuga, Yaqui, Shoshone, Seneca, Pampanga, Juaneno, Amazon Cambiva, Coushatta, Ha-wai’i and Shoshone. Their dances reflect their rich cultural heritage and draws on the stories and perspectives of a multitude of Indigenous peoples.

Activities:
- Can you locate some of these on a map? (suggested native-land.ca)
- First Nations indicates a relationship of treaties between independent nations; what is a treaty and what does it mean to honor a treaty?
ABOUT THE DANCE ARTISTS:

As an award-winning choreographer, Rulan works on many projects in many countries including ballet, modern, powwow, circus, opera, TV (We Shall Remain) and film (Apocalypto, The New World, Woman Walks Ahead for which she won Best Supporting Actress award from Red Nations Film Festival), before dreaming up Dancing Earth’s unique form of expression: Indigenous contemporary dance, and she works collaboratively with the dancers in all aspects of creation, to encourage their growth as artists and leaders.

...seeds: RE GENERATION...

stars incredible performing artists who are also cultural ambassadors:

Raven Ilm Bright - Raven is of Navajo heritage from Gallup, New Mexico, and he grew up within the Hip-hop community. “My roots come from the blood of my families but also from the heart and soul of the communities that I am a part of.”
**Olivia Camfield** - Olivia Camfield (Mvskoke Creek) was born and raised in the Texas Hill Country. She trained in Limon under Joe Alegado in San Antonio TX and is currently a Company member with Dancing Earth under the Artistic Direction of Rulan Tangen. In Olivia’s personal work she focuses on the intricacies of mixed-indigenous identities, promoting indigenous futurism, and the continued education of all settlers on the systematic erasing of native womxn, languages, sacred sites, and ancestral lifeways.
Justin Giehm - Justin is a dancer, model, and aspiring actor based in Colorado, of Navajo, German and mixed heritage. He became a member of Dancing Earth in 2014, joining the Summer Institute and a show called SEED with 60 community members in Four Corners area, later touring with Seeds Re Generation to Canada, Guahan and O'odham and Ute territories in US. with Dancing Earth's recommendation, he was cast in TV series Jamestown which filmed in Europe, and in 'The Atomic Opera' with director Peter Sellars at Santa Fe Opera.
Deollo Johnson - Deollo has been studying martial arts and dancing for over 30 years, practicing and performing a wide range of dance and movement styles and a variety
of combat systems. He has an extensive teaching background with a wide range of ages and skill levels, including teaching capoeira as an adjunct faculty member at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina, as well as at the American Dance Festival, at Payap University (Chiang Mai, Thailand), and the Haiti Baptist Mission. Deollo has been a core dancer with Dancing Earth since 2007, additionally contributing as rehearsal assistant, spoken word artist, percussionist, lead teacher for our year round cultural creative movement program in Cochiti Pueblo, and aerialist.

Deirdre Morris - (SEEDS Tech Director) Holds a masters from UC Davis and is an international performing artist, producer, dramaturge, activist, and educator. Her
Anne is Jicarilla Apache from Dulce, New Mexico. She was raised traditionally by her family on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation where she grew up with an intrinsic connection among self, land, and culture. She has been dancing her stories with Dancing Earth since 2012.
Eugene (Trey) Pickett III - Eugene Pickett III aka "Trey" born in Altadena, California now resides in Albuquerque New Mexico. He comes from a performing family and has 20 years of experience. He is of mixed heritage (West African, Cherokee, French, Irish) and shares love and culture through the arts.
Lumhe (Micco) Sampson - Lumhe Sampson (of the Sampson Bros. Lumhe & Samsoche) is world renowned for his innovative and unique collaborative style in hoop dance exhibition. Symbolizing the connection and emphasizing importance in unity of all things in this world, their unique performance invigorates the mind and brings harmony.
to ones soul. The Bros. have been teaching and sharing the art of Hoop Dance for over 25 years throughout Turtle Island and beyond.
**Samsoche Sampson** - Samsoche Sampson is a traditional/contemporary dancer specializing in Grass, Fancy, and hoop. In addition blending traditional styles with modern influences creating a dynamic fusion.

