

Twin Flames tour

Conversation, unity and truth

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You know how they always ask those questions if you could tell your younger self one thing, what would it be? June says she isn't sure she could have dreamed she'd be on stage, sharing her story with people who want to listen.

"Even in stories of hardship, we can find stories of hope."

Savage Daughter Cover

The word savage for June and her family is a multi-faceted one. In their family tree, many of their ancestors weren't given names, or savage was written beside their names instead.

"... savage was used as a very derogatory word for a very long time. But when we think of the word savage itself, especially now, we want to describe something of power."

She says she believes there is power in reclaiming words.

"I'm really proud to be my mother's savage daughter and my grandmother's savage granddaughter. I come from women who'd had to go through so much and had to have so much resilience."

June's grandmother came from a time when if you didn't look Indigenous, you didn't say it out loud. Due to her ancestry, her grandmother and her family weren't allowed to live on a reservation because they weren't Indigenous enough. Still, they weren't allowed to live in the French catholic community because they were considered half-breeds.

"I think she never really felt like she belonged to one world or the other ... the first chance she got, she moved to the big city, became a hairdresser, and dyed her hair blonde."

On the other hand, June's mom was raised by her great-grandmother. Her great-grandmother used to whisper,

"We need to have pride."

Broke Down

Ski'tuuq (Skidoo)

Jaaji's parents were born in igloos. The Inuit were nomadic, traveling with the seasons and through that pattern, the Inuit were able to herd husky dogs.

"The Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Government ordered the RCMP to slaughter all the husky dogs. And that immediately halted our nomadic ways. We were no longer allowed to have dogs.

"When you look up north, we went from igloos to the internet in 50 years. We had nothing but dog power and our legs, now we have Skidoos. We slept in igloos, now we sleep in big homes. That's a lot of stuff to take in in a very short amount of time, and it affects people."

Jaaji's brother has worked tirelessly to bring husky dogs back to the north, and although there are breeding programs in place now, the dogs will never be precisely the same. Canada has, however, brought dogs from Antarctica, and Jaaji's brother is involved in the programs that are rebuilding the presence of dogs in the arctic.

When June travelled north for the first time in 2015, she saw Jaaji's brother cross the finish line of a two-week, 600-kilometre dog sled race.

"It was beautiful to see the dogs get to do what they were made to do. And seeing Inuks taking back that power is really inspirational," she says.

But, those snowmobiles break down unlike husky dogs, and when Jaaji was nine, he was given life-changing advice on how to start a frozen engine. He can still recall his father's advice.

"Pee on it."

Battlefields

"I wish people would have known a little more about mental health and what it was when I was growing up," June said.

"Everyone would always say, 'oh, she's just tired, or she's just not herself today,' but depression and anxiety are real.

"Thinking about everyone going through this pandemic, people who perhaps never felt a mental health problem in their entire life, were faced with literally the scariest scenarios, and it's just a small window of what people with an actual mental health disorder feel on a daily basis."

Their song, Battlefields, explains that everyone has battlefields in their minds, and according to Jaaji and June, we carry so much as human beings, and we forget that the next person is caring just as much, if not more.

"We can never measure our pain, or someone else's because we can never truly understand what someone else is feeling. We can be empathetic to it, but we can never truly understand."

Without Tears

Jaaji's father once stood face-to-face with a polar bear for nine hours because he forgot to bring his gun. And when Jaaji was young, if he tried to cry to his father, he'd say, "No. Do not show emotion. Be a man."

"I was a policeman for 12 years. And it's not like down here when you're a policeman, you can have backup very quickly. (Jaaji was) the kind of policeman where you're isolated and may be alone. The next person to come and help you is a plane ride away."

Eventually, Jaaji fell into alcohol. But, eight years ago, after drinking for a quarter-century, Jaaji decided to stop.

"I needed to take control of my life. When you're already born as a statistic, it was something that I felt was important. I needed to gain the love of my family again. A lot of youth looked up to us as role models, we wrote a lot of songs about healing."

Jaaji says he felt like he was lying. Their song, Without Tears, is about self-introspection.

His ah-ha moment was when he was singing his own song, inebriated on stage somewhere while people sang his song word for word, he would yell the wrong town name.

"That's when I decided to stop."

Grace Too

When Twin Flames thinks of excellent allies in Canada, they think of Gord Downie. Downie, the lead singer of the Tragically Hip, dedicated everything to helping amplify Indigenous voices and help Canadians understand the lasting effect of residential schools at the end of his life.

"A few years ago, Jaaji and I were asked to be a part of the legacy tribute concert (for Gord Downie) ... and although we grew up with a lot of great music, Tragically Hip was not played in the house all that often, which was tragic in itself."

They were asked to cover one of the band's songs, and after picking their song, they were forced to change their choice on the five-hour drive to the event.

"We had to perform that night in front of 2,000 people. No pressure," says Jaaji.

They chose Grace Too on the drive and performed it that night at soundcheck.

"(Grace Too) has just been such a complete gift to us. Whether or not you believe in something after this life that's a personal choice. Still, it feels like that love that Gord had for our people lives on through that song."

Grace Too went on to be played on commercial rock radio across Canada, despite struggles for Indigenous songwriters to be played on commercial radio.

"We feel like it's a huge testament to what Gord did and the legacy he led."



Farhad Khosravi and Daniel Stadnicki are set to visit the Dekker Centre on Jan. 8. | Photo submitted

Prairie Debut at the Dekker Centre

By Miguel Fenrich
Staff Reporter

The earliest version of the santur dates back as far as Babylonian stone carvings over 2,500 years ago.

On Jan. 8, 2023, Prairie Debut, an organization in Western Canada that links classical music to rural centres, bring Farhad Khosravi and Daniel Stadnicki to the Dekker Centre.

They blend the resonating tones of the santur with the earthy sounds of contemporary percussion to create a musical journey unlike any other.

A review published in St. Albert Today says,

"The duo's hybrid of

Persian and Western music blends rapid tempos and dense ornamentation with a melodic pattern similar to poetry ... exotic, romantic, and haunting."

The pair have released two collaborative albums and have toured in multiple venues and festivals in Edmonton, including the Royal Alberta Museum, Winspear Centre, Alberta Culture Days, Mile Zero Dance, and the Yardbird Suite.

For more information, visit prairie debut's website at: www.prairiedebut.com, or to purchase tickets, visit the Dekker Centre's website at: www.dekkercentre.com

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