

BAAADASS BERDACHE



Images
Michael Dudeck

Words
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It's Full Moon in Beaconia, Manitoba – the Planting Moon, end of May. The wolverines and coyotes howl in anticipation: the witchdoctor will cast a spell tonight.

The weekend nudists depart Lake Winnipeg for the safety of the city and Michael Dudeck awakens in his tree house, high up in a poplar forest. He nimbly descends a rope ladder to activate a sacred circle upon the forest floor, sending waves of psychic energy detectable by the concentric rings of ravens cawing; first loud, then fading into the distance - a serenade to the rising moon. The Eastern shores of Lake Winnipeg, from Brokenhead to Sagkeeng stretching back to the petroglyphs at Bannock Point, comprise a triangle of rare and sacred Native plants, home to practitioners of the healing and mystical arts.

Naked in the early summer night air, save for a rooster feather butt-plug firmly held in place by his young shaman's physique, Dudeck chants softly, burning sweet grass, lavender and sage to purify the air and conjure the ancient queer spirits.

His flock for the night arrives from the beach, a little heat stroked and swelling with expectation. They are: Pete, a young artist from Winnipeg who recently traveled with Dudeck up to the Far North (Igloodik, Resolute Bay); Joshua, the Witchdoctor's former

lover and a botonist/artist and Benny, a Winnipeg artist living in Berlin who'd always been curious about the witchdoctor's circles.

A Magikal white fire is stoked at the Beaconia Research Station where Dudeck is Shaman-in-Residence. The supplies for the evening are arranged on a buckskin hide: a bottle of Crown Royal whiskey, a cigar, massage oil and personal possessions which each of the participants will burn while channeling the invisible forces of the universe.

The Berdache were the two-spirited trans medicine men of pre-contact Aboriginal tribes. Cherished and respected for their healing abilities, they took warriors as husbands and were identified at childhood when, as young boys, they preferred to play with baskets not war toys. Early Christian missionaries were outraged to see these flamboyant cross-dressing characters riding ponies with their hair ornately braided wearing jingle dresses.

Adopted as an infant by a North End Jewish family, Dudeck's biological origins remain unknown (he's opted not to trace his birth parents). Perhaps one day he'll

discover he's a direct descendant of An-gakkuq, The Man Who Could Fly – one of the most powerful Inuit Shamans of the North. Or maybe he was the son of a Jewish sex trade worker who hooked up with an Egyptian boxer visiting Winnipeg one night in the '80s to fight Donny Lalonde, the Golden Boy, left dripping in placenta at the orphanage as soon as the umbilical cord was cut.

The witchdoctor is working on a multi-year project, a creation myth that drills down to the core of our collective psychosexual composition. He sees it projected as a wide-screen cinematic extravaganza. He's given audiences a taste of this epic drama with large-scale performance art happenings where Andy Rudolph splatters multiple nude actors with throbbing granulated sound.

Dudeck's work has garnered him a cult following in the museums and artist-run centres of Winnipeg, and at the same time a backlash from Native purists who, in a nod to the 'Birthers' movement, want to see government documentation before they'll accept this Yiddish-inflected queer Shaman as their own. Similar objections



were leveled against Native activist Ward Churchill, whose percentage of Native blood has been questioned by the right-wing in a colonial line of reasoning, with blood purity being the racist Ur-text. It's worth noting, as actor/collaborator Andrea Von Wichert passionately pointed out at a recent artist's talk, that the Shamanic tradition is not solely a North American Native phenomena. Dudeck has

many friends and lovers in the Native arts community in addition to detractors, and his purview will expand (as an emerging artist) -- bringing more facets to his Technicolor creation myth.

When the Harvest Moon rises Dudeck will journey to Montreal to continue his studies, acquiring the necessary skills to bring his myth to

life. In the tradition of Woody Allen's "Zelig" he may cease soaking up the funky Aboriginal flavor of Winnipeg to reincarnate as a Québécoise student radical. He is wading into the epicenter of the most exciting political movement in recent Canadian history, and they need a Starhawk of their own to cast prickly spells upon the National Assembly.