![Samsoche Sampson](image)

**Rulan Tangen** - Rulan received the Kennedy Center Citizen Artist award in 2018, for arts practice that embodies Service, Freedom, Justice, Courage, and Gratitude - which she believes is expressed by the daily work and lives of all the cultural collaborators of Dancing Earth. Of mixed heritage including Kampampangan/Norwegian and hunka Lakota, she has recruited and nurtured a new generation of Indigenous contemporary dancers and believes in dance as functional ritual for transformation, healing, and energetic connection with all forms of life on earth.
Esmé Vaandrager - Esmé Olivia is a performing & teaching artist grateful to have grown up in occupied Tiwa Pueblo lands known as Albuquerque, NM to a Mestiza Mexican-American mother & Dutch father. Her blood is a peace treaty she honors through prayers of dance, poetry & song. Listen, look and learn more at EsmeOlivia.com.
This dance performance is about the \textit{re-storying} of seeds, land, water, skies, remembering ancient ways, imagining the future, and being fully alive in the present. Our elders guide us to consider seven generations forward and back, in everything we create. This dance contains many things beginning with \textit{R}, that you can look for: renewal, resistance, remembering, reflection, re-generation, and glimpses of the color red.

The dance reflects a collage of many perspectives, told in many languages, with many colors. This opens our eyes and ears; the other senses are invited by the eating of good food before and after the performance, the use of essential oil and the smoke of sage and cedar, and inviting the audience to rhythmic movements at the end including hand clapping. We invite the five senses as well as the sense
of imagination to open you to the energy of the performance, so that you leave with a sense of awakening, with new interest in connections with other people, and other forms of life, and awareness of the life energy of earth, water, wind, sky. This is how we believe we can have a healthier and more balanced life on earth!

ACTIVITIES
Can you name five senses?
Can you imagine additional senses?
One week, take a notebook and try to write down different smells, tastes, sounds that you find in different places!

OPENING OF PERFORMANCE
Everyone comes from peoples who had long relationships with a particular area of land, water, sky. First Nations peoples of this land each carry ancestral knowledge about understanding their land and water, that goes back tens of thousands of years, with many artifacts being discovered all the time that match Native stories of ancient origins, making them “Older than the concept of America” - poet John Trudell. The Piscataway First Nation are the traditional land stewards of the area of Nacotchtanke, Which has come to be known in more recent centuries as Washington DC.
One way to recognize and honor original people of the land is to ask permissions to come onto land, bringing gifts, songs, and introductions about your intent. You can learn more about nation-wide efforts to participate in this process which has been active amongst Indigenous peoples for thousands of years at https://usdac.us/nativeland
We did this upon arrival in Nacotchtanke, with the Tayac family who are respected Piscataway culture carriers.
Onstage the first images you will see were created by Anthony Ch-Wi-Tas Collins of the Akimel O’odham as well as Seneca and Cayuga Nations. That is because the first place we ever offered this performance was in O’odham land of Phoenix Arizona, so this is how we remember where we began.
About these images: “The first one is of “The Hole in the Rock” at Papago Park in Tempe. The region is originally known as ‘Vavdag’ in the language. This a kinda of astronomical calendar for the ancient people. The other image is of ‘Sveg Do’ag’ - Red Mountain, a place that holds great spiritual significance.”
Activities (Choose one, can suggest age groups)

1) What is a place that is special for you? How would you give it a special name?
2) Imagine coming to a new land for the first time, how would you imagine introducing yourself and your hopes and dreams, and what would you bring as a gift?
3) Your parents or grandparents or great grandparents all come from places where their families once lived a very long time, sometimes these are called ancestral homelands. Can you make a map that traces some of these routes, they all might be from different areas!

