

**Preview Performance: August 1, 2008 7 pm, Roxy Theatre**

**Part of the Edmonton & Athabaska District Historic Festival**

The performance will be about one hour with no intermission

Written by: David Cheoros and Karen Simonson  
Starring: Steve Pirot and Kirsten Marie Rasmussen

Director: David Cheoros

Dramaturge: Karen Simonson

Story Editor: Linda Wood Edwards

Costume Designer: Geri Dittrich

Lighting and Sound Designer: Paul Bezaire



A.8007: Vivian MacMillan and her father, A.D. MacMillan



Bl.2726: Florence and John Brownlee leaving the courthouse



A.8006: Florence Brownlee



A.13,905: The Brownlee home



A.13,926: Brownlee's lawyer, A.L. Smith



A.13,927: MacMillan's lawyer, Neil Maclean

## *A Message from the Provincial Archives of Alberta*

It is with great pleasure that the Provincial Archives of Alberta co-presents *Respecting the Action for Seduction: The Brownlee Affair* with MAA and PAA Theatre during the play's Roxy Theatre preview on August 1<sup>st</sup> and Edmonton Fringe Festival run in August 2008.

With origins dating back to 1906, the Provincial Archives of Alberta's vision is to be *the* source of enduring knowledge that fully documents the Alberta experience, accessible to all and integral to the historical foundation and cultural, social and economic advancement of the province. While continuing our traditional role of being home to Alberta's government and private records of enduring value as well as a leader in the preservation and conservation of archival material, the Provincial Archives is actively pursuing new avenues for providing access to our collection holdings. What does this mean? We will provide quality in-house and virtual outreach services through special events and educational programs and exhibits. We will ensure positive research experiences in our inviting and user-friendly facility, and become active in diverse communities to expand the range of content within our holdings.

And, we hope to broaden the general awareness about what the Archives is and does by taking the facility's strengths out into the community. Collaboration on the content production and promotion of *Respecting the Action for Seduction* is a fine example of this final goal. Copies of the court transcripts, upon which the play is based on, are held at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

I encourage you all to enjoy the play and in the near future, to visit the Provincial Archives and explore other treasure troves of archival records to be found therein!

Leslie Latta-Guthrie  
Provincial Archivist  
July 2008

## *A Note from the Director*

The idea that historians engage in tug-of-war over competing interpretations of events is not new. It is, however, fun to pick up the rope ourselves from time to time.

The facts of this story are relatively simple to grasp. A young woman, an intimate friend of the Premier's family for several years, breaks off most contact with them. She consults a lawyer, briefly re-initiates contact with the family, and then launches a lawsuit claiming damages related to a two-year-long affair.

Everything else becomes opinion and imagination. And that's where theatre steps in.

The first half of this play simplifies and presents the two versions of the events as clearly as we could. The testimony that's presented on the stand, and the scenes related to it, are close to a verbatim presentation of Vivian MacMillan's and John Brownlee's actual testimony.

From there, we leap from the testimony and supporting archival material to ask a few hard questions. What series of events might reasonably have led to the trial as it unfolded? What do we as a contemporary audience have to learn?

Today, people are so used to the trope of powerful men using women inappropriately (the parade of Bill Clinton, Eliot Spitzer, Mark Foley, and so on) that we feel we know all that we need to about that version of events. Describe this story in two sentences – any two sentences – and people are ready to move to judgement against John Brownlee.

We set out to tell a more complicated story. I'd like to think it's as plausible as any interpretation of the evidence. We hope it's one that leads to conversation about trust, about attraction, and about sexual politics – and the recognition that Albertans are just as flawed, as complicated and as sexy as everyone else.

