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Gatherings VII

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ABOUT FACE

this is where we stand our ground

Gatherings. a gathering place. a gathering of nations.

and this page is my place. our meeting place. you, me, and the landscape upon which these words are written. on this page i assert myself with words like bones sinking deep into the earth. into earth memory. this page is my ground. my turtle island. where the bones of words are inside me too. and i am rooted to this place. to the land. singing my words over this landscape. playing this song like music from a bone flute passed from generation to generation. this voice is mine. and yet through me my ancestors speak and sing and are given voice. their thoughts flow through me. there is strength in this voice that is mine and theirs.

and around me other voices call out. singing and laughing and crying. telling stories, speaking poetry, asserting themselves. calling out and answering. calling and listening and answering just as i do. and between us a song forms, an ancient song. a song of the people of the land. a calling and listening and responding. a uniting and blending. a harmony of voices.

singers of songs. indigenous writers. orators. bone carvers. gathering. standing ground at this place. this gathering of nations.

indigenous writers. we gather together on this meeting ground. this burial ground that holds bones of thought. this living ground that is ancient and sacred and new, like a song sung by each generation. like the landscape of grandmothers. like the spiritual place that is inside each of us. where our ancestors' thoughts are. and writing roots us to this place, to the trees, to the land, to each other. all is connected.

indigenous writers. this is the ground upon which we stand. we know this ground and this ground knows us. she recognizes our ancestors in us. she knows our genealogy. we carry this knowing. and so we will not be moved. we will not be muted. even if our

stories are ignored. our tongues ripped from our throats. our poetry ridiculed. our mouths slapped. we will not be moved. no matter how many times the maps are changed, the borders shifted, the lines drawn. we will not be moved.

indigenous writers. this is the ground upon which we stand. this is the motherland. the gathering place. the place for remembering, for singing, for telling stories, for honouring the bones of our ancestors. this is why we stand firm. why we will not be moved. why our writing is resistance. and protest. Ipperwash, Gustafsen Lake, Wanganui, Kahnesatake, Wounded Knee, Chiapas Restigouche, Hawai'i Nei, Green Mountain Road, Neyaashiinigiing... the Black Hills, Uluru, Halawa Valley, Nochemowenaing... our sacred places, our homelands, our memories are in our words.

indigenous writers. every mark on every page is a foot firmly planted. every story, every poem, every word given breath, is eternal. imprinted into eternity. like fossil in stone. like the moon in the night sky: enduring.

indigenous writers. this our territory. this is indigenous land. where our values, our ways of speaking, our oral traditions, our languages, our philosophies, our concepts, our histories, our literary traditions, our aesthetics are expressed and accepted and honoured each according to our nations. this is where we carve stories into the memories of our people. we sing songs our children will remember. it is to them we speak. it is for them we sing. mee iwih. mee minik.

these are our stories, our songs, our words, spoken in our voices, in our ways, for our people.

we are standing ground. kawgigeh.

kawgigeh

OPENING ADDRESS

Speech to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations

Hua Kola, my name is Arvol Looking Horse, my Lakota name is Horse man. I humbly stand before you as Keeper of the Sacred Pipe, which White Buffalo Calf Woman brought 19 generations ago. Wakan Tanka, Great Spirit created everything upon Mother Earth. Paha Sapa, the Sacred Black Hills in South Dakota is where our spiritual power and identity flows, the heart of everything that is. Our stories tell us that our ancestor emerged from the place we know now as Wind Cave. Many of our stories and Star Knowledge informs our way of life.

After the Creation story a great race took place around the Sacred Black Hills in an area called The Racetrack. The race was between the two-legged and the four-legged. The two-legged won the race. From that time on we used the Buffalo for ceremonies, for food, shelter and clothing. Our First People were the pte oyate (Buffalo People). The extinction of the Buffalo reflects the status of the Lakota people.

The victimization our people have experienced at the hands of government representatives over the last hundred years continues to this day, and it must stop. A hundred years ago the government ordered the slaughter of sixty million Buffalo, this constituted our main livelihood. The intention was to pacify and reduce our people to a state of dependence and poverty. Our Sacred Lands, the heart of our Nation, was guaranteed with the signing of the 1851 Treaty. At this time the representatives from the White House had the bible and our representatives had the Treaty Pipe. They prayed over this land. Over a hundred years ago, that was our way of life. We kept our word. Then, gold was discovered in our holy land. A Lakota Standing Rock Delegate, Goose, made this statement regarding the events that took place.

General Custer and some soldiers came to me and asked me if I was able to go and show them where I found this gold... I told them I could, so we started for the Black

Hills.... Soon after our return, General Custer started for the Black Hills a second time, to keep the white prospectors out as the land belonged to the Indian. ...Sometime after, I and some others were called to council held at Red Cloud Agency, Nebraska to confer with some commissioners that were sent out by the government to cede the Black Hills to the United States.... We refused on the ground that a majority of the Sioux were out on a hunting trip.

General George Custer tricked Goose into thinking they would protect the land; instead Custer ended up paving the unexpected road for the white prospectors, abrogating the Fort Laramie Treaty. The invading settlers defaced our Sacred Black Hills and we have struggled for the return of our Holy Land to this day. Our leaders have always fought to protect the land and the people. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, two of the greatest Indigenous leaders in American history, never signed treaty and never relinquished Aboriginal title to the land. Crazy Horse had the most followers and he refused to Treaty. They were both politically assassinated for their resistance to the U.S. subjugation. However, their blood relatives are alive and well today. They can kill our leaders but their visions will never die.

General Custer and General Ulysses Grant were under orders to "pacify" the "hostiles" using any means necessary. The United States government waged a genocide campaign against my ancestors. Our people endured unspeakable acts. One example of how they dealt with the "Indian problem" was the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. Four hundred unarmed men, women and children were slaughtered. At the time of arrival there were over fifty million Native Americans. In 100 years they decimated our populations to a mere million. Some tribes were slaughtered to extinction. There were more "casualties" in the so-called "Indian Wars" in a fifty year period than there was with WWI and WWII combined. The holocaust of Native Americans has yet to be truthfully depicted. As I said, our status is similar to that of the Buffalo. In fact, there are more of our ancestors remains in museums than there are living survivors. We seek to reclaim these

Sacred remains which were perversely displayed for all Americans to observe, further degrading our forefathers. It is time to restore the dignity of our People and Nations.

The survivors were forced on to concentration camps, the U.S. government called reservations. Our children were taken to Christian run residential schools where they were physically, emotionally, sexually and spiritually abused, severely punished if they spoke their language or practised their traditions. Our ceremonies were outlawed. Our ceremonies were forced underground for fear of persecution by the U.S. government until the 1978 Freedom of Religious Act. A country that was founded on the principles of democracy and religious freedoms did so with the blood and soul of my ancestors. The injustice continues. I am here to see it stop. We must correct the historical wrongs. We need your help to do this. Apartheid and genocide exist in America and will continue to exist unless the world pressures the U.S. to deal justly and honorably with the First Americans.

Today, with so few resources available, our people are at the mercy of government officials. These same government officials continue to take our sacred lands, livestock and horses. We have no avenue for due process or legal recourse. We are not protected by the U.S. constitution. That is why I address you today, to pursue our rights on behalf of the Sioux Nations. We are resilient and spiritual people who know the time has come for prophecies to emerge from sacred places.

A prophecy which has great significance for us is the story of the Great Flood which came to this sacred island long before the contact with Europeans. A flood was sent to purify Mother Earth and our people were residing in an area we now call Pipestone, Minnesota. This sacred stone represents the blood of our ancestors. It was sometime after the flood that the Sacred Pipe was brought to our people by a spirit woman we now refer to as the White Buffalo Calf Woman. She instructed our people in sacred ceremonies and how to live in balance with all life. The bowl of the pipe is made of the Inyansa (red stone of our mother) and it also represents the female. The stem of the pipe is made of wood

and represents the Tree of Life and the male. The Tree of Life represents the root of our ancestors. As this Tree grows, so does the spirit of the ancestors' people. The only time the pipe is put together is when you are in prayer. After she had given these instructions to our ancestors, she said she would return as a White Buffalo Calf.

Our prophet Black Elk said the Nations Sacred Hoop was broken at the Massacre of Wounded Knee in 1890. To begin mending the hoop we have led a spiritual ride to wipe the Tears of the Seventh Generation from 1986 to 1990. The Nations Hoop has begun to heal and mend. The prophecy tells us the White Buffalo Calf will return.

In August of 1994, a White Buffalo Female Calf was born. This tells us it is time to take our rightful place in leading the people towards Peace and Balance once again. We will be strong and the people will heal. Our healing is global.

On June 21st of 1996 we will return to the Sacred Black Hills to pray for world peace. We will pray for the return of our Holy Land. We will pray for the two-legged, four-legged, and winged ones, and for Mother Earth. We ask you to pray with us. Indigenous Nations know our earth is suffering. Humanity is heading towards total chaos and destruction — that is both a scientific and spiritual fact. The new millenium will make harmony or the end of life as we know it. Starvation, war and toxic waste have been the mark of the Great Myth of Progress and Development. As caretakers of the heart of Mother Earth it is our responsibility to tell our brothers and sisters to seek Peace. We ask every Nation to declare June 21 World Peace and Prayer Day. Pray at this time with us from your sacred areas, churches, temples, mosques. Pray for the Seventh Generation to have World Peace and Harmony. This is the message I bring to you. May Peace be with you all.

Mitakuye Oyasin.

RIGHTS

TAKING ON THE WAR TODAY

We are in a time of war with those who destroy the environment, and threaten the existence of all living things. If we are to take on this battle, our best defense is to be in a healthy strong place emotionally, physically, and most of all, spiritually. When these parts of our being are nurtured and cared for the collective mind is able to resolve these situations. It is then instinct for survival overrides the way we each think and act in our normal day to day lives. Because of the hopeless way of thinking in this modern era there needs to be a sense of hope to keep visions of a good future alive in the minds of the people. Our children and the earth are fully dependant on us to continue finding ways to slow down the destructive processes in order to give our people and the earth time to recover and heal.

To take on this war is to be warrior, however, because of the modern technological world in which we live, the roles and duties of the warrior have changed drastically in the past hundred years. In this we must not only look at what we are doing but we must also look at what we are not doing in upholding our responsibilities.

During the 70s many of us used alcohol and drugs and by doing so, hurt our own resistance movement. It caused a lot of division within our communities and turned some people against what we were fighting for. In the 60s and 70s, there was an attitude in the movement that we should go out and face the bullets and die, if necessary, to bring the injustices inflicted on our people to light. During this resistance era many of our people did lose their lives. Hundreds of others were incarcerated in the state, federal, and provincial penal institutions of North America. Many others were forced off their reservations into urban areas because their lives were threatened.

Today, we can see how things might have been different if we had been sober and clear thinking. Our intent had not been to hurt our Nations but to get them to become aware that the government was legislating our rights away and systematically committing

genocide against our people. I know now that a key to making a positive change is to start with ourselves. For the most part that means healing the inner spirit. When we accomplish this, then and only then, do we start to have a positive impact within our families, communities, and Nations.

I was at Kahnawake in 1990, when the army invaded Tekakwitha Island, with four hundred soldiers, helicopters, APCs, automatic weapons, razor wire, tear gas, and 50 calibre machine guns. I felt true anger as I first walked up to the razor wire and I wondered how they could be so racist and hateful as to intrude, militarily into these peoples own territory. It was so easy to get caught up in that rush of emotion, but I also can say that not once did I feel despair within the people, if anything there was a strong feeling of confidence, in themselves and each other. So what I saw as their strength was the great courage in the collective determination of a people and, on that day, I wondered how the white people had been able to put us in the position we find ourselves today.

While in the camp of the Shuswap defenders at Gustafsen Lake, I sat and listened to the talk about dying. I reminded them that our people have resisted for generations upon generations, and that the fight is for survival; it is not about dying. And yes, sometimes our people have to make those sacrifices but to prepare for those acts and to be a warrior isn't an overnight decision. Self sacrifice and spiritual awareness of our responsibilities to one another, the land and all of creation, is the reason these things are put in our minds and hearts. We don't throw away our lives because we are frustrated and feel that we have been wronged. I asked them to look and see the peace and beauty that is in the camp even while being surrounded by hundreds of armed men and APCs. To see that the only way they can take away the peace and beauty is if you give them the power to take your lives.

Such acts in defence of people, the territory and the future are examples of practicing and living sovereignty and controlling destiny. Fighting for what is already ours is not a difficult thing to do, however, the more important and harder part of the fight is

for the individual to believe in and practice those rights that he or she is defending; otherwise it is just rhetoric.

So the battle grounds have shifted and we face our enemy with a whole new breed of warriors. When a call goes out and a message touches a person to go to offer assistance, a spirit awakens in them. There is a definite change in a person's thinking and in the way they respond to the situations, when they are following Fools Crow's instructions that warriors have to prepare themselves spiritually first and that this is the most important preparation. We now see this movement happening around us with many of our people returning to their cultural and spiritual ways and, therefore, giving the younger generation a better example to follow. We still face many of the same situations in our communities but there is less fear to take on the problems and work towards resolving them to make positive changes.

We must be careful in how we deal with situations which jeopardize our rights, the land and its resources, because our enemy is getting smarter in how to counteract and subvert our resistance. I know that the government does not give or take our rights away but some of our own people believe that it does. They believe in the governmental process. They are the ones who negotiate the rights of our grandchildren out of existence.

It is extremely hard for me to try and say in words, the feelings which prevailed during those years and up to this generation of resisters and freedom fighters. I hope and pray that you find your place in this struggle. To the men and women of the Six Nations who fought the army with bare fists and drove them out of your land, I have the deepest respect for all of you. To the strong-hearted defenders at Gustafsen Lake, remember why blood was spilled on that land in a sacred manner. Under heavy fire, you charged the enemy and lived to tell the story. I will tell my grandchildren these stories to remind them that the fires in the Confederacies are still burning strong in the hearts of our allies, the Six Nations and the Shuswap.

Untitled

One must visualize, being on the Road Block. Or walking the line of confrontation. The passive seeking of public sympathy, has fallen on deaf ears. The security blanket of the Media, has been lifted. You are face to face, with Armed Force. Sent to subdue your defence. Don't forget about the "Red Dots." Remember that the spirits of thousands of fallen Warriors are with you. To either greet you into their world. Or to guide you on, to fight another day.

"You With The Gun"

You look with fear in your eyes, as you peer from behind your false courage of Racism.
It is the same law, that keeps you from opening fire.
That is keeping me, from zipping up your body bag.
Soon those rules of engagement, will be turned in for that Geneva Convention.
We all know, that there are no rules – except on CNN.
Sleep well, for we already possess your very nightmares.
Kiss your children farewell, as you salute your acting superior.
Remember that those you fear the most, are stirring from our hundred year nap.

The Whales Are Glad They're Not Indians

For the three gray whales
I was cheering,
Hoping, like others, that they would
get free of the ice
and they say it cost a million
dollars to help
the two who finally make it
and I was thinking
about how much
the USA spends
to kill each Indian in Central America
and why don't more people
stay glued to their TV's
cheering on the Indians
as they try to escape
from the helicopter gunships
and Contras
and army death squads.

I respect whales
intelligent ones
whom we have learned
should not be slaughtered
anymore, and
yet I wonder
how long will it take to learn
not to kill the Native People
of this land
after 500 years of genocide.

It seems the whales
cannot be called communists
and now there are so few
that most countries
have abandoned their killing

And will that be true with the
Native American race?

When the brown people of Central America
have been slaughtered
and replaced by mixed-bloods
and white people from the north
raising cattle for hamburgers
and export crops
to sell in super-markets
then will it be like it is
with the Cherokees and the Sioux.
the Hopis and the Choctaws,
they can be left alone
once they've lost their lands
and are run by the
white churches and the
Interior Department?

In case you've forgotten
Native Americans didn't have to be
called communists
in those days
tribalism was enough
with paganism
and just the fact that they had
countries of their own
that the U.S. wanted,
that was enough!

Avarice guaranteed that Indian land
was mostly gone
after 1890
and then the oil had to be stolen
in this country
and whatever good land
had remained
was taken by the allotment system,
leasing, and fraud of
the usual kind.

Avarice guaranteed that the U.S. would
turn south, hacking off a big slice of
Indian Mexico and then,
looking south, beyond,
to little republics
less able to resist
the Yankee dollar...
and the Marines.

Not long it was, then, that
every rebel Indian
every freedom-loving
halfbreed
every zambo
became a "red"
and to fight for your independence
to fight for simple justice
was enough to earn the label
of "commie."

In times past those called whales had no rights,
for their very being was
demanded to produce
money
their body liquids and
sometimes flesh
being sold
to produce profits
for the greedy
and now that they are almost gone
the harpoons and
factory ships
no longer pursue
them
quite so relentlessly
and overwhelmingly
but the Indians...

