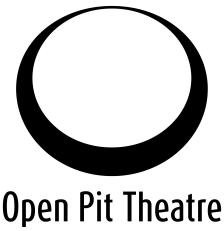
Open Pit Theatre created the following *Project Field Notes* in 2022 as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project. Please credit Open Pit Theatre and Balancing Act if you use, cite, or share information from this resource.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss these materials, please contact Balancing Act at balancingact@theatredirect.ca.



Open Pit Theatre

BALANCING ACT

Open Pit Theatre
Level UP! Childcare Solutions Pilot
Project Field Notes

The following notes were written by Jessica Hickman, Co-Artistic Director at Open Pit Theatre in 2022, after Open Pit Theatre completed their Level UP! Pilot Program.

Project Focus: Our Childcare Solutions project supported the active participation of playwright and associate director, Geneviève Doyon, in the rehearsals, production, and touring of their show, Radio Silence.

Project Inspiration: Geneviève is a parent to three children, and the project focused on providing childcare for the youngest, who was a baby at the time, and had no option of going to daycare or school.

Open Pit Theatre let Geneviève steer the ways in which the company allocated funds to best support her. This approach worked well for a few reasons:

- This was the first time Open Pit Theatre had supported a caregiver in this way, and even with the best intentions, it would have required extensive communication between Geneviève and the show producer to coordinate adequate childcare and touring logistics to meet her needs. Having Geneviève take the lead on co-ordinating childcare and travel was more efficient and reduced administrative tasks for the producer.
- Geneviève had the flexibility to adapt childcare on a day-to-day basis based on her needs. Baby needs and schedules can change extremely quickly.
- For touring and travel, Geneviève was able to select flights and accommodations that she knew would be adequate for an infant.
- Geneviève was able to hire a caregiver who she felt comfortable with and she appreciated having control over who that person was.

Project funds were allocated to three main expense areas:

- **Childcare:** Childcare costs were covered for rehearsals in Whitehorse, Yukon. (1 to 3 hours per day). A professional nanny was hired who took the baby on walks every day to allow Geneviève to have the space needed to focus on the work. There was not a great space for them to stay in the theatre, so having the nanny take the baby for walks worked well.
- **Travel:** The cast and crew of the show had to travel from Whitehorse to Dawson City and to Victoria for performances. Rather than driving for six hours to Dawson City, which would have been challenging with a baby, Geneviève and the baby were able to book a flight. They also booked a flight to Victoria on a schedule that was more convenient for the family's needs.
- **Accommodations:** The cast and crew of the show were staying in accommodations with small rooms, single beds, and shared bathrooms. With support from project funding, Geneviève and the baby were able to book separate accommodations for each show that worked better for a caregiver travelling with a baby (e.g. bathtub, closer to the rehearsal hall).

Reflections and discoveries:
In a small town like Whitehorse, there are no organizations or networks to find childcare. Sourcing childcare requires research and word-of-mouth. Moving forward with touring and new projects, it would be extremely difficult for a company like Open Pit Theatre to provide the level of support to caregivers that was provided during the pilot without financial support like what was received from Balancing Act. The theatre runs without operating funding and runs on extremely tight budgets, which make it difficult to allocate money for childcare and related supports.

During this pilot, we had only one caregiver involved which made it possible to provide comprehensive support. The support would've looked much different if it was split between multiple caregivers, especially given that caregivers have unique needs (for example, children of different ages would require different types of care and support).

It would be helpful to have support from a local institution to support local and visiting artists and arts workers with childcare needs. An organization like Yukon Arts Centre, for example, could offer support by providing an up-to-date list of caregivers in the area that folks could contact.