At every location where Dancing Earth will tour, we invite local Native peoples onstage at the beginning. We brought this performance to Norway in the summer, and the Indigenous Sami people danced in the opening scene. We performed in Colorado, with Ute and Dine peoples onstage. And on April 26th at 6 pm, Piscataway representative Sebastian Medina-Tayac will be onstage before the show, to welcome everyone and we will invite Native people in the audience to come to the stage.

SCENE 1)
HONORING THE BALANCE; ANCESTRAL SEEDS

After elders and culture-carriers stand onstage to honor all Native peoples of all lands and their sacred sites, including tribal peoples of the Southwest who reference being surrounded in four directions by four sacred mountains.

The voices of Native peoples from the Southwest are heard in the soundtrack as well, speaking in their Native languages. They have been singing, dancing, taking care of plants and remembering cultural stories for a very long time, so that's why it is so special to hear their voices when we dance. Sometimes they even join us onstage at the very beginning!

ACTIVITIES:

1) 'Discipline': what is one thing you love so much that you can imagine yourself doing for 20, 30, 40 or more years, to get better and better at?
2) Your class can create your own morning movement, with a stretch or special move that you do in four directions of North, South, East and West. How would you find those directions in your classroom?
3) Dancing Earth dancers of every age are very fit, due to exercise and eating healthy Indigenous foods. What does a physical activity you would like to do once a week or more? What is a food that comes from your area? How do you know where your food comes from?
4) The name of this dance includes the phrase “Ancestral Seeds”, with elder Uqualla’s voice describes humans as being of air, of water, or sky. How are we as humans like plants? How are we like seeds? How are we like seeds of ancestors?

SCENE 2)
WE ARE SACRED MOUNTAINS, WE BURY OUR CORDS HERE
In this scene, the four corners become mountains which become human...

Photos by Paulo T Photography and Tim Trumble for Dancing Earth
There are four mountain people onstage, but many more voices of Native community members in the soundscape, speaking in different languages that were spoken here even before English, Spanish, French, Chinese or African languages were spoken here. One voice speaks of being connected to the land, because for generations her family had buried their umbilical cords on the land, tying them to the land. The costumes show red designs of special personal and cultural symbols designed by each dancer, representing the special stories that are in our bodies, hearts, minds and spirits no matter where we go, or what we wear.

Activities:
- Are their mountains near your home or school? Have you ever climbed part of the mountain? What are the names they are known by? What name could you imagine giving to them?
- What is a place so special to you that you could imagine bringing a gift, and burying in the earth? What kind of gift would be good for the earth to receive?
- Take a big piece of paper, lie down and have a friend trace the silhouette of your body. Then decorate the shape like a map with words, colors, drawings, of things that happened in your life, or of special symbols that you imagine are close to you all the time.

Scene 3)
SEEDS AND SOIL
This dance show all the activity of life and growth beneath the soil, of micro-organisms, seeds, roots, earthworms - all are interconnected! The soundtrack says: “they tried to bury us, but they didn’t know we were seeds”, which represents the resilience of Indigenous peoples, never to give up, and to stay strong to overcome many obstacles including being pushed from land and forced into slavery, being separated from ancestral food sources such as buffalo which were hunted to near extinction by settlers, not being allowed to speak their Native languages being forced to cut long hair at boarding schools, not being allowed to vote, and not being allowed to practice dances associated with Native religion until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1980. Yes Native people continue to live and protect their cultural ways of living, throughout this continent and as Indigenous communities in other parts of the world.
ACTIVITIES

1) take use cardboard egg cartons and split them into separate sections. Add soil, and a sunflower seed. Water every day and keep near sunlight - wait and see what happens!

2) Do you know what compost-ing? You can save up organic waste (leftover foods from lunch) to become a nitrogen source. You make ‘green’ moist layers mixed with dry ‘brown’ layers and this can get mixed into dirt to create healthy soil to grow plants, even grow your own food for school lunches! Here are some ‘good idea’ resources:
   - http://www.sodgod.com/composting/

Scene 4)
DEER SOCIETY

Our dancers become four legged, with antlers. Did you see this image in the dance, when we make a shadow deer?