The Native Red-Brown Peoples of America
it seems
are to be granted no reprieve
hunted when they were
just Indians
now they are murdered
as leftists
and communists
for only seeking justice in their own lands!

It's good that whales
don't own any land that the
Rich People want-
It's good that you can't call whales
a bunch of leftists!

A preacher in Houston, a Christian
tells his white
congregations, so they say,
that it is God's will
to kill communists
murder being okay
but then
they always did like to
kill Indians in Texas
not much Indian land left
in the vast Lone Star State!

When the greedy people want something
that belongs to someone else
they always find a way-
don't they-
to come up with the
right names
the big dirty ones
Savages
Injuns
Halfbreeds
Greasers

Leftists
Commies

Isn't it time to recognize the fact
that people of American Race
are as good as whites
that the masses of
Guatemala
of El Salvador
of Nicaragua
deserve the right to life
free from
bullets of death
made in the U.S.A.?

I experience great joy
in knowing that
the whale people
are
at last
being given a chance
to live in their oceans
free from terror.

I ask you then
where are the
oceans of the Indians?
Can you show me the waters
where Indians will be
left alone, will be free?

BLOODLINES

Your steely blue eyes
Open wide, staring
Your hunger spilling
All over my body
Your desire oozes
To invade my space
Your ever so obvious hatred
Contorts your face
As your mouth twists into a smirk
To tell me your Grandmother
was a full blooded Indian!

My blood memory boils
As I think of your Grandmother
And all the generations of Indian women
Who sacrificed themselves
To men like you
Thinking they were building alliances

My conscious memory shudders
As my brown skin cringes to the tone of disdain
Of you and your ancestors
Who so easily stole our lands
And now you want to own our bloodlines too
So you hold a gun to our heads

My spirit memory glistens
As I hear the voices of my Grandmothers
Telling me not to forget
To protect our blood
Because it is as precious as our lands
We stand to protect

My heart memory screams
NOT ONE INCH MORE....
NOT ONE DROP MORE....
NO WAY, NO HOW, NO MORE!

SOUTHWEST JOURNAL: MEDICINE EAGLE'S GATHERING

(in memory of Chief Reymundo Tigre Perez)

Oyes pues, Maestro Tigre, now that you have crossed over to the other side, can you tell us what it is like? Is it similar to the stormy times we shared in Detroit, wandering amongst the chaos, searching for the meaning of life in the present tense? Is it the madness of the 1960s with knife held between the teeth swinging from one mast of injustice to another, our written words ambushing the King's representatives at every cove on the shore? Did we do right in risking our lives to immolate Crazy Horse and the Mixteca Indian leader Emiliano Zapata ascending from the mountain top for an occasional raid on the oppressors who held our people captive? The midnight thieves continue to toss stones at our sacred temples, breaking every window then running away without being caught because they know that after all, boys will always be good 'ole boys. From where you can see Tigre, is anyone up there keeping an accurate record of all this?

Just a few miles east of the Kanto celebration dedicated to the well being of the sea creatures, I reconsidered the trophies safely labeled and stored in the crowded automobile; wild desert and mountain sage, red Colorado cedar, earth stones with images running through them, a pair of old gourd rattles from Mayo River country farther south, and a special parrot feather given by the Huichol on the burning desert floor of the Kiva. These objects we took home with us to guide us through the wintry blasts of difficult times. They grant us the authority to speak on behalf of the earth's distress and dismemberment, a genocide against the living creatures of the earth that continues with a renewed frenzy at the scent of money. It was the last time we saw you. We embraced many lessons at Kanto, endured the weather and our own doubts. Our lives were enriched and changed. When authority is carefully passed on it may someday resonate again with the same if not stronger force. This lifetime knows its limitations does it not? A path not taken, a road pursued too far?

St. Vincent Hospital
Congestive Heart Failure
Shown Sunday through Saturday
10:05, 12:35
15:05, 20:05

St. Vincent, pues vato,
there is a hole in my heart
where a poem oughta be,
an ache in my soul,
for the loss of innocence.
The Medicine Bundle dangles
over the edge of the bed,
embraces the blood pressure ball—
a black spring bulb draped over it;
027/020 nitro blood thinner
where a poem for life oughta be.

They claim their machines can pump on forever
without being held by the hand, if you let them;
until one bright morning without warning,
Death will smile at the foot of the bed,
a macabre jokester playing pinball
with the master control switches,
flicking lit matches at the pure oxygen containers,
wearing dark sun glasses in winter.

Anciano Tigre, following the arrest and subsequent parole by the fascist cardiac police, I was surprised to find my name on the mail still being delivered to the same old house, surrounded by the Tree Spirits who had rescued me. Was this an indication that all was well? Or do you mean to tell me that when we die life really does continue onward and upward without us? Does the U.S. Postal Service also deliver in heaven?

So many foolish questions. So little time to respond.

The brief stroll through Santa Fe brokerage houses selling Indian wares and dreams, with slight variations one from the other, did produce a few treasures; a nod of the head in greeting from an Indian homeless person in tattered Levis moving skillfully and stealthily amongst the crowd of wealthy tourists, and the Pueblo elder living in the city who greeted us at the doorway of the jewelry shop, begging time and money. The elder said that most people believe that he is crazy from the sun. He said he knew that the lessons of the burning sand are patience and strength. He had wandered the lonely canyons of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains and farther north to Taos searching for his 'double,' the 'other,' the Nahual guardian, he said.

Camping in the desolate, dry foothills of the Jemez Mountains having to transport in bathing and drinking water, life grinds down to a crawl before the onslaught of the noon day sun. Wandering among the dry canyon walls makes one appreciate the abundance of water in the northland where it is too often taken for granted. At Sun Dance time, four days among the stone crevices veined red, purple and yellow; among the spontaneous combustion of pinon, cottonwood, juniper and mountain mahogany populations of trees, wondering how they can stand still all day without a whimper in the hundred degree heat. Four nights with the coyote and wild dog songs to Tsi-mayoh in the distance, watching their silhouettes move closer to the campsite when the familiar sounds of the aging evening quieted. Coyote had picked up the scent of Walking Bear, the thick haired out-of-his-environment Husky dog. I wondered if Bear could summon the strength not to dart outside after the intruders. Seven thousand feet above the dry arroyos, the stones there speak of still higher places, stronger winds and more true to life earth revelations in their pristine, simplest forms. The scars are real and the happiness complete in the victory over the challenges of the journey of a full life. It is what separates the Iyac Tlamacazqui, the warrior priest, from the simply curious. Maestro, our exploits have been many and the battles won numerous yet always there is one more crossroad, one more raging river luring us to the promises on the other side.

Maestro Tigre, at Chimayo Sanctuario the miniature silver and brass replicas of arms, legs, hearts, abdomens and other body parts filled the showcase at the gift shop. The carved imitations of body parts were used as offerings in prayers to secure a cure. On view were crucifixes from Africa, homemade, brightly painted Christian crosses made of wood and also carved animal representations to be carried on the person for protection. The small wooden, silver and brass animal figurines attracted me the most. These were representations of the animal guardian spirits worn by the Indian people. I chose one that would insure the continued fertility of the creative heart and mind. The store keeper claimed that it was the civilized Spaniards who brought the symbol of the quincux and the cross to this continent. I did not mind his ignorance because the inner silence of such truths, tested by the forces of Creation, is stronger than their outward manifestations. Their outward manifestations allow them to be seen by we pitiful Human Beings. The symbols have power only in the truth. It is no wonder that the priest in charge at Chimayo felt compelled to turn to the sole Indian policeman on the church premises to keep an eye on me. It seems that one of the parishioners had turned me in. All that the bumper sticker on our automobile asked was for people to HONOR INDIAN TREATIES, como en Chiapas. It seemed like a reasonable request considering all that had been taken from us. The Indian policeman that was summoned was a young man, visibly embarrassed that he was asked to follow me. We exchanged nods in confirmation over the ridiculous situation. We both understood how deep the scars of history, war and revenge had cut their mark into this vast and complex countryside. We both had our work to do.

That same evening the white column of fragile clouds formed themselves into a crude Indian cross, a quincux, the ancient symbol of the four directions, the four elements and the four previous worlds. The red sand cliff overhang in the distance that protected me from a sudden downpour of rain a few days ago shuffled the ice in the cooler with the invisible hand of hot reflected sunlight. The clinking sound of ice being transformed into liquid water, a herons favorite dining place, became the conduit for the realization that all things truly are connected to one another. Knowledge

was contained equally in the majestic rise of Quetzalcoatl as the Morning Star as well as in the scamper of tiny spider legs that hardly left a trace of their passing on the cooling, shifting sand. Sun spots reached with their heavy winds to carry the canyon hummingbird from Cliff Rose to Palo Duro, the lizard from one cactus shadow to another. Automobiles on the curving canyon road above our encampment joined the migration from the steaming city to the cooling lake in the distance. Sharp, piercing mountain shadows slowly dissolved into another crystal clear, cool moonlit night. All was as it should be, and life continued to move ahead as a matter of inches, a moment lost to delay, an opportunity better left alone.

There is one thing I would like to ask of you Maestro Tigre, please tell me that there are no Indian police up in heaven. Tell me that our people do not contradict one another up there. Tell me, will I have to hide the tequila bottle under my long, yellow, plastic authentic Dick Tracy trench coat to get it through the gates? Pues guy, you will meet me there for one final toast, que no? It will be good to see you again in a place where words have no power. We will rest and not be ashamed of being content with watching the Universe unfold before us. We will sit silently and partake of the energy that moves within and around us, that elongates and shrinks us with each harmonic pulsation of warm summer sunlight. We will move as the seed moves to seek its rooting in the womb of our precious Earth Mother, quietly and with much humility.

School

I'll take you back to olden days
 when school began.
They came to the place
 where my ancestors lived.
They ripped away
 from the arms of my people
Children of the future
 crying for help.
They took them away
 to residential schools
 to teach them a new way of life.
Along with it all
 they take away
 my way of talk.
Children of future still
 learning from books.
But for me
 I'd rather be
 back in the older ways.
Where my ancestors live
 free from all prisons,
 rat race and all.
They say Education is the way of life,
 But all I see is trouble ahead.
All technology destroying my Mother Earth.
 Just look around and you will see.
People of the future so far gone,
 So full of Education they cannot stop,
 they go on and on.
Children of the future still in school.
 Just remember who you are.
Don't ever forget
No one in this world can be the Great Spirit.

Brown-Eyed Divas

Swallowing 500 years of ancestral tears. Voices seared,
salted, numbed, silenced....quiet. Swallow. Again and again and
again and again....until,
salt settles as history does and becomes, memory.

They were born on the River Why, somewhere just south of
Denial.
History says,
they were the last of the Red Paint People.
The People never vanish.
They find another place to be.
Sometimes not recognized in another form,
the spirit shapeshifts,
gives way to another,
to change places
in celebration
of the cycles everchanging.

In this spirit,
they smudged themselves with red ochre,
red paint,
and are called savages, red Indians.
Literal winds of contempt lashing at their heels,
they travelled
back and forth
between Survival, Hope and Justice carrying with them, all of
their cultural baggage, lined in indelible ink, that reads:
Assimilate, assimilate,
let go your pagan ways,
do the White thing.
Never remember the sacred ways
of the spirit womb that bore you,
mother, matter, wood.

When they reached Hope, they laid out their dreams at the edge
of the universe. Threading songs, braiding histories, weaving
courage, into the soul of the nation.

Shapeshifting into the skin of the earth
on the backs of waking dreamers,
power robes wove the landscape of the six worlds,
stitch by stitch.

Mirroring songs coaxed by sound,
echoing colors urged by light,
seamless dreamers
patterned signs of symbols
into the cloth of the nation.

Walking in whispers
with the breath of the land,
symbols danced in wonder
colored by the celebration of the makers
when,
the custom tailor
sewed their hearts
too close to their sleeves.
Cut fabric,
from the soul of their nation,
frayed at the seams,
sewn too loosely
with faith colored threads
of peace,
ordered
by good government.

They pass on salvation,
gently folding their dreams back into their cultural bags and carry
them along reality's path.

They walk ten miles down the reservation road.
Bus don't stop for Indian souls.

They walk ten miles down the reservation road
past the Indian Agent screaming cat calls

They walk ten miles. Pass the vintage reserve

sipping rationed memories of the Indian years.

Pour them another. White whines, if you please.
Water into wine and, they become savaged, ravaged,
tributaries of Indian times.

And they become at the river's edge, memories
waiting out another's Indian summer.
Pulling souls over their shoulders,
they wade into Autumn and continue west again toward Reality,
along the throat of the river.

At the edge of the universe they stretch their granite spines
against the earth, stopping before reaching Denial, chewing
courage, digesting history,
shielding themselves against the thrust of colonial winds
whispering;

Ignore this,
wrap it round the crutch of immortality,
hide behind the cross,
pay for us sinners.
Oh Christ,
we'll be your mothers,
build a brand new wound.
Carve new wombs of glory,
while young braves hang from broken necks.

From the distance, memories visit,
crawling over stones they circle sovereign sisters.
Seven saintly sinners sitting in the sun
sat up on a pulpit, with mesmerizing grins
they looked out over savages indigenous to sin,
and danced erotic promises in blankets soiled in sin.
They circled Noble Savages dangling crosses in the wind
unravelling tales of justice,
prophets in a din.

Thin memories. Long tails
ease into colonial suits and
slither down granite spines into Denial,
into Band Office shoes.
Measuring blood quantum dues
Band Office Blues
land claims refused
welfare abused
as council reclines in shiny new shoes
Ah. The Band Office Blues
who to abuse
which funds to misuse
how much culture to lose
whose soul to pool by the gambling fools
singing the Band Office Blues.
As the
Brown Eyed Divas,
Matriarts on their knees,
scrub whitewashed truths
out of red-neck genes.

Brown Eyed Divas.
Matriarts on their knees,
tearing worn-out lies
from white collared sleeves.

Brown Eyed Divas.
Matriarts, if you please,
ain't scrubbing no more truths
on wounded, bended knees.

Meeting Place

Sweet garments of memory,
I don't know how to follow you.

Crossing and recrossing
the borders.

I was a mermaid once
for ten minutes
in a four-year-old's eyes
and became one
then
and now
when I remember
and emerge.

From the water
laughing
hair like seaweed.

Crowned princess, twice
one night in North Carolina
one in Illinois
my identity
so easy
Indian princess
the one in Peter Pan.

Refuses
like him
to grow old.

Simple distances those.

But these.

At the boat landings, I see you raise your leg, knee bent, stepping to shore. Your hair falls across my eyes. I tilt our chin and flick it back, then brush it away with the back of our hand because the fingers hold to the handle of the bucket. The hand is chapped and tight with the cold night air. It smells of fish.

Then you look up and I see you grin your triumph. I remember the tired joy we felt at bringing home a meal. But when we look up, we see the game warden who took those fish we netted that hungry year. We zip up our thin jackets and rub hands against our pant legs knowing we must try again and knowing he knew, too.

I pass the bucket to the eager children, reach down to grab the boat and pull her further onto shore. The old man grasps the other side, together we ease it out of the water. But as I turn to nod my thanks, shouting faces, angry twisted mouths, crowd in at the edges of the night. They are that frowning game warden of forty years past. They are the resort owners' overgrown children, cursing, throwing stones.

You are stepping out of the boat. Your hair falls full across your eyes. When you push it back, I am standing before you, a protector. You are my past, standing before me. I am at the landing, one foot on shore, one in the shallow water.

DIGS

The N.P.I.I.C. central headquarters was small but served its purpose. Tucked in behind an insurance office, near the ancient Universal Studios lot, the base post provided easy access to those peoples living inner-city. Outside, the two-story brick building looked common and was barely noticeable when driving by. Inside, the large sheet metal desks, molded chairs, and cracked plastic blinds gave the office the appearance of a low-paid private detective's quarters. Usually there were only a couple of dozen members gathered. Today there were so many people within the small space that their shoulders were pressed against the glass windows and they could hardly move about without bumping into one another. This was an important day for them. One they had long waited for. A turning point.

The votes were in. A new spokesperson had been confirmed. 90% of the known members had turned in written votes and another 5% turned up at the meeting for a show of hands. A landslide victory was proclaimed. Mike Swimmer was the newly elected speaker for the Native Peoples' Intertribal International Coalition.

N.P.I.I.C. operated as a nation within a nation. Its members banded together to fight for sovereignty of the red nations, for full treaty benefits, for enforcement of pro-native policies of the Re-organization Effort, and for advocacy of a variety of civil rights issues which were, in the opinion of N.P.I.I.C., still unresolved. The members were definitely intertribal, yet worked together as though they had begun a tribe of their own. Not a Pan-American Native group, where all assimilated into a whole, but a group respectful of each other's differences willing to embark an alliance so strong it could not be suppressed again. Its members were from throughout North America and from the Aleutian and Hawaiian Islands. They worked closely with other groups from Central and South America, and from the Caribbean Islands. In addition, they supported other indigenous struggles worldwide including that of the Australian Aborigines, Africans, Middle Easterners, Indians, Saami, and Asians.