David Cheoros  
July 2008

## *Key Dates in the Brownlee-MacMillan Trail*

July 16, 1930	Premier John Brownlee travels to Edson, meets and dances with Vivian MacMillan.
October 13, 1930	According to Vivian, the beginning of her "seduction" by Brownlee.
September 1932	Vivian meets Johnny Caldwell at a dance
May 22, 1933	Caldwell consults attorney Neil Maclean.
May 24, 1933	Vivian gives a deposition to Maclean.
July 5, 1933	Brownlee picks up Vivian and notices a car is following them. Caldwell and Maclean are in the pursuing car.
August 3, 1933	Maclean sends Brownlee a letter informing him that he will be named as defendant in a suit launched by Vivian.
Early August 1933	Attorney General hires an investigator, Burford to begin gathering information on Maclean's case. Harry Brace, Superintendent of Insurance, also begins an investigation.
September 22, 1933	Maclean files a Statement of Claim against Brownlee, under the <i>Seduction Act</i> (RSA 1922, chapter 102).
November 10, 1933	Brownlee's attorney, A.L. Smith, files a Statement of Defense and Counterclaim against Vivian and Caldwell, seeking \$10,000 in damages.
November 17, 1933	Vivian and Caldwell file a defense to Counterclaim, affirming the truth of their allegations.
June 8, 1934	Trial is set to begin, but is postponed when Smith is in a car accident. He manages trial with arm in a sling.
June 25, 1934	Trial begins, starting with selections from discovery, then Vivian takes the stand.
June 27, 1934	Vivian finishes her testimony. Other witnesses for the plaintiff provide no significant corroboration of her core testimony.
June 28, 1934	Brownlee takes the stand and denies all charges. His testimony is corroborated by Florence and his secretary, Miss Emily Brown.
June 30, 1934	Smith announces dropping of Counterclaim.
June 30, 1934	Closing statements. Jury deliberates for almost 5 hours before returning a verdict, awarding Vivian \$10,000 and her father \$5,000 in damages. Judge Ives immediately expresses his disagreement and adjourns court to consider.
July 20, 1934	Maclean files Notice of Appeal.
September 1, 1934	Judge Ives formally enters his verdict, awarding damages to Brownlee and no money to Vivian.
September 19, 1934	Maclean files details of their appeal.
February 2, 1935	The Supreme Court of Alberta, Appellate Division, upholds Judge Ives' decision.
March 29, 1935	Maclean files second appeal.
October 16 & 19, 1936	The appeal is heard before the Supreme Court of Canada
March 1, 1937	The judgement from the case is released by the Supreme Court of Canada and upholds the jury's decision.
June 17, 1937	Brownlee applies for permission to appeal up to the Privy Council of the British Empire.
July 1, 1937	Brownlee receives leave to appeal to Privy Council.
1941	Brownlee's appeal is heard by Privy Council, and is rejected.



## *John Edward Brownlee*

Alberta would not be what it is today were it not for the premiership of John E. Brownlee. He is responsible for the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement in 1929, something dreamed about since the establishment of the Province in 1905, but not realized until much later, thanks to the leadership of John Brownlee. Brownlee's legacy has largely been overshadowed by the scandal that ended his time as premier and resulted in the downfall of the United Farmers of Alberta government in the 1935 general election.

Born August 27, 1883, in Norfolk County, Ontario, John Edward Brownlee was the son of William James and Christina (Shaw) Brownlee. Brownlee attended public school and later attended the Sarnia Collegiate Institute. He trained as a teacher and taught school in Bradshaw, Ontario from 1902 to 1904. He then attended Victoria College (University of Toronto) and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1908.

In 1909, Brownlee articulated with the Calgary law firm of Lougheed, Bennett, Allison, and McLaws. He was admitted to the Alberta Bar in 1912. On December 23, 1912, he married Florence Agnes Edy. They had two children: John Edy and Alan Marshall.

In 1913 he became a junior partner in the firm Muir, Jephson, and Adams. During his early years of practice, he did a considerable amount of legal work for the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company Limited (later known as the United Grain Growers Company). By 1917, Brownlee became general counsel for the United Grain Growers and was legal counsel to the United Farmers of Alberta. He also played a prominent part in the organization of the Alberta Wheat Pool.

Following the election of the United Farmers of Alberta in 1921, Brownlee became the Attorney General, even though he had not run in the election (he ran in a by-election later that year). John E. Brownlee was appointed Premier of Alberta on November 23, 1925, after the resignation of Premier Herbert Greenfield.

The United Farmers accomplished a lot while in office, but they lead Alberta through the first years of the Depression – a difficult time throughout the province and continent. Following the suit brought against him by Vivian

MacMillan, Brownlee resigned as Premier effective July 10, 1934. He continued to serve as MLA until he was defeated in the 1935 general election.

After leaving politics, Brownlee practiced law in Edmonton, and was soon legal counsel for the United Grain Growers. In 1948, he was appointed president and general manager of United Grain Growers, and moved to Calgary.

John E. Brownlee died on July 15, 1961, in Calgary.

For more information about Brownlee, check out:

*John E. Brownlee: A Biography* by Franklin Foster

Legislative Assembly of Alberta bio:

<http://www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/PREMIERS/brownlee.htm>

Provincial Archives of Alberta's *Making History: Premiers and Politics*.

