We are delighted to welcome Northwest Coast First Nations Art Historian, Leader & Choreographer of the Git Hayetsk Dancers and The Dance Centre's artist in residence Dr. Mique’l Dangeli to Dance Central for the 2016/2017 publishing year, where she will be a regular contributor writing about First Nations dance. For an introduction to her project, please go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXXeegrjwfo

For more about the Git Hayetsk, go to http://www.githayetsk.com
Twitter and Instagram: @githayetsk
Facebook https://www.facebook.com/GitHayetskDancers
Raised on the Annette Island Indian Reserve, Dr. Mique’l Dangeli is of the Tsimshian Nation of Metlakatla, Alaska. She belongs to the Laxsgiik (Eagle Clan) and carries the Tsimshian name Smoodm’ Nüüsm (cherished more than any other person) and Tlingit name Taakw Shaawát (winter woman). In 2015, Mique’l received her PhD in art history from the Department of Art History, Visual Art, and Theory at the University of British Columbia. She is the first Indigenous person to earn a doctorate in the study of Northwest Coast First Nations art history.

Mique’l was groomed from childhood by leaders in her community to be a dancer, caretaker of songs and dances, and person responsible at potlatches. Throughout primary and secondary school, Mique’l traveled with Tsimshian dance groups, Git Lax Lik’staa Dancers and the Fourth Generation Dancers, to share songs and dances at ceremonies, cultural exchanges, and other events across the US and Canada. Witnessing and participating in these types of gatherings, as well as studying her language, preparing traditional foods, creating regalia, and spending time with elders, inspired her to study Northwest Coast First Nations art history. After graduating from high school, she moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington. In Seattle, Mique’l danced with two Tsimshian dance groups, the Tsimshian Hayuuk and Git Hoan, and performed with them in many major cities throughout North America. After graduating with her Bachelor’s degree, she returned home to Metlakatla to teach Tsimshian Studies in the local high school and take on the leadership of the the Git Lax Lik’staa Dancers.

Since 2003, Mique’l and her husband Nisga’a artist and carver Mike Dangeli have shared the leadership of Git Hayetsk (People of the Copper Shield), an internationally-renowned Northwest Coast First Nations mask-dancing group based in the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples—known today as Vancouver, BC. Git Hayetsk means “people of the copper shield” in Sm’algya-x, the language spoken by the Nisga’a, Tsimshian, and Gítx̱súan Nations. Members of the Git Hayetsk are bonded by connections to the Sm’algya-x speaking peoples with distinction in their family ties to the Haida, Haisla, Tahltan, Tlingit, and Musqueam Nations. They are dedicated to carrying on the high standards of artistry embodied by the copper shield—one of their most powerful and sacred forms of ceremonial wealth—through dance, song-composition, choreography, masks, and regalia. The Git Hayetsk perform ancient songs and dances that have been inherited through their families as well as continue their peoples’ ancient practice of creating new songs and dances to reflect and record their experiences as First Nations people today. They have performed, given lectures, and held workshops throughout Canada, the US, and abroad including Austria, Malaysia, Germany, and Japan.

Mique’l has choreographed a large body of dances for the Git Hayetsk to accompany newly composed songs by her husband Mike Dangeli as well as for ancient songs whose dances were lost through cultural oppression enforced by colonial policies, residential schools, and other means. Her work with the Git Hayetsk led to her research to focus on the processes through which Northwest Coast First Nations dance artists assert, negotiate, and enact protocol as a part of their process of creating new songs, dances, and collaborations. In doctoral thesis, Mique’l demonstrated the ways in which these complex and political processes can be viewed as Indigenous practices of sovereignty that affirm Aboriginal land rights, epistemologies, and hereditary privileges.

In addition to being an artist-in-residence at Scotiabank Dance Centre, Mique’l currently serves as a Protocol Consultant for the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance in Toronto, a sessional instructor in both Art History and First Nations and Indigenous Studies at UBC, and a curator-in-residence at Full Circle First Nations performance.

For more information on the Git Hayetsk see: www.githayetsk.com
https://www.facebook.com/GitHayetskDancers/

Mique’l has also published an article on the Git Hayetsk with Bard Graduate Center. See:

Her dissertation can be found on most university thesis databases under the following:
Mique'il Dangeli