In the past, many North American Native organizations had failed due to the clash of intertribal cultures. N.P.I.I.C. set the new standard for unity and solidarity among Native peoples. The

group was mostly composed of direct descendants of the Hold-Outs and other Native leaders of the past; they vowed to restore the continent to its state before the Euro-invasion Period. They vowed to restore the dance, to dance back whatever the Intruders/Invaders rid this land of. To bring back the rich blue, red, and yellow colors of wildflowers stretching out through long, lush, green grasses; to return the mighty elk, bear, moose, and wolves to live alongside the graceful deer, otters, puma, and panthers on the mountains and the plains; to revitalize habitat for eagles, falcons, herons, and flamingos; to quicken the pulse, the flush of feathers bound to the ground by skies and waters so thick with poison, the breath of wildlife would soon be choked away forever without intervention from The People; to reestablish life as it was known before these days when natural life was no longer viewed as precious, but as expendable.

The elections had been held in the belief that the people within the organization should choose a leader based on honor, respect, strength, accomplishments for the betterment of The People, generosity, and honesty. They were based on a back to traditions wisdom. Swimmer was a logical choice. He had shown all of these qualities over and over again, and had never faltered in the face of danger.

Not one to be intimidated, he had often gone out on a limb for the cause without ever being asked to or prodded as some of the others had to be. He believed the old ways — respect for the earth and her inhabitants. He also believed in peace. The only time Swimmer would resort to other means was when Native people were being endangered or oppressed in any way by the Mainstreamers. He had been instrumental in Re-Organization negotiations and in setting policy, twenty years before, for the media to follow in portraying The People in literature, audio-track radio, film, television, and vista-holo broadcasts. Those who knew him knew that he also had the gift of humility and would stop whatever he was doing to help an elder, a woman, a child, or a fellow man in need. This is what a warrior does, he had been told repeatedly as a child, and he understood that to be a man was meant also to follow the ways of a warrior in principal and philosophy. This is what separates us from the assimilated — the ability to remember our ways. He had heard his older friends and relatives say this many times.

The meeting produced no mixed feelings as the candidates had not offered themselves to the election. They were nominated on reputation alone, not on a campaign strategy. All of those nominated raised Swimmer high into the air above their heads and shook his hand one at a time. Emotion rushed through him; he felt as though he was only a tiny element of The People, as though he was tangled within their strength and that this force would guide him throughout his term. He reached out as an older woman gave him a hand-made quilt she had saved for decades and another one she had fashioned herself. Much food was served at the feast and a drum was set up to honor him. He realized there was standing room only, the office could scarcely accommodate everybody. They were going to need a larger space for their meetings.

Swimmer approached the table and ate last, after everyone else had been served. His long, dark hair was combed neatly into braids which joined into a single braid at his waist. When he had finished eating they asked him to say something. He began:

“Thank you for honoring me in this way. I will serve you to the best of my ability. I will keep an open-door policy. All are welcome to come to me at any time to discuss any issue he, or she, believes vital. Or, just for coffee.” He grinned the Swimmer smile he was known for and resumed his place in the group.

Several people rose to proclaim Swimmer’s accomplishments, remembering all the things he had done for each of them separately as well as for the group as a whole. One woman, so old her hair looked like smoke curling around her face, stood before them, pointing her chin toward Swimmer and said, “This man is tender and kind, yes. But, he is also full of strength and courage. He will make a fine leader. I know his family. I have heard many of you ask about his ancestors over the last few weeks. No, they never had a chief among them. That Swimmer was from a different bunch. But, they did have many fine warriors and a fine warrior is what we need to lead us today. I believe Mike Swimmer will make us proud. You will see.”

After the celebration, the business portion of the meeting began.

“We have a number of issues to deal with,” a large, middle-aged woman holding a clipboard said. “Does anyone have any new information on the Northridge project?”

Someone wearing an old Pendleton coat said, "Red Horse needs to find some friends. The Yuppies are threatening to protest her project. I have heard that a family in the White-Collars is involved in her narcotics find." Her eyes swept the crowd as she said, "They're outraged."

A man in a cowboy hat said, "Now they know how we felt. Serves 'em right. I hear Thompson's out to stop everything we try to do. Seems to me somebody should be over there stopping everything he does first."

An older man with short white hair and a grey jacket said, "What we need to do now is to make sure Northridge isn't in a bargaining position anymore. Fix them so that they can't give us qualifiers every time we make a step forward."

The woman with the clipboard said, "I believe we should break up into our previously assigned groups to deal with these matters. For anyone here who doesn't already have an appointment, please see me immediately and I will find a place where you can be helpful."

Swimmer discussed Northridge and Red Horse, huddled closely with several assistants. He promised them, "I will meet with her soon. She doesn't know it yet, but she will become an ally to the people again. She's too educated, too educated in the assimilation way. There is always hope for a Native. Don't forget that. The lost ones just need to be reminded, that's all. The divisions imposed upon our people were our greatest downfall; we cannot let the same thing happen again. We are in a position of True Progress. And, we fare well into the De-Progressing of Euro-American Civilization. Now is the time to stay strong and stick together. Thank you." He stepped slightly back from the group, faced fully the entire crowd of N.P.I.I.C. constituents, and said, "I have to be at a meeting with a friend downtown. I hope to see all of you soon. Don't forget, think positive. Keep a good mind."

He shook some hands extended to him on his way out, jumped into his beat up red truck, and drove away from the office, bushings and springs squeaking all the while. Some bailing wire held up the muffler and several other parts. The wire was hard to come by these days, plastics and rubber products had replaced almost everything; he was lucky to find a roll at an older hardware merchant at the outskirts of the city. He watched the traffic surround-

ing him on all sides, scanning for those who didn't pay as much attention to the road – especially the hoverers. They weren't bound to the pavement. Due to the cushion of air being affected by the passing roadsters, they often sideswiped those vehicles that were. He was aware, as always, of dangers.

Driving through the plagued city he felt the pain of the polluted skies and smelled the stench of the foul air. He wondered how others could live here all of their lives and never seem to be bothered by these conditions. He had spent time all across North America and even for a short time in Central America. He had lived on the reservations before the changes of the last two decades and knew the lifestyle of Native peoples. He wanted a better place for his children and their children. The Euro-Americans had to be re-educated or exiled. There were no other reasonable choices.

He thought about how beautiful the world really is and how, if cleaned up properly and allowed to return to its natural state, it could be plentiful again. He knew, also, that by turning around the Lost Ones and the Sell-Outs they could outnumber the Mainstreamers in leadership skills and lobbying. The Hold-Outs had a good hold on the Coalition of Commerce, but Swimmer knew that they must disband the coalition altogether to rid the continent of the capitalism that plagued it. The new world mustn't include any tainted concepts of the Intruders, Invaders, or the Mainstreamers. It mustn't include them or it would surely be a case of history repeating itself. They were unwilling to give up what they considered necessities. The planet could no longer support these frivolous lifestyles. That time had expired. A reduction of harmful products and practices with major impact on the environment must happen within the next year or the entire balance could be irreparable.

Swimmer had scheduled a meeting with an old friend who had once frequented the Native skid-row in the downtown area. The man was much older than Swimmer and remembered a lot. He had shared stories of when the city had gathered them into vagrant concentration camps in the '90s because the Mainstreamers thought they were unsightly. Laws had been passed to make it illegal to feed the homeless in San Francisco and the police made it a regular part of street detail to harass those with mental illnesses and to confiscate their meager pos-

sessions. His friend, Bob Ball, had told him a story of a homeless Native woman with paranoid schizophrenia, how she had collected blue cloth and paper scraps which she hauled around in a shopping cart and based all of her reason to survive on. The blue pieces somehow helped her to piece together an existence worth living for in her delusory state. They gave her special meaning, enabling her to cope with life on the street.

Ball had told him that the Los Angeles police force had taken great pride in knocking over her cart and taking all of her pieces of blue survival material away. They mocked her and patted each other on the shoulders as they carried out this mission. Later they forced her into one of the concentration camps where homeless could be fed by charitable groups. She had last been seen searching endlessly for her blue bits of sanity.

Some activist groups, such as the Treaty Council and All Peoples' Congress, had planned open feeds for these people in the San Francisco Bay area and had been arrested for their efforts. Patrons of Golden Gate Park claimed that feeding the homeless obstructed the aesthetics of the park. This was California in the Twentieth Century. Now, in 2030, there was hope for a change. It had begun at the turn of the century and they were growing in number and strength. About 100,000 Native people called the Los Angeles area home in the year 1990; now it was home to more than a million Native people and that million was a strong million.

Many of the people arriving from the reservations had been put on drugs because the Mainstreamer's physicians had diagnosed them with paranoia and depression. Swimmer had proven in court that the people involved were suffering from Bunker-Syndrome, a condition that naturally occurred to oppressed people and gave them the feeling that the world was against them. And, in 1990, it was.

The Mainstreamers had turned their ugliest at the end of the century. They began to enjoy viewing prisoners electrocuted or beaten by police on network television. They even set up a special pay station to air these programs at their own convenience. The Mainstreamers went even further by airing shows focusing on their superiority claims which encouraged hate crimes. Swimmer had likened this behavior to the patterns demonstrated toward the end of the 1800s when they enjoyed public hangings.

He realized history was repeating itself in the Mainstream culture. He had protested this bizarre Euro-American entertainment as being inhumane and dangerous to the society. It gave ambitious, would-be killers the inspiration they needed to commit heinous crimes.

Swimmer's parents were living on the traditional tribal lands on which they had always lived. They refused to come in to the city for any reason. Swimmer admired their convictions. Their yard was a testament to the troubled automotive industry, a car graveyard which stretched for a good quarter of a mile. The cars which had been affordable to purchase, broke down quickly. The parts alone usually cost more than simply buying another Mainstreamer's auto-discard. He had attended the Institute for American Indian Arts for a couple of years and had seen a woman incorporate this into her art by welding sculptures from parts in "rez car" graveyards she knew in her community.

Swimmer's parents had raised him on deer meat. They proclaimed cows to be stupid, "like the Mainstreamers," and refused to feed their children beef. Their mother had never given in to commercial infant formulas, either. "It's still a cow. These are not cows' babies," she would say. She disagreed with the childraising methods of the Euro-Americans. "Just listen to them, look at them, they're pitiful. I'm not raising my children to behave that way. They must have got it from their ancestors — the apes. The claim that they are descendants of the apes," she would say and fill the room with her laughter. "Maybe that's why they have so much hair on their bodies. Guess that explains it."

He remembered when the Wannabees came around and made complete fools of themselves, but she felt sorry for them. "What do they have? Nothing." She fed anyone who came into her home. If she didn't have food she gave them coffee; if she didn't have coffee she gave them water. She gave them whatever she had, willingly.

His friend Bob Ball reminded him of the people back home. He had lived through the same times as Swimmer's parents and then some. He was knowledgeable about a lot of things, and Swimmer knew he could be trusted as a confidant or an advisor. And he was thin and lived pitifully. Not like the Sell-Outs in their fancy cars and flashy clothes. He took only what he needed for himself and gave everything else away.

Ball had taught him all about the European need to control and take over and how they had tried to justify such actions by claiming that the Native People were fighting each other all the time, "the savages." Or, by claiming that war was inevitable: "In the history of the world, it has always been conquering after conquering," one of their leaders once said. If what they had said were true, there wouldn't have been any Native people here when they arrived. Just bloodshed. Ball also taught him that most tribes dealt with conflicts in alternative ways, that some tribes didn't even have a word for war, as they had never experienced one and they had no enemies. All tribes were indeed different nations and could work together well if they respected their differences.

The Mainstreamers loved to deny responsibility for crimes committed by their ancestors. In reality, the Euro-American's ancestors both organized the Dodger's Major League Baseball team and organized the massacre at Wounded Knee in the same year. Also in 1890, what had been healing waters for Lakota holy men and sacred women only, was taken over by the Invaders and fenced in, then given a Euro-American name – Evan's Plunge – which was advertised "For Whites Only."

Mainstreamers denied any responsibility for crimes committed to the peoples and on the lands of Central, North, and South Americas. No responsibility for the loss of the rain forests, or the redwoods, or any of the tribes they wiped out entirely. No apology for the assimilation, or genocide. The most common response was, "We helped you people come into the modern world." "Modern world." This was not Swimmer's idea of progress.

He remembered learning from his grandmother that the pioneers had committed atrocities against the original inhabitants of these continents without ever having to worry about it being logged in history. They only reported their version of "savages chasing after school marms and burning wagons." Of how the Euro-Americans had glorified reservation life when, as late as the turn of the century (1999), families at Pine Ridge had to burn their shoes to keep warm in the 70 below freezing wind-chill factor winter. The men had taken apart pieces of homes to fuel the fires, even though the state of South Dakota had tried to make wood stoves illegal on the reservation. They passed this law in hopes that the people would give up, much as they had in the

1890s so they would starve, or be frozen into surrender. The CORRECTION OF PRINTED HISTORY pamphlets now explained: The people of this area often could not afford to buy the government heating oil.

The pamphlets also revealed that the Invaders had once burned so many people in their homes that many bands were left with permanent names to attest to the torture: Burnt Thigh and Black Feet. Children who survived massacres all up and down the plains had been drowned or kept for "living curios" by high ranking officers in the military. This followed the earlier centuries of torture on the eastern plains and coastal regions and up and down the west coast. The head of "King Philip" (whose real name was Metacomet) had been hand-delivered to the Intruders and put on display at Plymouth. Metacomet, even in those earliest days in the struggle with Europeans, was convinced that the English Intruders must be driven from the country.

At about the same time, a Pueblo revolt occurred in the southwest. The Tewa Pueblos were successful in kicking Spaniards out of their homes, but in retaliation, entire communities were wiped out by the Spanish Intruders. The hands and feet of many native peoples were severed and delivered to serve as a message to others on both coasts and throughout the southwest area. Strangely, N.P.I.I.C. concluded, this practice continued in the 1970s with a Canadian Native woman, Anna Mae Aquash, having her hands severed "to identify her dead body," then displayed by the Federal agents to other native peoples being interrogated by them. Similar scare tactics were noted in the case of Myrtle Poor Bear who was coerced into testifying against Leonard Peltier. N.P.I.I.C.'s hand-outs also told that this information was kept silent and "classified" until as late as the 1990s.

Swimmer remembered learning that there were some slight differences in the basic Intruder groups. Since communication was important for the interests of the French Intruders, they mixed with natives, even learning native languages and intermarrying—though mostly French Intruder male and Native female relationships were recorded. Even from their earliest arrivals here, they had met with and lived with native peoples. This enabled them to carry out fur trade practices. Simple settlements on the river fronts staked places to trade. They were never as keenly interested in colonization as the English, or Spanish

Intruders. They did, however, take part in manipulation and exploitation of native people and their need to communicate produced many off-spring with French Intruder blood.

The stream of Intruders seemed endless then, when the Invaders arrived behind the Intruders, The People used to close their fingers over their infants' noses and mouths until they passed through to keep them quiet enough to hide their position. "Shhhht, the bogey man is coming," they would say in their own languages. Later, when the children were older they were told outright, "the bogey man is a White man."

Swimmer hit the downtown loop. He noticed a billboard advertising the Northridge Basketball team, "The Invaders." He liked the idea of giving them what they had given The People. How better to demonstrate the injustices? He thought of other reverse-insult names: The Intruders, The Yuppies, The Honkies, The Pale Faces, The Long Knives. He was glad so many teams were following suit now that it was legal to be impolite to Euro-Americans and it no longer carried a prison term or monetary fine.

He thought of a game he had seen during football season and the mascot: The Imperial Wizard. The team was the KKK Supremacists. How goofy the mascot looked, and rightfully so. Swimmer felt the sports arena was being kind when they opted for simpler, more subtle jabs: The Presidents, The Army Boys, The Marines, The Navy, The Hot Chickees, The Babes. The Presidents had a mascot named Ronald Reagan. Swimmer really got a kick out of this guy's antics. Often he was accompanied by Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Immelda Marcos cheerleaders. He liked them all and had finally become a fan of sports, something he never thought he would learn to enjoy.

He remembered Ball telling him that the first person in the Baseball Hall of Fame was a Chippewa, that there had been dozens of Native Prima Ballerinas, Olympic Winners and Football players. He told him of a time when Jim Thorpe (a Sac and Fox tribal member) had his Olympic medals stripped away for using his athletic abilities to earn monies to survive. The story of how a former teammate (Avery Brundy) had been so jealous of being outclassed by a Native track and field medalist that when he was placed in charge of the International Olympic Commission, he used his position to investigate Thorpe playing

baseball for small pay before he went into Olympic competition. He used his position to strip Thorpe of his medals and tried to bestow them on the athletes who had placed after Thorpe and who refused Thorpe's medals.