<http://culture.alberta.ca/archives/educationalresources/makinghistory/default.aspx>

John Brownlee Photo – A.2149, Provincial Archives of Alberta

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### ***Primary Sources used in the creation of the play:***

Provincial Archives of Alberta:

John F. Lymburn fonds

MacMillan-Brownlee Civil Court file, GR1983.0001, file 24962

Vivian and Henry Sorenson divorce file, GR2000.1441/42785

Elizabeth and Frank Howie divorce file, GR2000.1441/45794

Orders-in-Council

*Edson-Jasper Signal*

*Edmonton Journal*

*Edmonton Bulletin*

Legal Archives Society of Alberta:

Neil D. Maclean and John W. McClung fonds

Wilbur Bowker fonds



## *Vivian MacMillan*

Vivian Almeda MacMillan was born June 10, 1912 in Nelson, British Columbia. She was the daughter of Alan Duncan and Letha MacMillan; Vivian's brother Harry was four years older than her. In 1920, the MacMillan family moved to Edson, Alberta, where Vivian's father was employed as assistant foreman in the Canadian National Railway shop. Vivian attended Edson Public School and High School, and the family regularly attended Edson's Baptist Church, where

Vivian played organ and taught Sunday School.

In 1929, Vivian began her Grade 11 year at school, which was the highest grade at Edson High School at the time. This was the same year Carl Snell began teaching Latin at the school; Vivian was one of his students. As a Baptist church goer, Carl became a family friend of the MacMillans and often attended Sunday dinner at their home. Carl proposed to Vivian in the spring of 1930, but she refused on the grounds she was too young. As she could not continue to Grade 12 in Edson, Vivian contemplated further studies in music or nursing elsewhere, though her father wanted her to remain in Edson and continue her music studies there.

In August, Vivian moved to Edmonton to take a business course at Alberta College. She finished these studies in June 1931. She started working in the office of the Attorney General on July 3rd, and worked until September 22, 1933, the day her suit against Premier Brownlee was filed. In the fall of 1932, she met a young medical student, John Caldwell, the son of Reverend J. Caldwell. He proposed to her in January of 1933.

Following the trial in June of 1934, Vivian returned to her life in Edson. On August 7, 1935, she married Henry Sorenson, of Edson, who operated an ice cream parlour there. They had one son, Allan Crestin, born about 1938. Vivian moved to Calgary in 1940, likely around the time Henry enlisted to fight in the Second World War. Upon his return, Vivian and Henry divorced, and Vivian became the bookkeeper for a construction company operated by Frank Howie. By March of 1949, Frank and Vivian were having an affair and Frank divorced his wife in 1950. Vivian and Frank were married shortly afterwards. Their son, Michael, was born in 1955. Vivian and Frank later moved to the Okanagan, then to Arizona and finally to Florida. Vivian died August 1, 1980 in Florida.

Vivian MacMillan Photo – A.8005, Provincial Archives of Alberta

## The Creative Team

### Paul Bezaire (Lighting and Sound Designer)

Paul has worked for over fifteen years as a designer and technician. He has no real schooling, but has managed to figure it out through plagiarism, trial and error. Most recently, Paul designed *A Watched Pot Never Boils* at Nextfest, and will next be appearing in the role of Technical Director for Theatre Network.

### David Cheoros (Director)

David studied theatre at the Universities of Waterloo and Victoria. He co-founded MAA & PAA Theatre with his wife, Karen Simonson. David has been the festival director at the Edmonton Fringe for a few years, and also taken shows to Fringe festivals across Canada, and in Washington and Adelaide. He's also been Executive Director of the Film and Video Arts Society, Co-Producer of the Comedy Arts Festival, and General Manager of Theatre Network. Currently, he also produces the Edmonton International Literary Festival.

### Geri Dittrich (Costume Designer)

Geri has been so busy doing costumes and props for stage, individual performers, schools, corporations and special events in and around Edmonton that she is too busy to write a decent bio

### Steve Pirot (Performer - John Brownlee)

Steve Pirot is an Edmonton-born, bred, and based theatre artist who has worked for most every professional company in Edmonton in some capacity. His formal training includes a BA Drama and a BFA Acting, both from the University of Alberta. He has performed with many companies in Edmonton, including the Citadel (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Popcorn*), Northern Light Theatre (*Wreck Beach*), and Catalyst Theatre/Theatre Network (*Faithless*). He is a Co-Artistic Producer with Azimuth Theatre, and this season he directed *God's Favoured Child — A Rant at the Living Room Play House* and performed in *Hockey Stories For Boys* at the Roxy Theatre. He is also the Festival Director for Edmonton's multi-disciplinary emerging artist festival Nextfest. At the Fringe, Steve is also appearing in Otilie Parfitt's *The Mole*.