© PamTaylorPhotography for Dancing Earth
Moving like a four-legged is fun, and it takes a lot of strength and stretch! Try a race across the room with everyone traveling with equal weight on hands and feet! Push-ups are a good way to build strength.
Write down your favorite animal, and draw a picture. Imagine their home, what they like to eat, what position they like to sleep in.

Scene 5)
TALKING CIRCLE: WE BECOME OUR STORIES
In this scene, the dancers are wearing tunics the color of terra cotta mountains. They start in a circle, and each share a gesture that reflects a tiny part of the story being shared in the soundscape. Then, the circle revolves clockwise and they share again, each time the movements getting longer as they ‘tell’ more of the story.

Native peoples throughout the Americas had over a thousand different languages that were spoken before 1492 with more diversity of linguistic origins than any other continent. “at the time of Columbus more than 15 million speakers throughout the Western Hemisphere used more than 2,000 languages; the geographic divisions within that estimate are 300 separate tongues native to some 1.5 million Native Americans N of Mexico, 300 different languages spoken by roughly 5 million people in Mexico and Central America, and more than 1,400 distinct tongues used by 9 million Native Americans in South America and the West Indies.”

Now, north of Mexico, about half the languages are still being spoken, although many of the languages have few speakers. (See first page about Natalie Benally, and her achievements as a Dine/Navajo language speaker)

Yet, for thousands of years, when these diverse people would travel and meet other people who spoke different languages, their first instinct was not to attack, but to communicate. A sign language was created, and there are still “speakers” fluent in the Plains sign language. When Director/Choreographer Rulan was researching Mayan Codex symbols for her work in the film “Apocalypto” she found that in the portraits of the Mayan figures, they were making some of the same sign language gestures, thousands of miles from the Plains!
ACTIVITIES:
In the dance, some of the movements come from many parts of stories including:

- People coming from the mixing of earth and water
- Waking early in the morning to plant seeds
- Grinding of corn
- The universe being in a circle
- Soil being alive
- Migrations of people following the paths of four-legged or winged, leaving seeds behind
- The people riding the back of the great condor and being gently placed to live in different parts of the Grand Canyon

• Can you remember seeing any movements that could have represented these stories?
• Can you try to tell these stories, or any story, using a sign language?
• Do you know anyone who can’t hear or speak, and uses sign language to communicate? What is a good first thing to learn in sign language, if you wanted to get to know that person better?
• One of the difference between sign language and dance is using your whole body to express a meaning; how would you take sign language movements and make them bigger so your whole body is involved?
Photo courtesy of Iscah Carey for Dancing Earth

Scene 6) RUNNING FOR WATER; RUNNING FOR LAND
The scene opens with an ancestral spirit, carrying seeds of for the future. These seeds are for plants that are good to eat, that make medicine, that can be made into baskets or clothing or shelter, and are also seeds of dreams being cultivated for future generations.

One by one, the dancers run in wearing loose draped clothing inspired by what has been worn by different desert peoples across the world, for thousands of years. They represent the ancestors. One by one, they are replaced by dancers in blue denim - representing modern day people. This kind of clothing has been worn by workers since the 1940s; these outfits were inspired by Rulan’s grandpa’s uniform that he wore working as a mechanic, and also when he was gardening, but the younger dancers said they still like wearing similar denim outfits and it makes them feel strong and ready for any activity.
They are on a with movements of hunting, foraging and planting. They use words from their own language, and don’t remember each other at first, but share movements that show they are all on the same journey, and connect at the end to make one giant seed pod.

ACTIVITIES
On Hopi Land, one of our elders Bucky Preston organizes long runs, to call in the clouds, and bring water to the land, to help the crops grow. He wishes that more young people would be involved in running, because sometimes he feels like he is the last one left dedicated to running for water, running for land!

- Do you ever run? Would you be interested more in running if you were running for a purpose?