Ball had told him that years before *DANCES WITH WOLVES* played, and Graham Green was nominated for an Academy, the Academy for Motion Pictures had denied flatly a nomination request for Chief Dan George's acting, stating, "We will never give an Oscar to an Indian for playing an Indian."

Maggie Han had been the first Asian-American to land a girl next door role for her community. A role in which she just happened to be Asian and wasn't a stereotypical image of her people. They were the last minority left other than Natives with this plight. Finally, Michael Horse landed a role on *Twin Peaks* that did not hinge solely on his ethnicity. Ball said, "Too bad the show wasn't strong enough to survive." Swimmer was glad to have such a close friend with such a good memory.

He pulled into the narrow streets of the downtown area and scouted the sidewalks Ball liked to frequent. They were filled with people hurrying along far below the towering high-rise buildings painted into artistic commercial murals by corporate advertisers. Ball had promised to meet him "around town" at this time, and Ball was usually on time as far as that went. Swimmer could think of no one else he would rather share his most important day of opportunity, the day he was chosen to serve The People as a speaker. Seeing Ball would make this joyous day complete for him. But, there was more to this scheduled encounter than just that.

Rounding the corner of Broadway Swimmer caught a glance of him crossing the street a few blocks away. He thought he could make the next block turn but was cut off suddenly by an auto-hover skimming past filled with Mainstreamers. Suspended high above the street were video cameras used to record traffic violations, and signal displays flashing warnings to stop traffic. The wide oval signals hung on translucent cables. The vermilion letters changed in exactly one second intervals to read 'STOP' in four languages: English, Spanish, French, and Italian. N.P.I.I.C. had lobbied to remove or replace all Euro-related languages currently on traffic signs and signals. But, the downtown area, boasting a high percentage of Mainstream workers, had fought these

changes and had been successful, so far, in maintaining the Eurocentric references. They had agreed, however, to include some signals sequences for: Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Armenian. These inclusions were obvious at the next light, which included all eight languages. No Native languages were allowed in the downtown area to date, but in the lower suburbs and surrounding Greater Los Angeles community there were hundreds of signs reflecting signals in a few: Dine, Lakota, and Tsalagi.

Swimmer watched the lights flash from lime green to vermilion, pausing momentarily at amber in between. He kept his eyes scanning the sidewalks for Ball. He knew he was nearby but couldn't locate him again as he circled around the center of the city's hub. The Mainstreamers lining both sides of the streets were rushing so fast that they often ran into each other. Swimmer thought they looked strange, like ghosts of men and women, moving with confusion. They often were so preoccupied with multiple tasks that they couldn't focus on one single purpose. This affected their strides, the way they carried their bodies, the way they pushed and shoved their way through the crowds, the way they stole from each other's pockets as they brushed by. To Swimmer, they appeared to move without reason, without respect for the earth below the concrete facade. They seemed to be fragments of people rather than whole. Watching them gave him a sensation like something creeping toward his ears from the nape of his neck, reaching upward until it set off a jerk reflex in his upper body. The spasm reminded him to continue looking for Ball and to ignore the Mainstreamers as much as he could.

Swimmer turned on First Street and headed down to Indian Row. He was sure Ball would make his way through the ghosts on the pavement and toward the area more Native people worked and lived in. He remembered how the streets had been filled with people dying from alcohol poisoning only a short time ago. He remembered Ball's work in helping Native people to defeat this Mainstream disease of liquid poison. Ball had spent years and years in the pre-Reorganization period establishing free centers for treatment of alcohol and narcotic abuse in Native peoples. Swimmer remembered that this work had started in the late 1900s. The efforts of those early days had been phenomenal at

the time, but the problem of addiction was so great that it would take almost three-quarters of a century to have a major impact. The introduction of these poisons was certainly one of the most destructive gifts from the Invaders and Intruders. N.P.I.I.C. took a hard line against their use. The organization participated in education toward clean generations for Native people. A woman speaker for them had once put it this way: "Oppression in this hemisphere brought forth much dysfunction, as did the liquid which seemed to kill the pain of living in a changing world for the people who had to live through the Intruders and Invaders occupation periods. This use of alcohol continued with the Mainstreamers' era. Not only did it continue, but narcotic use had been assimilated into the Native community, as well. Though it was said to have been illegal for Natives to use alcohol, it actually was used to bargain for products, lands, and rights in the treaty days. This bargaining tactic had devastating consequences. Some of our greatest minds were plagued by these toxins. Some of our greatest people fell victim to this spirit of ruin. Some of our greatest families were ruined by its effects. We have to rid ourselves of this alcohol, these drugs. We have been in the era of alcohol ever since anyone can remember. It is up to us to change the era. This spirit of alcohol has endured." Survived for too long, thought Swimmer as he remembered this. Surely the slowest smallpox blanket we ever received.

He drove by healthy urban Native men and women and was proud to see them standing on their own. He didn't care if the Mainstreamers wanted to kill themselves that way. He didn't want it for his people. He was glad that they had made it through the beginning of the Dark Ages in the western hemisphere. He knew that they had a long road ahead. It was a journey he was happy to be helping along the way. They were among the living.

Highway Through Community

Silence
to live in harmony with all creation
Silence
easily mistaken for acceptance and compliance with foreign values
Silence
in my silence you push through me

Innovation
paving new roads to the future, a prosperous future for all
Innovation
ripping me apart, dividing me from the earth

It is that damn highway! That damn highway!
You can keep your innovation, I will no longer stay silent!

LAND

Valley of the Believers

I'll say it this way:

you know they're going to
walk deep
into the forest & dissect it,
they're going to bring
microscopes & dirt samples &
there'll be seekers
of wine & the bread I broke
with you
or anyone. they'll peer
between the leaves
& note the smudges, yes, &
they'll find the bodies
strewn everywhere, & there'll
be a collusion
of confusion & blood &
screams,
(some of them mine) & they'll
gut the place
of gold & emeralds &
desecrate my sacred ground
& they'll water down every
element
of purity & quality they find,
except for one thing:

by that time, you'll be able to
smell me
in their pores, & I'll have
touched upon
the essence in them
of every thing, & in that valley
of tears
we shall already have
become One.

Untitled

Winds may gently whisper
Trees may softly speak
Sacred grounds below
Height the eagles seek.

Tears formed a river
Land formed a time
Screaming of a bird
Sings his lonely chime.

Night falls upon us
Stars show a smile
Black clouds will come
But only last awhile.

This is our world
It's our sacred land
This is our ground
Upon it we'll stand.

The Tea Party

The clang of the shovel, on the rocky wet clay as the grave diggers patted the fresh earth, seized Jay's chest and squeezed his lungs. Gasping for breath, he spun, one hand on his chest, the other reaching out, groping.

The young man nearest to Jay, turned, dropped the clay-packed tool he'd been using, "Uncle, Uncle are you okay?"

Jay, tears in his eyes, reassured the young man, "I'm Okay." He stumbled from his friend's final resting place. Anger as to how his friend died filled his spirit as he nearly tripped over a discarded pickax. He muttered a silent oath.

Geoff watched as the dignified old gentleman left and, as he knelt to retrieve his pickax, he saw his uncle meet his aunt by the gate.

Jay's backward glance to the grave revealed the workers taking the tools to the shed. Their sombre laughter echoed in the tiny shed as the men took turns entering and leaving. Jay wondered at the laughter as he turned his attention to his wife and relatives but his mind was busy evaluating the receding last month with his friend.

A few days ago as the sun rose over the community Jay and Norman were in the veranda watching the construction equipment thunder into the community. From his chair, Norman had a good view from Jay's modest one bedroom home.

Jay would have laughed if anyone had told him he lived in a one bedroom house. He would have told you that a partition, a partial one at that, does not a bedroom make. He was dressed in jeans, a blue plaid shirt, and, on his feet, worn moccasins. He was, in fact, edgy about the new project. He spit some tobacco from his cigarette then reached for the offending tobacco with his finger, removed it from the tip of his tongue and flicked it. As the vehicles moved earth, each man, lost in his own reveries, watched the past recede with the realization their lives were changing as permanently as the landscape.

Jay pointed his cigarette at the crowd behind the equipment, "I wonder where they'll house everyone? They ran the sewage line into the creek."

“There goes our water. That creek flows into our lake. How come they couldn’t put the line away from the community?” Norman’s bleak voice went on bleaker now, “I hear bunkhouses are being built. Most of the trees are gone. How long do you think before they get the permanent structures up and what do you think the land will look like in twenty years?” Norman shook as he continued his questions with no answers, at least none that were apparent to him. “I wonder if this many people will be working after?” Norman pointed with pursed lips toward the river, he couldn’t trust his hands not to shake as he asked the sixty four million dollar question, “Who said we needed to dam our rapids?” Norman wiped tears from his eyes, looking accusingly at his pipe. A thousand campfires couldn’t make his eyes water. Wistfully, he turned to look at the carnage.

A month ago Norman’s home had been the first to make room for the ferry which would drag everything else after it. He’d grabbed a gun, shouted at the crews, “Get out of my world!” He was going to shoot the first person to cross his home. Norman relented but it took a court order with four policemen to disarm him. Later, as Norman was being yelled at by the four policemen, he thought to himself, as he watched the red face with spit flying from its mouth, “No wonder I misspoke myself. Hell, maybe, I did want them to leave the world. The gun wasn’t loaded.” The spittle-spewing heads disappeared to needle points as Norman used techniques to tune them out which he’d honed to perfection while endlessly and patiently waiting for game in total immobility. A shield dropped, covering his face with cold uncomprehending eyes that saw things somewhere else beyond time and space. The mask excluded the policemen who would have elicited as much response yelling at blades of grass in the wind. When Norman explained how he’d listened to his guides to exclude the police, Jay knew exactly what he’d meant, he’d been using the technique all his life. The house Norman had lived in for forty years was torn down the day following his arrest. A day later the ferry began operations from Norman’s old vantage point overlooking the community.

Next day, the fly-in magistrate spoke to Norman who stood unabashed and unafraid in front of the make-shift court bench. Made from a closet door, it had been hastily ripped off the hinges

to the school’s janitorial supplies. The construction companies did not donate anything to the community. That would be interfering and there could be no interference. Pressed into service, the magistrate now spoke over the unfinished wood, “The rule of law must prevail. One person cannot stand in the way of progress, I have no choice, ahem...you could have hurt someone, I sentence you to six months incarceration, and...quiet in the court or,” the magistrate threw a magisterial glance at the small crowd, “else I’ll have everyone thrown out and arrested...where was I? Oh yes, I was going to... place you on two years probation. See a probation officer once a month. Case adjourned. Next.” The judge was a busy man.

The spectators in the courthouse gasped as two members of the force stood over the old man who was made to take a seat behind them.

One old man attending court as a visitor, one of Norman’s friends, wailed, “They can’t castrate my friend.” He was ushered out by some young woman presumably to prevent him from being thrown out and possibly arrested. He returned with the young woman a few minutes later with a slight grin on his face.

The magistrate took immediate offense. “Wipe that smile off your face. This is no laughing matter.”

Confused the old man turned to the young woman. She hushed him. Quietly, and with a blank look at the pudgy man with authority, the elder gentleman of the community assumed a stance in the room that further irritated the green suited tyrant behind the desk. Exasperated, the magistrate glanced at the policemen who took up the glare.

As for Norman, he sat there quietly as others, mostly outsiders, went to face charges of assault, theft and sex offenses. He’d been the only one sent to jail. The locals were aghast. Norman left on the same plane with the sentencing magistrate although in retrospect Jay thought that the magistrate would have preferred not to have Norman in the same plane.

Norman returned to Jay’s home from jail. Release had come within three weeks, the lesson to the community having been driven home. Now they were sitting in the veranda discussing old times.

Jay rose to get tea and biscuits his wife Helen had baked. The small log house smelled of fresh bread. The streaks of light from windows sought out darkened corners of the small house, illuminating dust motes as they drifted past the light. Jay took a blue plate, two cups and a tea pot, set everything on a tray and offered refreshment to his friend. There were no electric lights for them. The light of day and kerosene lanterns for an hour or so in the evening were all the old people required. The fire from the stove heating the oven threw heat across the room and carried scents outside the house.

Jay placed milk and sugar on the tray, checked the condensed crap. Helen gave him a plate of steamy buttered biscuits. "Those smell really good. 'Milk,' I wonder who thought milk was good for humans?" He returned to the verandah after kissing his wife's cheek and telling her not to worry.

"Have some bannock and tea," offered Jay as he returned with refreshments.

Norman helped himself to biscuits as Jay poured tea.

So many trees had been cut that the two buddies could see where the rapids began. Beyond the clear cutting, lay the area landscaped by scrapers until the mud and limestone gleamed like a white gash in the earth's side, to lie exposed to the elements.

The weather changed the night Norman passed away. The wind blew in from the northwest bringing cold wet rain. The lashing wind blew rivulets of water across the window. Thunder and lightning raked the sky and the volume of the thunder depressed the little house pushing it closer to the ground.

Jay had awakened from the light sleep of the old listening to the noisy rainstorm, thinking about the difference between the sound rain makes on a tent as opposed to the sound it makes on a wooden structure. He snuggled deeper with Helen under the blankets. He thought as he held his wife, 'I do not want to leave this warm bed but I need to pee, and make some coffee.' Jay, shivering exaggeratedly in his long underwear with the button down flap, in the cold, damp cabin, pulled on his boots, and threw a jacket over his shoulders to go outside. He frowned as he noticed Norman was not moving and thought that strange. 'He should have made the fire already. It's usually going by now. He's always saying something to me about laying in bed till all hours with my

old lady.' In the pounding rain he ran to the outhouse. His physique, soaked to the skin, shrank under the wet longjohns when he found that Norman had succumbed and passed on. Shocked as he was, Jay summoned the police to report the death and later the doctor from the construction crew sent for the body. Jay took care of the legalities as the community made ready for a funeral. Jay knew that the community people would want to be involved in the wake and funeral. Friends and relatives took over the details, including where the community wake would be held.

The Parish Hall was the logical choice since it had electricity, which none of the local homes had, and it was large enough to accommodate as many people as would show up during the peak times. People drifted in and out of the hall the first night as if they were in a daze.

During the second evening an itinerant preacher showed up to sing hymns and pray. The Parish Hall had peak crowd as everyone who knew Norman was at the wake. Food was being served next door, and there were shifts of people moving between the hall and the dining area. Inside, the hall had all its windows opened – the cold rain of two days earlier was a distant memory and the heat had become unbearable, even with the windows open. There was no cross breeze. The people sitting against the wall around the hall, surrounding the closed casket, had stopped singing to catch their breath. Other people wiping their faces, were glad that someone else was going to be doing the harmonizing, and calmly placed their hymn books under their chairs.

In a loud, passable voice the young preacher sang as the organist played music for him. Everyone sat back. During the second verse, he stretched his arms, shut his eyes, and inadvertently closed his hymn book. He opened his eyes, forgot his lines and frantically started screaming for 'Jay-sus!' He pounded his chest and the hymn book. With a crash, the organist stopped playing. The screaming awoke one old woman who'd been lulled into lethargy by food and heat. To save herself from falling she grabbed someone's thigh and pinched. The girl screamed as the old woman clamped her strong thumb on the young woman's soft thigh. The preacher man quit his yelling, picked up his other books and he was gone. A few minutes after the earnest young preacher had left, Henry, standing at the corner of the hall, was

shaking uncontrollably. The poor preacher in training must have heard the laughter all the way home. One fat lady, with her shoulders heaving fell off her chair and as people rushed to her aid everyone collapsed in a heap on the floor. The girl who'd been pinched showed her mother the beginnings of a bruise as the old auntie tried to explain, "I thought I was in Hell. I was trying to hold onto something. I'm sorry. I didn't know what that screaming was. Did I hurt you?" The girl and mom soothed the old Auntie as she gave her niece a hug and a kiss. She turned and waved a dismissal to the rest of the congregation, as she sat back down.

Jay rose wiping tears from his eyes, "Thank you everyone for your kindness but please don't forget, we are here for a reason. I am thankful." He swept his eyes, which had lost none of their acuity even though he was seventy, over all his friends and relatives who sat there willing to sing hymns, trade anecdotes and assist the family. Finally, after a few minutes, when everyone had composed themselves, "Can someone please lead us?" The rest of the long goodbye was uneventful.

Upon these few minutes of reflection, Jay's mood darkened as he stood waiting outside the fenced graveyard. Dressed in his Sunday best, he knew he was leaving a large part of himself and with the afternoon sun in his face, felt mortality. Finally, he and Helen were going to be taken home. They hugged, shook the hands of their friends and relatives and promised to visit. After declining the offers for supper, they left everyone standing on the riverbank in front of the church. Geoff assisted his Aunt Helen down the river bank, into the boat. The twenty foot yawl powered by a twenty-five horse power motor flew along the river with a tall white rooster tail behind. It was a fishing boat but it had been cleaned and given a coat of green paint. Jay and Helen sat quietly against the wind with the reflection of the sun burning their skin, burnishing and polishing until their faces glowed like copper. Geoff, after docking, was pleasant as he helped his Aunt up the bank. Jay had never built stairs. He arrived ahead of his wife and, as he gave his house a critical stare, he whispered, "I'll have to start earlier if I'm to get ready for winter. I need to put in storm windows and a porch as well as bank up the sides of the house." He opened the door for Helen, who had hugged her nephew

before sending him back on his way. She watched him jump into his craft and race to the other end to start the motor in a very expert fashion.