## Kirsten Rasmussen (Performer – Vivian MacMillan)

Kirsten Marie Rasmussen is a multi talented performer hailing from the small town of Lumsden, Saskatchewan. Kirsten graduated this spring from the University of Alberta's Bachelor of Fine Arts Acting program. In the BFA's Studio Theatre season, you may have seen Kirsten in *Twelfth Night*, *While We're Young*, and as the title character in *Antigone*. As well as acting, Kirsten is passionate about playwriting, dance, physical theatre, clowning and improvisation. Kirsten joined Rapid Fire Theatre in April of 2006 and has called it home since. Other favourite credits include, *An After School Special* and *Hag* co-written and acted with the outrageous and stoic Amy Shostak, and *The Beggar and the Dead Dog* and *Romeo and Juliet* for the University of Alberta, and every wild little thing she's done at NextFest since 2004. Kirsten invites all out to her other Fringe show, *KISS MY BUS*, which she wrote with and is starring in with Ms. Shostak and the amazing Clarice Eckford.

## Karen Simonson (Dramaturge)

Karen is thrilled to be collaborating with her husband David for this project, her second foray into the world of theatre following last year's *Letters from Battle River*. Born and raised in Edmonton, Karen graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in History, and received her Masters of Arts in archival studies from the University of Manitoba. She has worked in a number of archives across Canada and is the reference archivist at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

## Linda Wood Edwards (Story Editor)

Linda entered the Edmonton Fringe scene in 2005 with *Spring Alibi* which garnered a Sterling Award nomination for Best New Fringe Work and invitations to the Capital Fringe Festival in Washington DC and the Nakai Comedy Arts Festival in Whitehorse, Yukon. Her next play *True Grid* ran at the 2007 Edmonton Fringe Festival. Both Fringe hits were directed by David Cheoros. Linda has been cutting her stage manager teeth with Gerald Osborn's *Family Squabbles* in 2007 and *Scrap Paper* in 2008. In the daylight, Linda is a CFL fanatic and association governance nerd. She is very glad to be part of this show.

**Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!**

Archives Society of Alberta  
Andrea Beca  
Azimuth Theatre  
Elisa Benzer  
Paul Bezaire  
Blake Brooker  
Adrienne Canty  
Denise Clark  
Concrete Theatre  
Chris Cran  
Clarice Eckford  
Franklin and Dorothy Foster  
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Theatre Network

...and the volunteers and staff of Edmonton International Fringe Festival.

**MAA and PAA Theatre is grateful for the support of the  
Provincial Archives of Alberta in the creation of this work.**

# Provincial Archives of Alberta

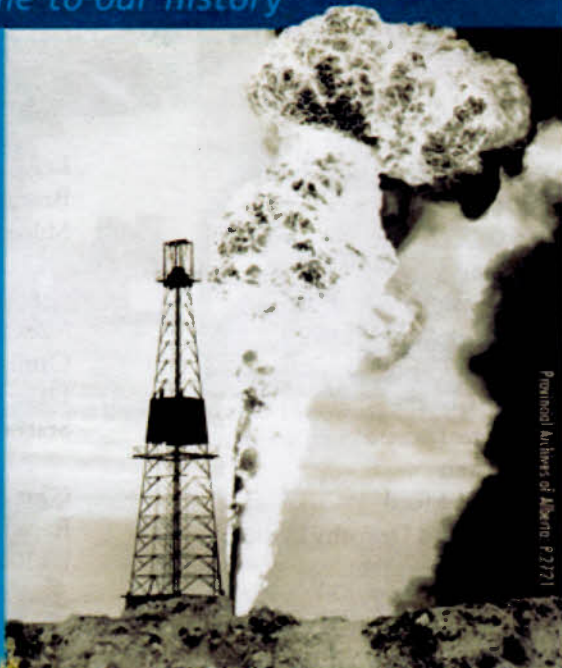
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[www.culture.alberta.ca/archives](http://www.culture.alberta.ca/archives)

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#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

Edmonton Fringe: *Respecting the Action for Seduction*,  
for information: <http://www.maapaa.ca>  
Archives Week: October 6 - 10, 2008,  
featuring events at Provincial Archives

Alberta

For more information about MAA and PAA Theatre  
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