What are foods you could eat in your area, that would grow if you planted them? What are wild plants you could eat if you gathered them? What are other purposes of wild plants? We use the word ‘purpose’, rather than use, to remember that all of life forms on earth do not exist simply to be ‘used’ by humans, but everything has a purpose. The great Native chef Karlos Baca has prepared banquets using foods he has foraged and stored for months. He says that
whenever he gathers, he gives a gift - whether it is song, or corn meal, so that we is in reciprocity - giving as well as receiving, rather than ‘taking’

- Everyone in class can draw a picture of a plant and some of its purposes, to make your own plant guide!

Scene 7
PROTECTING THE SACRED

From their seed pod position, the dancers listen to each other’s heartbeats, and the heartbeat and voice of the land and water.

In earlier scenes scene the ancestral voices speak of being a warrior of peace, and our heroines stand up for what they believe in: sacred water and sacred land. Many Native peoples describe the earth as mother, and water as the lifeblood of the earth, and the source of all life. Now we hear a voice of a Native grandmother, letting us that some people have forgotten the sacredness of water.

Meanwhile, a figure of Greed looks fancy but she is covered with trash, and a gas mask, as she swallows up and consumes what is left of the water in the desert. The dancers movements are restricted, cut off from the life-giving force of water, and they show the suffering of plants, animals, and people, when water is polluted.

Then, the music changes to a strong and energizing powwow beat, and the voice changes to a male voice (Frank Waln, a Lakota hip hop artist, whose homelands are threatened by construction of a Pipeline) talking about “oil for blood”, and about mother earth that “my mother is clean now oil is mud”.

The other dancers stand strong, making several gestures repeatedly: a raised right fist for solidarity, a horizontal left arm that has been used by community members to signify “Protect Oak Flats”, and a triangular shape with hands over head that community members have used to signify “Protect Mauna Kea”.

(images courtesy Paulo T Photography for Dancing Earth)
ACTIVITIES:
Our waters are around the planet are become filled with trash, especially plastic. Our dancers bring reusable cloth bags, water bottles, cups, plates, and utensils on tour with us wherever we go.
- What are three actions you can take to reduce your use of disposable plastic?
- What are 3 fun art activities or instruments you can make by re-using plastic items? We have made great rattles, using filling plastic bottles or old cans part way with small pebbles. We decorate them by wrapping fabric.

Google Research:
With four groups, each group can google research one of the following and report back to the group, acting it out like a news reporter
- Frank Waln has been on MTV, google his name and ‘Rebel Music’
- Vision and goals of “Idle No More”
- Oak Flats
- Mauna Kea

Scene 8)
SPIRALS OF SMOKE BECOME SPIRALS OF WATER
Our heroes have been standing strong as water warriors, in peaceful protection, giving their blood sweat and tears to defend the earth and water until they are on the ground exhausted. The sacred water returns, first dribbling in small twisted pathways until the full flow is restored, combining the essence of rain, rivers, waterfalls, acequias, and underground waterways. They greet the waters with prayers with three movements of ‘patience, perseverance and prayer’, which Professor David Martinez of O’odham First Nation described to us six years ago as the original qualities of people of the desert, in regards to water. Rising in the air like spirals of smoke is a dancer carrying prayers that meet the clouds and become rain, a blessing that returns to earth.
ACTIVITIES:
1) what are qualities you love and appreciate about water? Write a letter or make a card with collage or drawings, for Water, letting water know what you love and appreciate about water!

2) We have made a lot of our costumes out of old T-shirts that we cut into patterns and shapes. We challenge ourselves to see how many things we can make from one T-shirt (headband, bag, skirt, dishcloth, bracelet!) or how many different ways we can wear one item. It's very fun creative exercise and it's good for the environment because it saves on waste, and on water pollution caused by toxic dyes in making of new clothes.
   - Materials: old T-shirt, scissors. Can also use fabric paint, stamps and stencils, glue, decorative items. Use your imagination!