Jay stepped behind Helen. The empty house was still warm with a faint odour of earlier baking. He was glad to get the smell of the fresh turned earth out of his nose; he felt disturbed at the mess he'd seen at the graveyard. One old couple, who'd raised sixteen children, most of whom drank, had graves overgrown with weeds. He made up his mind to return later to clean up the pitiful markers.

Jay, as he stoked the fire in the kitchen stove said, "Since the project came into town, everything's changed. I mean everything! We can't get involved with each other as a community. People are wanting to be on their own too much and most times people who want to be alone have something to hide." Jay didn't like the way this particular line of thought was going and decided to change the subject. He thought that the subject of why people embrace being alone, was beyond him. 'My opinion means as much as a hill of beans in this settlement.' Jay softened as he moved to Helen, "The engineers have scheduled this dam to be completed in 1965." He gently moved to embrace her. She calmed him more than anything he knew and as they stood by their cook stove, he whispered quietly into her ear, "Helen, I only wish I was young and strong enough to work, you and I could buy so many things."

Helen mused, "I don't think you would be happy with so much destruction and everything comes with a price." She slipped easily from under his arm as she moved about in the small kitchen. She was upset that their life was changed forever and her movements rattled pots and pans piled on her counter.

"The work launched when barges unloaded heavy equipment." Jay fetched a tub from the corner of the kitchen, "One of the barges was turned sideways and a ferry was born. Took Norman's house and life." Jay paused briefly. "The convoy spilled over to the other side." He moved by the counter to assist his wife with the pots and pans. Jay, positioning utensils into the blue enamel tub until it could hold no more, placed them outside the door and said, "I hope the kids come for them soon. The food really hardens on the pots, oh yeah, do you recognize your stuff?"

Helen loved her husband who was thinking of her and her few possessions during this stressful time. She brushed a small tear from her eye, wiped the counter until it gleamed. "You know who I feel sorry for? Them." Helen indicated the children playing along the top of the river bank, "They feel change immediately."

"I believe it," Jay moved across the room to the window to watch the children. "They were moved from a pair of two room schoolhouses to a dozen or more trailers plus two hundred new children. There's been a lot of problems."

"The village grew to over 3000 newcomers." Helen sighed as she contemplated the destruction.

Jay knew the settlement was suffering physically; there had been several fires because people were careless. "The people are forgetting what survival is. I've recently been told of welfare, some type of government assistance." Jay threw up his hands in a gesture denoting, 'I don't know.' "People who can't work are able to get support. Can you believe that? Anyway I'm tired of feeling so low. I know my buddy, bless his soul," Jay looked up in what he hoped would be taken for intense fervour by whatever Spirit took notice of such things, "would not have wanted us feeling so exhausted."

Helen nodded in agreement as she poured water for tea from the stainless steel container at the counter. She knew his pride but she wondered, 'how will we survive the approaching winter?' There was no one to help, not like the old days. She watched Jay peer out the window as he looked for children who could be heard but not seen as they ran down to the water's edge.

Jay, reminiscing, knew that Norman always got a kick out of this particular story that kept going around in his head, and maybe the memories were coming from the smell of violets. To Helen, "A few years ago a teacher by the name of Edward came to teach. His wife hated this place, she used to do things to drive him crazy. He'd go into some kind of spells, and the airplane would come for him. Do you remember what she did that made him take all his clothes off in front of the children? I don't. He left and she never came back either. I still remember the violet water she used and the smell she left behind."

Helen was lost in her own thoughts before her hubby finished; thoughts of her relatives as she looked for children in both direc-

tions – the ones to pick up her used utensils and the ones who could be heard playing near the dangerous river. Her sewing circles had always been a source of joy. She'd invite relatives to her home to do one of their innumerable quilts. She remembered one particular time when the women stopped for a second to peer into her kitchen to wait for Sarah and Judy coming in with a plate of cookies. They were laughing at something one of them said.

Helen noticed her niece's son slip into the room during the distraction but did not see him scuttle under their work area. Any table covered with cloth was Peter's favourite place to play. He sat underneath, in the dark, playing with his toys.

While working on the quilt, Helen, Judy and the others discussed how assistance could be given without intruding or interfering with their family members who needed help. Suddenly the women heard from somewhere.

There was a more insistent cough and then, "Boy, these old ladies 'tink!"

There was a collective snort from the circle as the embarrassed Judy pulled her offspring from beneath the table, and marched him out of the room. He was bundled up and shoed out the door to play.

Judy returned, looked at the women around the table then started an uneasy giggle. The hesitant laughter drew the others and soon everyone was joining in. As the water boiled, Helen took to remembering the dear women, some of whom had fallen victim to the bright lights of the construction. She poured water into the tea leaves and placed cookies on a plate. She took the plate and brown Betty teapot to the table that Jay was moving to the window. As her husband sat down she could see a smile on his lips coinciding with her own. Ceremoniously, without fuss, Helen poured the dark brew. She sat at the table with her husband munching on the small fresh cookies, listening to children play, drinking tea while looking at a river made golden by the setting sun. "Memories," she thought, "are made of moments like this." She smiled at her husband over her steaming cup of tea made with her own hands for her husband and partner. He returned her smile as they thought of their life together and, each in their way, said a respectful goodbye to a lifelong friend.

dark forest

the trees stretch long shadows
moonlight cowls
across the sleeping forest floor
darkness upon darkness
we mistake one for light
but there is not enough light
to call this shape owl
to call this shape fox
only the whispering
feathers stir the still air
furred feet bend dewed grass
our eyes are empty
our ears fill our heads
with visions of teeth and talons
the stones are silent prophets
bone-white and waiting

this sadness

a sky heavy with clouds
a bough burdened with snow
your tongue bends
to touch the frozen earth
the tracks of small animals
have led you
into this sheltered place
you kill and roast their bodies
over a slow, green fire
when your belly is full
you suck marrow from thin bones
warm icicles in your mouth
now, perhaps, you can say
how memory lives in the bones
how it is possible
to swallow the life of things
to speak from this quiet center

hanging bones

i have hung hollow bones
with strands of braided hair
in the branches of dark trees
the winds voice
a song beneath the stars
bones of my people
hair of my head
the moon brings her lantern
to witness
shadows spinning into dances

in early morning light
mosses and fallen leaves
stir imperceptibly
the bones cry out:
rise, rise with the dawn
be flesh
upon our cold, white bodies
we are not tired
we will carry you
we will carry you far

stone gathering

stones have gathered in circles
on moon-lit hilltops
with bowed heads they meditate
upon the things stones know
deep in forested valleys
there is singing and dancing
wind and shadows
honour these gathered stones

the stones inhale
ten thousand days
the stones exhale
ten thousand suns
into stone-sized indentations
in the earth
if we wait this long
will they
guardians of beetle and worm
speak the secrets of mountain and bone?

the uranium leaking from port radium and rayrock mines is killing us...

The girl with sharp knees sits in her underwear. She is shivering. The bus is cold. The man at the gun store has seagull eyes. Freckles grow on the wrong side of his face. This town has the biggest Canadian flag anywhere. It is always tangled and never waves. For grass this playground has human hair. It never grows on Sundays. The kids that play here are cold and wet. They are playing in their underwear. They are singing with cold tongues. They have only seven fingers to hide with.

Those are rotting clouds. This is the other side of rain. The band plays but there is no sound. i snap my finger but there is no sound.

There is someone running on the highway. There is no one in the field. Nobody owns the cats here. Nobody knows their names.

They are letting the librarian's right eye fuse shut. There is a pencil stabbed thru her bun. She can read "i didn't pop my balloon the grass did" in my library book. She looks into me. One eye is pink. The other is blue.

My father said take the bus. There is yellow tape around my house. A finger is caught in the engine but they only rev it harder. There are cold hands against my back. i want to kiss Pocahontas before she dies at age 21. Someone is stealing the dogs of this town. Doctors hold babies high in black bags. My mother's voice is a dull marble rolling down her mouth, stolen to her lap, not even bouncing, not even once. She has sprayed metal into her hair. i am sitting on a red seat. My hands open with rawhide.

This is the ear i bled from. There is a child walking in the field. He is not wearing runners. He is walking with a black gun. In my girlfriend's fist is a promise. She does not raise herself to meet me. Her socks are always dirty. She is selling me a broken bed so she can lay on plywood. Her feet are always cold. My feet are always cold. Her basement when we kiss is cold. The coffee we

drink is cold. The bus driver does not wave goodbye. Why are there only humans on this bus? Why are we wet and cold? Why are we only in our underwear?

I want to run but i have no legs. The tongue that slides from my mouth is blue.

Friday is the loneliest day of the week she says. The blanket she knitted this winter is torn upon us. She laughs at me with blue eyes. She says if you walk in the rain no one can tell you're crying. The soup we drink after is cold. The popcorn we eat after is cold. Someone is crying in the basement. Someone is crying next door.

The dream we have is something on four legs running on pavement towards us. It is running from the highway. It is a dead caribou running on dead legs. I meet its eyes but there are only antlers. In between the antlers is an eye. It too is cold and watching. Its eye is the color of blue.

The plants here have no flowers. The trees themselves are black. Someone is under the bridge. The fish are dying sideways. Rain has started to fall.

The child with the black gun sees my house. He is walking backwards towards me. He swings his head. His eyes are blue. *Can you please sing with me?*

The bus driver does not wave good-bye.

The band is playing but all i hear is galloping.

i snap my finger.

My eyes are blue.

All i can hear is galloping.

Our Ancestors Are Restless

We are standing at the Nicola river inlet praying for our protection, when a dead fish floated by, a few seconds later it jumped. A sign that we are now protected?

The Black Bear who used to chase me, has stopped, and is now watching me clean up Beer bottles in a field, and approves.

I was told that if he chases me again, I have strayed from the red road.

A Grandmother, with a red kerchief on her head, came out of a hole in the ground and said "It's time to come." I immediately followed her down into mother earth, along a long tunnel, to a large cave and we introduced each other to people here and not here, some we had to skip over.

Our Ancestors are restless, what is the message?

I was walking along a mountain path, above Nicola Lake, and see a hole in mother earth. There's a photo album with Black & White pictures of our Grandfathers and Grandmothers. I scan the book and put it back.

What does it mean? What am I looking for?

I looked into a river and saw the silhouette of a bear sleeping on the river bed. There were people looking up at me. I called the bear and some of the people to come out, some I had to leave there. I needed them to help me get rid of the "child snatchers."

Do our children need more support? Who do they need to be protected from?

I was shown an underground art gallery with a pile of

sketches of our Grandmothers and Grandfathers. I searched through them and left them there.

I saw a huge painted handdrum hanging on a stand made of lodge pole pine. The picture was very vague. Maybe I tried too hard to see what it was.

What does it mean?

I entered a large room and was drawn to a mural on the wall. The painting came to life. I saw a stormy black lake, with no shore, and four large blue fish lying on a boulder, a pulse barely beating. There is a red-orange beam of light shining down on them.

I was told this is a sign of hope against the rough times ahead.

I was told that my great-great Grandmother used to go to one of our traditional fishing lakes. A friend and I decided to go with others on their annual fish camp, even though we had never gone before. The Indian Name for that lake is "Nakak'sul," every four years the fish die. Our ancestors would gather and dry what was good, there was no waste as this was our survival.

A Company, believing that the lake was dying out, transplanted fish to the lake. Our Elders laughed, they were wasting their money because the lake always replenished itself. Who could foresee that they would claim to own the fish.

The Company that profits from commercial fishing the lake, called the police to ask us to leave or be arrested. We couldn't leave of our own free will. Three others and I were arrested while the rest left to plan our next step. "We must protect what is ours in order for our ancestors to regain their peace."

I witnessed the moment when our people, of the Upper Nicola Band, said enough was enough. If no one will listen then we will stand at our checkpoint and even die for our Aboriginal rights. Our belief was so strong, no one can underestimate the power of

spirituality. It is there at our beck and call; we are born with it. This is what our ancestors wanted us to remember.

We are immune to simple force and oppression. If we should leave this world, to join the others who are not here, our strength is not less; but more!

I am looking into a hole in the ground, I see a blue fish swimming below. I'm thinking of catching it but a black bear comes and chases me away. Why?

Perhaps the Black bear has shown me to think about rejecting the modern way of fishing in our traditional lake, go back to the nets made of lodge pole pine and hemp. Maybe we need to relearn how to appreciate the time and patience required to gather the food for survival.

I am fishing at the harbor, by the Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre, using plastic bottle crates to catch golden lake Kokanee. The trays were not effective and the fish were hard to catch. I am now at home cleaning the Kokanee, I open my back door and see four large black fish lying there, dead. I am about to clean them but I am drawn into the living room where I see my son has already done the job. The fish are lying on the carpet, bright red. I tell my son "good for you, I didn't even have to tell you to clean them."

I was told the dead fish feel sorrow because their natural habitat has been changed. Millions of years of instinct have been interfered with. There is still hope and strength shown by positive voice and red color of fish. Gold color shows how greed can overtake the preservation of Mother Nature.

I stay awake all night carving three identical deer antler symbols of a fish, with the rainbow of life attached to it. Insomnia caused by my indecision to attend a fish ceremony because, in my own insecurity, I don't feel welcome. I go anyway, and offer each to a hole, along the

path that our ancestors used to travel when they migrated to each source of food.

We have shown our strength and unity and people are now listening to us. We have learned more of our Okanagan Language, for that is the language we speak here, and no one can take away our identity. We are restoring our history, sweats and songs.

In the end, I am stronger for having survived my own rage, fear and confusion when I felt I could even kill. I retreated into myself so I wouldn't poison others or lose my own focus to our cause. I wonder if I was the only one to feel this way?

There is intense discussion between the Band and Government representatives to bring about a Negotiation Package.

We are back at our Douglas Lake Road checkpoint, at Quilchena. I am at another one on Highway 5A and see the RCMP and Government Officials advancing on the Douglas Lake Road Checkpoint. I sense fear.

I see a body lying by the fence near Highway 5A. Our people carry him to the Douglas Lake Road Checkpoint. It is a Band member.

Someone has been shot in Ipperwash, Ontario. Is this a warning?

Negotiations are over and a "Bi-lateral Agreement," not a Treaty, has been signed. The next stage of carrying out the terms of the Agreement have been started.

We are again at the Douglas Lake Checkpoint cleaning up the site.

It's over, for now.

As I come to understand all that has happened, I know that our battles were right and good because we are people of the land, air, creeks and lakes. And it's time to move on. Whi'.

GRASS DANCING

for Joe Dale Tate

Grass dancing north of Route
66 whispers secrets of
survival on a low west wind.
Only you and I hear them, see
them – the apparitions holding
our attention, reminding us of
when we first honored the
grasses flourishing and in
abundance. Our winter was
hard. The ones “pure from
the great spirit,” died –
mother’s breasts were dry.
The “long living,” lungs fragile,
no buffalo broth to carry
spirit, passed on. Old hides
and moccasins were boiled for
the youth and men. Finally we
ate our dogs, they knew their
sacrifice, that they would
become legend to remind the
greedy and keep us humble. It
was the first sighting of new
grasses that made us cry.
Tears came, washing away
the horrible night, because
some had died, because we
had persisted. We picked
bunches of grass, tied them to
our back and belt, to our arms
and legs and danced for joy
and love that grandmother
earth turned for our life.
“When the grasses are
plenty, there will be plenty
all around,” is what they
whispered on that low
spring wind.

Ramrod Standing

Fond memories are fading
fleeting like giant bullfrogs
ready for hunting
running from its fate
as food, it leaps away
landing it stops
a great and powerful oak
deep-rooted into the ground

I remember the rumours,
I know their truth
it is recorded in its concentric ages
holding onto
land and source
unmovable and towering
I remember what I know
truth runs far

Etched in thick bark
it has felt bayonet
before rifle-shot
seen others war
around it, yet never
did budge an inch
but for growth
revolutions and clock towers
civil slaughters and hatter’s-glue
not untouched
it bears it no mind, no care

By now it has many scars
many thoughts
it is old by us
young by its kind
the strong, the brave
it never threw a punch
never fired arrows

yet never lost
never lost footing, ground, power

Were it a few shades lighted
or dead, romanticized
or devious and corrupt,
there would be statues erected in its likeness
mountains carved to it
towns and kingdoms named for it

Instead it stands
as it lived
defiant without offense
a solid barrier
it still stands
now holding dignity and respect
Its craggy woods
are hard and dry
soft lighting fires
into it, bull frog leap away
the oak still stands.