Scene 9)
RENEWAL
The words of Anne’s mother Molly Pesata begin the scene, talking about how she made a garden from a junkyard. Onstage, the dancers make a dance of renewal, with a large recycled army parachute that becomes the living earth.
The song is sung by women including the famous Native singer Pura Fe, and women of the Canadian region of Attawapiskat, about the life that comes around a river.
ACTIVITIES:

1) Seed Ball Making is one of the activities we have shared with communities during this tour, led by farmer Lupita! It is a great way to generate plant growth without tilling the earth. One of the creation stories shared in the beginning seeds was that ‘we come from clay’ - this could mean humans, bowls, sculptures, or seeds and plants!

Here is a recipe for seed ball making:
http://permaculturenews.org/2014/06/18/making-seedballs-ancient-method-till-agriculture/

Some of the seeds that could be placed in seed ball could be organic corn, beans, squash or sunflowers. The dancer in center ended with a sunflower headdress; sunflowers protect the smaller plants of corn, beans and squash because birds eat the seeds rather than the plants.

Scene 10) Finale: RE-GENERATION

The stage becomes black and there is one dancer left with one seed, with a song she brings it to life, and joined by other dancers and their seeds, until the stage blooms with life!

The soundtrack is composed by DJ Ginger Dunnill, with the voices of female elders Pennie Opal Plant and Casey Horinek Camp, who helped write the first Treaty of Indigenous Women of the Americas Defending Mother Earth, as well as vocals by Native singer Desirae Harp freestyling on social justice anthems.

The dancers dance is based on ‘bio-mimicry’ which means imitating forms and patterns of nature. They create the growing patterns of corns, beans and squash: Corn with V shaped leaves, Beans with twisted vines that wrap around tall Corn, and Squash low to the ground with wide leaves that shade the soil to keep the moisture.

The dancers reach out to audience to lead body percussions, to include the audience as active participation in this interactive and interconnected way of living on earth. The elders join in a
round dance, an ancient social dance that has revitalized the lands of this continent for thousands of years. The video projections show images of some of the many elders and culture carriers who have helped to shape this work.

Image of Indigenous peoples at the Climate Change Summit in Paris:

ACTIVITIES

- We have taken old paper and boxes and made handmade paper, embedding with desert wildflower seeds (such as milkweed, indian paintbrush). Then we write poems, wishes or hopes and plant them in a garden. The flowers grow, and attract pollinators such as butterflies and bees! Bees and butterflies populations are diminishing, so we need to give them encouragement!


- Most places we go, people share food - made from grandma’s favorite recipe, or maybe from the local farmers market. Here are some awesome resources to learn about Native foods!
  - [https://vimeo.com/82926771](https://vimeo.com/82926771)
And cookbooks!

- **THE SIOUS CHEFS INDIGENOUS KITCHEN**
  [https://www.abebooks.com/products/isbn/97808166699797?cm_mmc=ggl-_-COM_DSASTAFEE_D_Trade--_-naa--_-1t1naa&gclid=CjwKCAjw7MzkBRAGEiwAkOXexHVKKBD7M2r2yCASkl3FdC-4nmoQK3UUTcGVZr0j7IF3t9H8PamtBoCznMQAvD_BwE](https://www.abebooks.com/products/isbn/97808166699797?cm_mmc=ggl-_-COM_DSASTAFEE_D_Trade--_-naa--_-1t1naa&gclid=CjwKCAjw7MzkBRAGEiwAkOXexHVKKBD7M2r2yCASkl3FdC-4nmoQK3UUTcGVZr0j7IF3t9H8PamtBoCznMQAvD_BwE)

- **FOODS OF THE SOUTHWEST INDIAN NATIONS**

Until next time, we are so happy to bring these dances to Nacotchtanke - Thank you Kennedy Center Millenium Stage - we say Pilomniya, Elahkwa, A’xee hee, Gracias, Ka Na, Mahalo, Salamat, Megwech!

We are grateful that the touring of this work is supported by the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts; and the creation and development of the work from 2014-18 was assisted by support from A Blade Of Grass Fellowship, Grand Canyon Trust's Intertribal gathering process, and countless farmers, seed savers, and Indigenous knowledge carriers - we are the seeds of our ancestors!