B.C.C.W. dispos.able

i choose to write
on this paper napkin
cuz i like its rough
homey feel
 from trees
 trees ya see

'nd they call it
easy 'nd dispos.able

i eat this food
from paper plates
'nd plastic bowls
it easy 'nd dispos.able

in this place I do not
choose must pitch in
things

they call dispos.able

but i know
 you know i do
forests give us breath
 give us food 'nd give us
 sanctuary 'nd give us 'nd give us

'nd they take n'd take
thru clenched teethe
they convince – dispos.able

d i s p o s . . . able!

i wonder this sadness
thru shadows of forest

i wonder 'nd wander these
cold concrete walls
the seams they crumble
'nd tumble 'nd edges
soften to lil' dispos.able
piles 'nd

i blow a warm breath
'nd watch yellow pollen
fertile pollen pollen
ride gentle
with a whisper

to a destination
indisposed
out out
side these
concrete walls...

FAMILY

SOLIDARITY IN THE NIGHT

This was the night
all the people sang together.

This was the night
all the people dreamed together.

This was the night
all the people danced together.

This was the night
all the people prayed together.

This was the night all the people began to heal.

Untitled

The water is falling, surrendering over the wet rocks. It is teal blue in the moonlight. The brightness of summer touches the midnight blue sky. I remember my cousin speaking. One wall is windows in the room we are in. He sounds the same talking to this room packed with people as he does when we stand alone. He is wearing a faded denim shirt and jeans. His hair is braided, silver runs through it now. He has large hands, with long fingers and he traces the air as he speaks. His hand flows downward as he talks about water, how it symbolizes humility and how humble we have to be to do this work. He says that water is flowing underneath this building we are sitting in now. We are on ground level facing the lush green sunlight filled woods. I feel grateful when it is my turn to speak as I have followed my Elder, Kayendres and three chiefs, beginning with the eldest. I am the youngest – the water is flowing in the right direction.

Revolutionary Genealogy

When we trace out
our family tree
we must look for
those whose tombstones,
made of wood or
a broken pot with flowers
long ago became earth again.

We must search
in invisible archives
for the un-named, the un-recorded
for the silent ones
not described
in any book.

For our revolutionary
genealogy
must have nothing
to do
with the tyrants,
the greedy,
the wealthy,
the generals,
the sons of (ig)noble
families.

To be known well
by history
nine times out of ten
is to be
an aggressor
or, if not that,
the child of aggressors
living from a bloody legacy,
from crimes
brushed aside.

How do we sing the praises
of the good
of the plain people
of the ones
who never stole enough
to buy a page of history?

How do we honor
the forgotten women
the ones punished
by patriarchy
their family names
often
not even so much
as written down?

Or the ones who died young
in childbirth?

Or the ones who never
had a chance to
learn to write
a diary?

Or the ones who never
earned enough
to pay taxes?

Or the ones whose memory
was wiped out
by the conquest
of our tribes?
(or by slavery's silence)?

Revolutionary genealogy
does not
chase after
noble titles
family crests

or fornicating
dukes.

It does not seek connections
with the wicked
but rather
it might be a
genealogy
of slaves,
Mabel, age 21,
yellow-colored
with a scar on her
right arm
and a limp,
has run away
from her owner,
a reward
will be paid
for knowledge
of her whereabouts.

A genealogy
of tribes
for we cannot
discover
individual names,

A genealogy
of villages,
of mountain ridges,
because the records,
start only in 1790,
or 1650,
or 1900
and the ancestors
have fused together
into the fold
from whence they come.

Genealogy cannot
for us
be the illusion
of false pride
in people
whose behavior
we would
or should, disown.

The genealogy of the ruling classes
is fake, for sure,
since only mother's
can be known
for certain,
father being often
rapist or
night-travelling lover
giving un-surnamed sperm,
perhaps the butler even.

And mathematics tells us
that each one of us
had 16 great-great grandparents
born of 32
born of 64
born of 128
born of 256
born of 512
and that was only ten generations
back
or 250 years.

And in 1492 each of us
had
mathematically
264,000 ancestors
born of
528,000 parents
unless, of course,

our ancestors
married each other
as cousins did
among the aristocracies
(keeping estates held tight
among related idiots).

It is whole tribes
from whom we stem
from entire watersheds
and basins,
even from entire continents
since migration
is ancient
as well as recent.

Revolutionary genealogy
will include the earth
our mother
from whence we came
and the salty water
which is our nature
and the plants
and animals
which form our flesh
and the sun and the air
which give us life
and the birds which sing our songs
and the friends who make it all worthwhile.

So now
let us turn
from false bourgeois genealogy
to the real search
for origins
which must always
lead us back to sperm and eggs
to nature and to nurture,
to the people

to the tribes
to the slaves
to the suffering
and struggling
and ordinary lives
from which even kings must have once come.

Let us find
our unknown foreparents
our ancient grandmothers
our ancient grandfathers
in their houses of thatch
and grass
and skin
and earth
in the clay and stones of our Mother's body
and honor them
with the songs
of our deeds.

As we seek justice
we seek them out

As we create beauty
we honor them.

As we liberate the world
in which we live
we liberate them.

As we end the suffering
of people today
we give meaning
to the suffering
of all those,
our relations,
who have given us this life.

Tepi lahapa

PENEMUE AND THE INDIANS

We are the ghosts
of our grandfathers
and grandmothers

we are life lived again

We are the knot
between the past and the future
we are string
binding our grandfathers
to our grandchildren

Letter Excerpt

Bojoh

Here's The Minotaur.

It's context may interest you: this is a dream I had some time before the issue of "cultural appropriation" made headlines. While the dream was exhilarating and I gained a real sense of my own personal power and awoke feeling triumphant, I was nevertheless cheesed-off that this non-Native monster had invaded my dreams. I would rather have faced a windigo! After relating this dream to Daniel Moses, he commented "so, you're a warrior-woman." Then during the whole "cultural appropriation" thing, especially during those times when I felt so alone and helpless, I armed myself with Daniel's comment, and drew great strength from this dream (now poem) and did what I could with what little I perceived I had — no one was going to bully me or my people (haha)!

I give thanks to this dream and that nasty ole Minotaur for giving me power and testing my strength. Now, I give this dream to you.

The Minotaur

Warm sunshine, blue
water and children's laughter
— a picnic on the shore.

And then he bellowed
from across the bay, that
creature. From somewhere
in the trees he
roared, again.
He thundered once more and
broke through the bush,
waded into the water,
planning to make
our picnic his.

Our men were not
with us, and those who were
feared this - this
bull beast of a man.
Closer he surged and
closer, through the
water, making for our point.

What were we to do?

I picked up a small
child, instinctively,
held the cherub
in the crook of my arm
and turned to face this
belligerent monster.

Showdown! This was
going to be good.

He would never know,
I hoped, how
vulnerable I was.

I picked a sprig of
snake berry bush too,

and held it out
before me as
I walked, as I
moved to thwart
that bull-beasty man.

Not too close though.
He would have to
challenge me first...
and he did.
And he did not
know how
defenseless I was.

*By the power
of this bush which
has touched menstrual blood,
I forewarn thee
to leave, make tracks,
get lost, clear out!
For should
these leaves but
touch thee lightly,
touch thee slightly, thou
shalt weaken and die.
I goaded.*

He laughed
me to scorn, that man –
*What menstrual blood!
Har har!*

But I held my ground.

The beast stepped
forward and I did too.

He would never know
how helpless
I was.

Studies in Migration

Pulled into Joe Olson's landing. Patterns of the past leaping before us like the frogs caught here for fishing. With the force of long history they return. Welling up in the iron scent of spring water. Pooling amid last falls leaves. Slowly seeping into tennies worn through at the big toe.

Each year someone comes home. Pat moved in next to her dad. Von settled on Grandma's old land. Laurie Brown, gone since after the war, came back that same year as the trumpeter swans. Pelicans have been filtering in for seven summers. Today they fill the north quarter of South Twin. The evening lake black with birds.

Each space held for years in stories. Waiting. Now reclaimed. *Your name was never empty.* We could have told them. *We kept it full of memories.* Our land the color of age.

Clouded titles fill courthouse files. But spring sap spills out just the same. Boiled in family kettles. Cast iron blackened over decades of fires. Some walk these woods seeking surveyors' marks. Some fingers trace old spout scars.

And flight the birds could tell us is a pattern. Going. And coming back.

My Mom

My mom is special. She loves
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 me and my little brother. My mom
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 goes to university and she is
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 always studying and reading. Mom
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 is a teacher. Now mom is going
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 to do her Masters. I think mom
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 is really smart. Mom sings Haida
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 songs. She is writing a book about
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 our Nonny I like it when
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 my mom takes us to the park
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 and go to eat at McDonalds. When I
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 grow up I want to go to university
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 just like my mom. I love my
 ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
 mom. She is the best mom in
 ♥ ♥ ♥
 the whole world.

The Greatest Mentor In My Life “My Dear Precious Grandmother”

My name is Pansy Collison. My Haida name is “Oolong-kuth-way.” The Haida interpretation for my name means “Shining Gold.” This name was given to me by my late Grandmother, Amanda Edgars. She was the greatest teacher and mentor in my life. In the Haida language, we call our grandmothers, Nonny. Since I was a young girl, Nonny Amanda has been teaching me the Haida songs, language, traditions and culture. She was the ‘Matriarch’ for our family. She knew all the Haida names for various families, and she was full of knowledge about the stories, legends and traditions of the Haida people. Nonny was always willing to teach anyone who was willing to learn the Haida culture. I am very fortunate that I took the time to listen and learn the stories from the most wonderful and precious Haida teacher I’ve had in my life.

Nonny Amanda was born at Kung, Naden Harbour. She was born March 10th, 1904. Her Haida name is “Wath-ul-can-us.” The English translation means “a lady with much knowledge,” which is indeed an appropriate name for my grandmother because she was filled with the knowledge of Haida history and traditions. She had two sisters and one brother. Her sisters’ names are Mary Bell (born 1911) and Minnie Edgars (born 1915). Her late brother’s name was Ambrose Bell (born 1913). Nonny’s mother’s name was Kate Bell and her grandparents’ names were Mary Guulay Bell and John Gaayaa Bell (born 1847). Mary Bell’s second husband’s name was John Glaawaa. Mary and John Bell had five sons and three daughters. This is how I must explain our family history so everyone will understand our family lineage.

Nonny Amanda is from the Eagle Clan. She originally comes from Kung. She was the oldest niece therefore, she was passed the traditional territory of all the land on Kung and Salmon River. In 1934 she put on a house dinner and invited all the Chiefs and Elders to announce she was keeping the land in her name until the Jath-lon-us people picked a Chief. Nonny explained it was important to pick a Head Chief who is leader for the Clan, and Chief for the territorial land of Kung and Salmon River. Nonny

Amanda's people also came from Jath, which is located on Langara Island. She was the matriarch for the Jath-lon-us tribe because she knew all the Haida names for different families and clans. She knew the family background and the crests of many families. Many Haida people came to Nonny for advice and direction or simply for information. She was a very knowledgeable and respectable lady. She knew how to speak the "old" Haida language and she knew many Haida legends and stories about lands, territories, customs and traditions.

She was married in the traditional Haida custom way. In the Haida custom a person from the Eagle Clan cannot marry a member of another Eagle Clan. The only time this is acknowledged is when the male person gets adopted to the opposite clan. Nonny Amanda's uncles, Phillip, John, Peter, Frank and Louis Bell chose her husband. Her husband's name was Isaac Edgars (born 1902). In the Haida language, we call our grandfathers Chinny. Chinny Isaac was from the Raven clan. He was originally from Yan Village, which is located directly across from Old Massett Village. Chinny Isaac had three brothers and one sister. Their names are Joe Edgars, Timothy Edgars, Jimmy Edgars and his sister's name was Irene Edwards.

When I was about twelve years old, our house burned down, and we had no other place to live until our house was rebuilt. This is when we moved into my Grandparents' house. This became the start of my learning about the Haida culture and language. Nonny would tell me stories about when she was growing up. She said that when she was a young girl she travelled all over the Queen Charlotte Islands with her parents and grandparents. They travelled with the seasons and harvested and stored foods for the winter. She remembered when they camped at Tow Hill to dig clams. They would dry the clams on sticks and they would have rows and rows of clams drying in the sun. Her parents and grandparents worked at Naden. When the work was finished at Naden, they travelled to North Island and went up the Inlet to work at Shannon Bay. During the summer they would salt salmon and dry salmon. They also picked an abundance of berries which were dried or canned in jars. In the month of October they smoked deer meat. In late April, the whole family went on a boat across to Yan Village to pick seaweed. Nonny said they would pack a gigantic

picnic basket full of food. The whole family and many other Haida people camped at Yan Village to pick seaweed. They dried most of the seaweed on huge rocks and half dried the rest of the seaweed and then packed them into boxes. Nonny said, "This was a fun time," when all the kids worked together and picked seaweed. Then all the children played together, and the adults sat around the fire and told stories. This was an enjoyable time when the children played and the other families shared their food. Nonny said that during those days, everyone would get together after they had enough food supply for the winter and they would have a potlatch. She said the Jath-lon-us family would pack baskets of food to one camp and different families took turns providing the food for the potlatch. As she reflected back to her younger days, she said "Everything was so good. Everyone shared and helped one another during those days."

As I grew older into the adolescent years, I realized that Nonny was teaching me many traditional values and Haida customs by telling me different stories and legends. This was how she was brought up by her mother, uncles and grandparents. She said the Haida people did not write anything down on paper. The stories, legends, customs and traditions were taught in an oral tradition. Nonny said, "The Haida people always explained their family lineage and family names in a potlatch, so everyone present in the potlatch will know their names and which territory or land belonged to them. The people present were the witnesses of the names that were given to individuals, the naming a new Haida Chiefs, as well as adoptions, crests and songs of families, and ownership of various land and territories. This is how the history was recorded, it was etched in the minds of all the people, so they can remember the history and pass it on to their own children and grandchildren."

Nonny Amanda was an extremely gifted and talented woman, Nonny knew how to weave hats and baskets out of cedar bark. She also knew how to crochet jackets, blankets and vests. She used buffalo wool to crochet jackets and she also used the fine crochet cotton to crochet beautiful table spreads. I remember I was a teenager when she started to teach me how to crochet. It didn't take too long to learn because I would sit and watch her crochet for a while and then I would copy her.

Nonny always said, "It is important to listen and it is important to watch." I realized when she was teaching me how to crochet that listening and watching were two important skills which were to become very important elements in my daily life. As a teacher, it is important that I listen to the concerns of my students, the advice and knowledge of other teachers, and to the wisdom of the Elders. I became a very observant person by watching others. Often, I analyze different situations before I speak. I also use these skills to observe the students I am presently teaching.

I eventually learned how to crochet many different items such as bedspreads, baby blankets, baby clothes and tissue covers. One of the most important lessons Nonny taught me about making button blankets or regalia is: "Always put the eye part on last. In our family clan, we believe that when we put the eye part on last, the Eagle (or whatever design) will open up its eyes and thank us for keeping our history and traditions alive." When I teach the wonderful art of 'button blanket making,' I always teach the history of blanket making and how the Haidas make the colours red, black and white.

Nonny Amanda was a composer of Haida songs. She composed Haida songs about her life, her children and grandchildren and about where she travelled. She was extremely knowledgeable in the songs and dances of the Haida people. In 1962, she started the dancing group called, "Haida Eagle Dancers." This is how I started learning the Haida language. Nonny Amanda started teaching me many Haida songs. This was a very inspiring learning experience because she would sing the songs to me and then she would interpret the Haida language into English. This seemed to be a natural learning process because I enjoyed learning the Haida songs. Nonny said, "Songs and crests tell everyone where you come from and which territory you come from. They are important symbols of our identity. No one can sing another family's songs and no one can wear another person's crests, unless they have permission from the appropriate owners of the songs and crests. It is just like stealing, when someone else sings the songs that belong to a certain family." Nonny Amanda reflected back to her grandfather's days. She said they had big wars if anyone else sang their family songs or wore their family crests. She'd say very sadly, "Today is very different, some people sing any songs and put different words in them."

I became extremely motivated by my grandmother's enthusiasm to teach me the Haida songs. I made it a habit to go to visit Nonny everyday after school to learn the Haida songs. Some of the Haida songs I learned were called: Welcome Song, Eagle and Raven Song, Men's Strength Song, Haida Love Song, Happy Song, Grandchildren Song, and Mourning Song. I also learned many other children's songs. She also taught me some songs in the Chinook language. Nonny said, "Each song has a very important meaning." For example, the Grandchildren Song tells how much the people love their children and grandchildren. Words cannot express this love, so they want to squeeze their children really hard to tell them how much they love them. When I first learned this song I was about twelve years old. I did not understand the meaning of the words. Now I understand what this song means because I have my own two precious children. I always want to hug them really hard to show them how much I love them. Now I have the same feelings that Nonny had when she was surrounded by her grandchildren. The "Mourning Song" is a very sad song which is only sung when a loved one has passed away or when the family holds a Memorial Potlatch for the loved one. The "Hunting Song" also has a special meaning. The women are singing the song for the men who went out hunting. When the men are out hunting, they cannot think of their family or they will not catch any game. One of the Haida songs I really enjoy singing is called the "Happy Song."

I love to sing Haida songs. It makes me very happy to be able to sing songs and to be able to share my knowledge with people who are willing to listen. Nonny said, "I will teach you and Margaret the Haida songs. It is important that the songs are carried into each generation in our family." She said, "The songs tell stories about our family lineage and where our families come from."

Nonny was a very energetic lady. When she was teaching the members of the Haida Eagle Dancers, she would show them how to move their feet, arms and body. She would say, "Watch me, see how I move my feet and arms." I felt very honoured because Nonny insisted that I start singing the Haida songs right from the beginning of when the group was organized. Aunty Margaret Hewan, Nonny Amanda and I were the main singers and drummers. Eventually, I became the organizer for the group and we

started earning our own funds to travel to different places in British Columbia. We also travelled to Germany, Hawai'i, Ottawa, and various towns throughout Alaska. Every time we performed our dances and sang the Haida songs in different cities, we ensured we wore our traditional Haida regalia. We were proud to share our Haida traditions and culture. Nonny Amanda always said, "Stand up and be proud of who you are. Dance and show the people who you are." Her words of encouragement were truly inspiring to each member of the group and she instilled a strong sense of pride in who we are. We danced and sang to show the people that we are Haida people and that we are continuing our powerful traditions and culture. We danced and sang to show the people that our culture and language is not being lost.

This is my story about the most inspiring lady I have ever known. Today I understand how valuable my grandmother's teaching were. Now it is my duty to teach my children and the members of the Jath-lon-us families the Haida songs and dances. As I reflect back to my younger years when I went to visit my Nonny Amanda, I always think what a wonderful learning experience and upbringing I had. I am always grateful for making the time to listen to my grandmother and Elders. They are truly the professional teachers in our culture and language. It is through the wealth of knowledge and experience that they pass on orally that we will survive as Haida people.

I end my story by giving advice to our young Haida people and other members of the First Nations: "Listen to your Elders and learn your traditions, culture and language. We must maintain our sense of identity through our legends, stories, songs, names, territories, and languages. We must listen and learn from our Elders.

Stand up and be proud of being a First Nations person."

SISTER PRAYS FOR THE CHILDREN

(For Juanita)

a round baby boy rides her hip
his dark eyes intent
searching everything
distracted momentarily
by the shape of his own hand

another boy tugs her skirt
then
impatient
urgent at her elbow
this one's smile can blind the sun
his scowl can block the moon

something's cooking
almost always
insistent phone rings
might be more sickness
or more trouble
more needs than can be met
regardless of good intention

it should be said
it's not always bad news
bad news is just more easily remembered

cluttered table
dog eared paperwork
endless and so often confusing
takes time away from living

we all laugh easily
at one another and ourselves
some singer said
laughing and crying
it's the same release
and on most days
that is what we need

eyes wide and concerned
she tells a story
about children
too young to fend for themselves
depending on their wits

for survival
their parents' absence keenly felt
they are without the grown up words
to say it aloud.

hungry bellied
breaking into neighboring houses
raiding people's kitchens
trying to fill the emptiness
stray pups
travelling in tiny packs
too often kicked
and left unfed
become mean dogs.

her man shakes his head
"when we were kids
we could get fed
in any house we knew"

"sister" she says
"what can we do about the children?
our house is full most days
and commodities only go so far"

unshed tears shake her voice

my blood pounds
fears her heart could break
behind this

my own belly aches
sleep is too light
listening in the darkness

for the sound of hope
hearing desperate cries
of lonely children
abandoned to the future

on some days and nights
they suffocate my prayers
drowning them
leaving me hoarse voiced with effort
fatigued and fuzzy headed

this sister knows this in me
it is something we share
in the lives we lead

the phone interrupts
the round baby shifts his weight
the older boy has gone out
to play with the dogs

her man sits apart
still shaking his head
lined circles wrap his eyes

silence weighs down the smells of dinner

the baby watches her face
feels her in his heart
tiny chubby hand
lays lightly against her cheek
he smiles wide
clouds part
sunlight joins them

she hugs him close to her breast
making soothing noises

we all smile together
feeling blessed.

collective consciousness

as I stroll through woods
of sugar maple
their cover of crimson
gold ochre and green
now discarded
crackles under
my footsteps

Alleghany Mountains surround me
worn and rugged
their faces hold many stories
their aura touches and comforts me

the earth in her glory
soft and warm with birth and death
invites me
sit for a while and rest
listen to the gentle winds
drifting through the trees
I hear those voices
words that float
on breath
from generations past

I am told they are veiled
yet I see them
dressed as pilgrims
and traditional Iroquois style
English, Scots, Irish and French
mix with Mohawk Oneida, Cayuga and Seneca

they are visions
for those who see
they are voices
for those who hear
they bring stories
told for generations
that one day I will tell

gigue the jig the six-huit stitch

funny how things go sometimes
when english is my father's tongue
and french my mother's too

I guess I'm colonized pretty good
assimilated too

which is what they like to think
I have a cousin who's a priest
a roman catholic priest

his name is jean-claude proulx
he's a very busy guy

he knows a bit about the grandfathers
the grandmothers too

but more about the grandfathers
being he's a boy

and so I ask him can he share
he says for sure
to put it in my book

he lives pretty far away so he says he'll write
it takes him quite a while
he knows he'll be more than an hour at his computer

and he doesn't have the time
they keep him very busy with the church

he likes his quiet time he says
his cottage on a lake where he goes to be alone

he likes to collect things which are old
much older than the church
a bronze buddha and an oil lamp from an ancient punic tomb

and the grandfathers pass his way
a bedside table from a.g. bell

a british empire box-style desk
from the officer at the conquest of india
which is what they like to think

jean-claude has a list of the grandmothers and grandfathers
that's longer than your arm
he gives this to me and I write to him that

it's just what we need to trace our métis bloodlines
back and to our roots

our roots before the second fellow founds quebec
before the first fellow sails the seaway bleu

my cousin writes me back and asks is he a métis too
which he punctuates with three question marks

then tells some stories
of things passed on his way
mostly by the grandmothers

mostly about the grandfathers
whom he knows

rosina from thurso gives jean-claude a red sash
which is nine feet long

francois xavier lafrance wears this to impress exilda
on the wedding day
it's the peak of summer in curran quebec in 1864

he wears the sash over the jacket of his suit
which has no buttons

jean-claude wears this sash too on very special occasions
which rosina shows him how

rosina moves to ottawa with napoleon proulx
after the wedding day

three years after the fire comes across the bridge and
into ottawa from hull

down booth street til it hits the marsh
over by where they make that man-made lake

napoleon saves his parents from the fire
suspends them in the well
saves the american ginger-bread clock too

the ginger-bread clock which marks the time
the time the grandmothers and grandfathers decide it's time

to assimilate
which is what they like to think
red river settles that one pretty good

because three brothers shot two sisters too
because the grandmothers whose hearts are fairly broke
too dangerous to say you're indian

because the children suffer
because the indian act

too indian to say you're not dangerous

napoleon learns from his father who is antoine proulx
to drum to jig

to hunt to fish to offer tobacco too
to plant three sisters corn squash and bean
to pray to mary joseph and jesus too

napoleon learns from his father how to clean that clock

on norman street in ottawa he teaches jean-claude too
which he plays the wheels as spinning tops

while napoleon wipes them clean of cooking grease
and reassembles all the parts

napoleon starts to work when he's just twelve years old
running on the logs
the logs jammed up on the ottawa river

which is very wide
his first day there

he's gifted with two pipes
tobacco too

an old indian his uncle shows him how to carve a pipe
bark trunk and branch intact
from cherry wood

he grows tobacco too
rouge quesnel and parfum d'italie
which is very strong stuff

in the gardens by his home
makes his old leather mitten into a tobacco pouch

tobacco he keeps moist in earthenware whose
lid's a little cup
a little cup for cedar chips to light from the wood stove

and burning sacred cedar
by the old wood stove
as she stitches squares of velvet

is rosina who's a poet who talks to tree and bird and stone
who talk to rosina too
who tells long stories while she weaves

crazy-patch quilt squares from velvet dresses

two generations two ways to work the cloth her mother's and her
own mothers daughters sisters friends

rosina who's a poet
who recites pauline johnson while
she is reading her blanket with her hands

*no woman in canada
has she but the faintest dash of native blood in her veins
but loves velvets and silks*

*as beef to the english-man
wine to the frenchman
fads to the the yankee*

*so are velevet and silk to the indian girl
be she wild as prairie grass
be she on the borders of civilization*

*or having stepped within its boundary
mounted the steps of culture even under its superficial heights*

*there are those who think they pay me a compliment in saying
that I am just like a white woman*

*my aim
my joy
my pride*

*is to sing the glories of my own people
ours is the race that taught the world that avarice veiled
by any name is crime*

*ours are the people of the blue air and the green woods and
ours the faith that taught men and women to live without
greed and die without fear*

the terms of a sister

begins in the womb
we swim
towards a nation

umbilical reach
blue infinity

severed by lightning
striking the core
of this hemisphere

we emerge
brown as earth
red as sun

children of chiefs
medicine women

this is me
this is you

power preserved
to ignite
the darkness

Finding The Inner Edges Of Life

Was it yesterday or that long ago
we began the search inward to find each other
to find life's essence
that burns in love
and in hate
that burns in you
and in me
to find the spark that rekindles the beautiful
essential element of humanity
life

It was a cold long hard wintry journey
of salt licked tears and wounds
turned to showers of laughter
as new growths of ourselves mingled
sparingly at first
and just as yellows greens & blues of spring
attacks the hill sides...with passion
you found the eruption of life
in the sounds of my laughter and I in yours

And the tears that we shed together
were not stained red
with anger fear or shame...any more

And we tore down the barriers of pain between us
And we found it was all for love...all for life that we were here

And we realized that our winter was not the only cold hard story
that needed to find spring

And we understood that even though new blossoms of life spring
up
all over our inner meadows
it marks already new signs of winters yet to come

But there will be magnificent springs
and magnificent winters will follow
and we will celebrate them together

And I will never be...
and you will never be...
anyone else's long hard winter again.

Birth

ten years ago
i did this
ignorance and fear
holding my skin and bones
so close
i was
tightly woven

spring in the form
of an old man infant
surging slowly through
burrowing
wakening
carving
a way out
into the world

five years ago
i did this
standing on my toes
then coming down on to
the palms of my feet
to be solid and strong

being as big as i can be
holding my ground
making space
for the arrival of
an old man infant
in the sudden
pale guise
of a thunderbolt

two and a half
years ago
i did this
hunkered down in a rented tub
kids at summer camp, we were

a baby is coming, a baby!

family drifting through
the house, children
swirling
up and down the stairs
as an old man infant
drifted and swirled
into our world

four months ago
i did this
i called upon the grandmothers
to be with me
i know this task
with every fibre of my being
i open close

midwife talking me through
says, it is safe
for you to do this
and the grandmothers
colour her words
it is sacred for you
to do this
sacred

near birth: we are scared
we do not trust this thing
the doctor says
you can do it
we say no

we honour the life that passes
unborn

first birth: we say
we can do this
maybe we can do this
i cling to you, my

desperado-nurturer

i hang my tired self
from the steady frame
of your bones

second birth: i clutch
your two hands in mine
stare deep into the
dark safety
of your eyes

i stand alone
you walk around
and greet the child

third birth: you come
for the last time
naked with me
into the birthing place

guide the child

fourth birth: you stand near
not entirely with me
draped in more than clothes

i surprise myself by calling
your name out loud

all of our grandmothers
are here

all of our grandfathers
are standing behind us

all of our children are waiting
for this birth

Grandmother/sweatlodge

learning
returning

it is not fear of the dark
but of your wet heat

which may be the
wet heat in me

i crawl
from your womb

nourished
in surrender

i give thanks
for the lean shanks

of community

Untitled

TELL ME... What is Sacred? Of what is the Spirit made? What
is Worth Living for?

What is worth Dying for?

The Love for the Sacred/Spiritual/Living/Dying Land is....

Quay! Hello! Bonjour! My friends know me as Louisa. I speak Cree, English and French. I was baptised with the name Emily Louise Mianscum. I was brought up on the land and taught to respect everyone's spirituality. My mother's name is Charlotte Rose.

My dad, Tommy Mianscum was a hunter/trapper, a friend, a father, a man with a strong living heart, a busy man always on the go. In February of 1986, as he crossed the road in Waswanipi on my brother Sonny's brand new ski-doo, a car came from around the bend at full speed and struck him. His plans that day had been to dismantle his tent at a hunting camp. He died within fifteen minutes. I own one thing from his living days... his hat. I was married that same year on July 26th. I miss him....

My wild and fun-loving uncle Samuel Capississit, hunter/trapper, was struck and killed by a train (there were no warning bells, lights or gates).

My 5 year old niece, beautiful, happy little red-haired Ruby was on a toboggan during the Christmas holiday season. She was struck and killed by a logging truck. Her best friends - my then very young brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews witnessed this.

There are many more stories out there... these are only a few of mine.

So tell me... is this "Progress" or is it "Separation?"

To Grandmother's House I Go

Grandma lives in
 the downtown eastside
 I walked there once
 nine months pregnant
 trying to bring
 on labour
 I passed Astoria
 invisible to hookers on
 their heroin bounce
 From the corner
 of my eye
 a car slowly
 followed
 The driver
 waved
 me over
 Drool dripped
 from canine face
 hunger in eyes
 I gave him
 the finger
 Off he drove
 into darkness
 If I had a gun
 like the hunter
 I would shoot
 him dead.

Untitled

grandma pours me a cup of red raspberry tea
 with loose yellow leaves
 swirling in vibrant midnight blue
 sending sparks of fire to radiate around
 when i kneel in mud
 rubbing red across my crescent body

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
 when i want to sleep all day
 never leaving my dreams
 lay in the stars
 lay suckling in my mother's arms
 and play peekaboo with my dad

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
 when i want to lay cradled in the moon
 watch over you
 and paint my body with red from my womb
 rub my fingers creating pictures
 that pulse on the walls of my room

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
 when i want to throw porcelain heads that sit on my shelves
 shattering windows and mirrors that surround my bed

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
 when i want to be a cat
 swaying my hips
 winning each stare
 playing with invisible rainbow spirals
 that linger in the air

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
 on days when
 i want to laugh with the children next door
 forgetting the years i experienced before

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
on days when i quiver
tasting salt tears
longing for random words
to send sensual waves
that lull still moments

grandma pours me red raspberry tea
warming unborn babies
that cry
 mama make this world soft
 with soothing sounds of drums
 and clean water swooshing around
causing blows in my stomach
to send me to the floor

grandma pours red raspberry tea
on my crescent back
cascades across my lips
lingers into my body
spirals in my belly
steeps inside
floats through my veins
sits quietly on my skin

so i can walk strong
with hands sending sweet songs

Untitled

She sees the world through a veil
mist mountain
draped against
silk sky
This is her sanctuary

Here she gave birth to herself
and then to a son
Here is where she opened her folds
of shrouding to
him
and found soft
fresh
flesh
touched
and alive

She clothes her self in sacred colour
Red
Yellow
Black
White
Dances them into song
Sings them into breath
Breathes them
Life

It is her son
that weaved this awakening
for nine months within her
It is him that danced
against the walls of her womb
and sang as she slept
so that she could dream the dream awake

And when he sang his first breath
she dreamed
and all of those before her
dreamed the same joy
Life is sacred
Life is sacred

IDENTITY

Native American
aboriginal
dark savage
chief
Indian
First Nations
Indigenous
skin
Amerind
Princess
squaw
The People
American Indian

who am i?

“Who am i?”

this piece is centered around the concept of ‘labels,’ whether these are self-identified or externally imposed upon ourselves. across the country, across the continent, these labels change with each new border we cross.

it is hard finding ourselves, with no clear consensus from our Indigenous leadership as to who we are. it is only in the last few generations that Indigenous People are finally demanding that their own labels be used by the mainstream culture, but it is still regional. it is important that we gather as Indigenous communities and move beyond imposed political boundaries and share our strengths and share our cultures before we get lost in isolation and forget who we are.

Innateness OF Being

I'm
Indigenous!
I see, feel, think,
dream, read, talk and
sense or am I just being.
To me, I am not ashamed, lost,
drunk, disgusted, stupid and smelly
or am I just being. Sometimes I think
I am an animal. I live, eat, play, compete,
sleep and survive or am I just being. Most times
I dream of wide oceans, big mountains, green trees and
long rivers. Part of me must be a bird. Must fly the skies
to see. Sun, I like a big hot sun. Turns me darker and darker
reminds me of who I am. I think I am a sun dog. Eagle, I like a
bald eagle. An eagle sits atop a tree by my house. I watches me,
reminds me of who I am. I remember
I
am
Indigenous!

native hum

I

rigoberta menchu tum, guatemala

zapatistas, san cristobal de las casas,
chiapas, mexico

oka incident, canada

haunani-kay trask, hawai'i

alabama-coushatta boys, livingston, texas

yanomamo massacre, venezuela

II

epicenter chant
ripple floods
gorging stagnant dams
releasing their bowels
into the oceans

in the noble land
the red necks say
"let's all be american"
knowing not where they
are from

"just us"
is what they pray

in their morning coffee cafes
talking farm reports and riot L.A.
achromatic eyes graze
chewing the color
of hate

grandma, the pilgrims are afraid

III

fernando hernandez sez
"native people do not
commit violence
easily"

IV

solidarity drum
we are not afraid

Letter Excerpt

To me, "Standing Ground" means not ceasing to exist, to BE, even when overwhelmed or overrun by others.

I live it as a woman in a man-first world; as an artist facing attention- and importance-hungry 'admirer;' as a Metis naturalist pushing back someday else's "now-I'm-supposed-to's" – supposed to be and think, supposed to do and say, supposed to have and produce. It takes a lot of standing on a sometimes very small pieces of 'ground' to just keep breathing.

My strength is nourished in the woods around me, in the birds in my sky and in the animal people at my door and the sounds of all in the wind.

I am with those who see Spirit in dust as well as in eagles. My sense of solidarity comes from knowing you are, here and now.

I neither need, nor want, a crowd in my studio; but, I do need to know that you exist and I do need to receive your communications, – verbal and visual.

Cave Adventures

My soil soaked shoes stepped into the scant light. I made my way through stale, musty vapours. My nose twitched. Irritation enveloped me in this environment. Laid out before me, this omnidirectional path was inter-connected and entwined with other paths. I was down on my hands and knees. I crawled, scratching against dirt and rock and clay. Kicked up dust blurred my vision, blurred my sight. Tears trickled down my cheeks.

"What am I doing here?" I said out loud

I was supposed to have been learning about art, Indian art. I was supposed to have been learning about history, history of Indian art. I had been asked to bring in an artifact.

"Randy Streams, You are Indian. This symbols presentation assignment should be no problem for you."

I wanted to correct the professor. I wanted to tell him I knew nothing more than the other students. I wanted to tell him I had no symbolic artifact. But he had learned from professional Indian experts.

Now, here I was in these caverns, deep dimensions below the surface. I was tunnelling through a musky cave. I had crawled some of the way.

I inched along. It was that kind of pace. I searched for something that I believed lost.

All these intellectual contradictions impacted me. I wanted to reconcile all these cerebral inconsistencies that surfaced within contemporary reality.

Home, Brother Return

I had struggled with the whole concept of attending University.

"University is just a different monster than other education institutions."

Was I personally participating in a process that was first initiated five hundred years ago? Or was I accomplishing something for the betterment of myself and my community? I didn't know for sure, which.

A part of me insisted that I was marshalling resources to live in this contemporary world. Resources which were internal, traditional, and modern in nature.

Yet another part of me screamed.

“You are going against the old ways!”

Now I looked for something to bring back to the Art History class. As the sole native, I was expected to perform, to make an earth shattering presentation.

We Are Brothers

I burrowed through the dark and narrow expanses of the cave. I made my way through the tunnels, sometimes having to crawl a distance.

“What am I doing here?”

Was I doing it only for the grade? Or was there another reason for being in the cave? I continued on. I pored over the cave’s remnants. I stayed, more out of the fact that I didn’t choose to leave.

We Are Related

There were moments I felt I had heard something. Something very faint. I had stayed up for two nights. Now, I convinced myself there was no voice; the whisper had come from a place very deep inside. I pushed myself further along the cave passage.

“I shouldn’t be here. No mark is worth this. Even if I do find something, should I really bring it to class? I don’t know. I shouldn’t be here.”

Despite my own adamant protests, I stayed. I kneeled down on the cave floor. I closed my eyes.

Aawooo . . . ooo . . . ooo

I kept my eyes closed as Takaya spoke.

“The blood that flows through your veins, is mine. Your great-great-grandfather and grandmother nursed on milk from Wolf blood that flows through my veins.”

I woke in the cave the next morning and immediately, I dismissed the encounter. I had fallen asleep and dreamed it.

I stood up from the cave’s floor and walked towards the entrance. I neared the opening. I stopped. I felt something dangling from my neck. My fingers quickly removed it. An intricate carved Wolf figure hung from the leather strands. My uncle told me once that the figure was already on the stone. What wasn’t a part of the figure was cut and chiselled away. But, where did this one come from?

We Are Blood

Wolf had visited. In my time of need, Takaya had presented himself. I no longer needed to be stressed out about my assignment. I had my symbol for the Art History presentation. I readied myself to leave.

“No, this isn’t right. Takaya gave me a gift. A personal symbol that represents a connection with Takaya, a connection with creation. This is a message. Takaya and I are blood.”

I reached down to the cave’s floor. I picked up soil.

“Thank you Wolf. Now I know the real reason I came here.”

I carried the handful of soil to class that afternoon. I walked in there. I stood there in front of fifty people I really didn’t know, even after three months.

“Randy Two Streams, you may present your symbol.”

I stood there in front of the gathered. I slowly moved my closed hands in front of me.

“This is my symbol. This is my connection.”

Soil flowed from my hands.

CHANGING TIMES

I stand in the glass of time
What are the sounds of time?
What do I feel?

Birth a child strange to the world
A natural cry of fear
leaving my mother's womb
the cord has been cut

Yet, I bring with me
the voice of my ancestors
From the mountains their songs
echo into my generation

I feel the spirit of freedom
innocent
A child born on strange land
with many others

I am learning See?
My Ancestors I am learning

I grasp at new surroundings
I learn to walk on this land
See? I am learning

I feel the changes in the time
of my youth
I see between darkness and light

My momma tells me
Child you are becoming a woman now
You have joined the cycle
of the moon

A SACRED TIME
A VERY SACRED TIME

Momma I'm beginning to feel
the pain of others

that travels between the
darkness and light

Sometimes the mountain
is veiled in darkness
I watch for the shaft
of the red sunset
to grace the tip of the mountain

Grandfathers I PRAY
as I kneel on the surface of
Mother Earth
I am only a traveller in TIME
Let the eagle speak
or the birds to whisper hope
in these changing times

I PRAY

I am a woman now
in many colours
I grasp at the beams of light
from all walks of life

I stand by the mirror
an allusion I say!
I have to find myself
in these changing times

I take out my tobacco and sage
I PRAY

CREATOR I take refuge
in the solitude of nature
Trees stand quietly
as I PRAY

The rivers continue to
flow for generations
past and future
It carries my prayers on

The Seasons have past
I am old and tired
I have gathered wisdom
I have cried out in pain
I have felt the sorrow of others

I cry too for the coming generation
Will they see the seeds of time?

Will they see the trees?
Will the waters be pure?
Will they hear the birds sing?

Then too I wonder
Will they retain their
native identity?

Will they hunt the land
Like their ancestors in the past?

Will the young womans
carry their children
in the woods to pick berries?
Will there be laughter
by the sores as the
womans bring in the salmon?

Yes! My answer
floats down the river

SACRED WATERS
that are blessed by the
prayers of our ancestors

Their spirit will see
us through these changing
TIMES

Portrait of a Heathen Considered

The glow is unmistakably red.
It could be dawn
but then it could be dusk
though judging from the sky near sunset.
Paintings such as these are dramatic by nature,
and red is the color of character.

My head is shaved and painted
(you guessed it: red).
My eyes steely, reptilian.
(after all this is a portrait).
My mouth severe, wordless.
My jaw rigid, metal
like my scalping club.

The woman I am holding
by one white porcelain arm
has aptly swooned.
Her dress is in slight disarray
though not provocative by any stretch of the imagination.
(That is for another day.)
Fear glistens her brow.

Her face is fixed on a distant nimbus:
could it be, yes, it is,
a horse and rider,
under the cover of cloud,
her protectorate, her angel of god,
brandishing pistol and sword,
thundering down with all bravado
of legend.

This is not a pastoral scene.
No English cottage country.
No Lake Windermere languidly rolling by.
No sheep lulling in the background.
This is America 1700 or thereabouts.
The message is clear.
It is a pose
the artist expects us to hold.

Remember

Remember that you are
a good woman
grown from a perfect child
remember
all of your hopes and dreams
not forsaken
still possible

Remember that you are
completely deserving
all of the love in the world
is the net
that you stand upon

Remember that you are
a smart person, and wise
your feelings are
an essential guide
the clear heart of matter
beating out a rhythm
we can all dance to
you are a foundation
a generous loom
all of us are weaving
our lives around you

Remember that you are
a full woman
remember
that you are not
alone in this place
remember
all of your needs
all of your hopes
all of your dreams
are a potent fire
warming the world
lighting your face

Untitled

I started sewing when I was a young girl. I always felt secure with a needle and thread.

As time passed I started drinking. It totally destroyed me. I started smoking and got into heavy drugs. I guess heavy drugs weren't for me because I cramped up and started throwing up.

Many lonely times set in. My paranoia set in – thoughts of suicide-then finally the attempt – which landed me in a hospital. I'll never do that again.

As time moved on, I made my way to Northern B.C. where I quit drinking, returned to college and graduated with a nursing Certificate in Long Term Care. yet I wasn't happy because I didn't have "EXPRESSION." Everyone needs to have "EXPRESSION" – whether it be sewing, cooking, writing, etc.

One evening in 1986 I was travelling through the mountains and I got out of my car. I looked up, there was only a spot of light away up there. Man! the mountains were giants and I was just a grain of dust compared to them. I asked myself – who? – made them so beautiful? That's when I realized there was a Creator and started to get my shit together. "I humbled myself". Since then I have respected every living thing, and today I am trying to study Ethnobotany, preferably the "Thompson." It's my way of paying respect to these native peoples.

I believe in truth. You save so much energy when you tell the truth. I also treat people the way I want to be treated.

Keep a positive attitude – it helps.

I tell stories and my experiences in my sewing.

The broken woman symbolizes my dysfunction. The woman put all together is the feeling of being whole.

There was a lot of verbal and very violent physical abuse when I was young and growing up. I bartered with my sewing for my therapy – \$85.00 – a session. I wanted to know why I drank?, why I was violently mad when I drank?, to the point that it put me in jail. Well, I found out! *The healing started that day*. I now love myself. I am a good person.

A therapist can analyze you but can never be you or get in you. I feel in order to heal, you have to let that out of yourself in “Expression.”

Each scrap or piece of my material I hold in my hands means I am letting go. Every stitch I quilt is a tear-could be of happiness-could be of sadness. It calms me. I never fail to thank the Creator for giving me hands and fingers to sew and eyes to see. Life is like a patch quilt – each scrap of material useful – put together – sometimes it gets worn-like we in life but you start another project – or recipe if you cook and this time it gets better.

Never let anyone make your quilt for you – do it yourself so you can praise yourself. I cry when I finish a project, then I pray my cushions go to good homes. All my work is smudged with sweet-grass; then I am happy and start on some more work.

I Didn't Ask

I didn't ask
to be born
into a surrounded family

I didn't request
an invasion

I didn't ask
to live
between uranium
and a hole in the sky

I didn't pray
for gravity
to keep me stuck
on the ground
with Eagle spirit envy

I didn't say
anyone should go
to the moon

I didn't ask
for 1 billion tons
of concrete
or a dirty glass
of fish head soup

I didn't run the entire species
over the buffalo cliff
or dig the earth for metal
to make a knife
for my tongue

I didn't enroll
for school

I didn't place an order
for two more languages
and send the second one back

I didn't want
foreign justice
or enter the judges court
or build a jail
for myself

I didn't dial 911
or call upon the troops

I didn't sleep
with the enemy
or fill out a census
or vote

I didn't beg
for money
or go
to the market

I didn't rise out of
and fall into
this ancient land
for grounded astronauts
and beached sailors
to live well
off the shorelines
for 5 centuries
into a new millenium

SPIRITUALITY

Cherokee Invocation

Sge!

Hisga'ya Galun'lati
Great Father of Earth-People here,
Mighty Owner of Lands and all Waters
Who sends forth the Harvest each year;

Creator of all the world Creatures,
The Willow, the Wren and the Bear,
The Master of Thunder and Lightning,
of the Wind and the Rain and the Air'

Hear me,
Iya!
Hear my prayer!

Untitled

A dog barks and I wake up in the dark. I can hear birds singing their cheerful and relentless morning song. I look over at the neon light on my black digital clock radio, it's four A.M. I hear these words, they seem to float up from the depths of the ocean deep within my consciousness. "Sound is sacred. Sound is sacred." I recognize the voice and the style – simple words – straight from the one to whom I give thanks. I think about the man who is teaching me to drum. He is big and dark like this night. He surrounds me like a flute surrounds the wind that blows through it to make music. When I look down at his hand over mine I see that we are two shades of the earth and I can relax in him. He is a Spiritual Father. The first time that I hit his drum I became aware that the drum vibrates. When I see him dance as he plays the drum, I experience that the drummer, the stick, the dance and the drum are one instrument. The instrument is God. Once I watched a great spiritual teacher heal through sound – his voice and the harmonium he was playing on the banks of the holy river. There was a man sitting in front of him. I could sense the vibration travel from the love in his heart, to the reed of his throat through the air to the one in need of healing. Tonight I read that the Yurok people believe being true to yourself means giving your best to help a person in need and being true to yourself is the one and only law their people have.

Sally Stands Straight Stands Her Ground Shocks the Salesians

Yes,
I know I am late.
Late to Mass,
Late to Mission,
Late,
so late,
to the Mayflower.

Yes,
I know how late I am.
I may be latest woman you know,
keeping your time and mine.
Two pulses,
two heartbeats.

My circle time surrenders
to hours struck from iron.
Straight lines win,
in the end.
I am late anyway.

This morning I entertained angels.
I was aware.
They wandered up the walk,
wrapped in beads and feathers,
let themselves in,
asked for oatmeal.

I saw glory in their faces,
and served them.

This morning I saved a burning bush.
I stopped to blow on the blaze.
The flame died,
tired as I right now am.
I would be late to Mass, again,
but I paused to whisper wado,
thank you,
and bandage its charred limbs.

This morning I greeted the sun.
I opened my eyes at dawn.
I blew kisses at creation,
smudged the saints.
I could have dressed for Mass right then,
made it in,
but I went to the window,
fancydanced.
In my own time,
I saw God.

Sally Stands Straight Scolds The Dominicans

Our words echo in the air
remembered by mountains,
told again by thunder,
as lessons in drumbeats,
and dance steps.

Jingle dresses carry our verbs.
Grass dancers are our poetry.
We have all the Rosary we need,
since eagle feathers shelter Scriptures.

Our confessions are in our eye,
watching weavers and warriors
lick their fingers clean of fabric and fire,
tasting God.

Our indulgences are in our ears,
bronze heads titled toward the worship in the whirlwind,
counting coup,
breathing God.

Our supplications are in our souls,
mothers and mankillers trade wisdom and weapons,
making master's degrees from a night by the fireside,
talking God.

Ancient Songs

When isolation
is a sharp
cold wind,
and rain
needling despair,
your song
whispers its heartbeat,
insistent
til I hear,
above the raucous shrill
of modern man.
No surprise they kill
so easily
in this noise-begotten silence.
Above their clatter
they cannot hear
the ancestor's blood
running thick
through soil and stone
coursing wild
through sapling,
wild swan
and rusty toad.
Bird song sonatas
drowned in exhaust.
Proper thanks forgotten
in the high speed chase.
Then the sun spills
just so,
warmth spreads in pools,
and the heartbeat resumes
I hear you again
in your tireless voice,
first ear-straining murmur
then dream world strong
exhale,
relief,
return,
my turn
at Ancient Songs.

Stone People

The stone people lay in the ember embrace
Preparing the sacred rite.
The flames dance languid
The smoke smell true
A blanket of god lays on the land.

Breath and smoke join the trail to the sky
Dusk warm on the distant horizon.
The brotherhood silent
Already in prayer

Awaiting the sacred, moist rolling heat.
Burned to the ground stones scattered and broken
Horse Soldiers know his own good.
In the silent ruin
Of a prairie dawn
My Grandfather buries his Pipe.

Wrapped in a blanket dipped in disease
Winter, a devastation.
The walls of our bellies
glued with ice
Or filled with fever's fire.

Springtime we stand in a crosshair shadow
Awaiting the great benediction.
Indentured to ploughshare
As dreams of redemption
Are sown in the minds of our children.

Summer bereft of the sea of tipis
Rising on waves of prairie grass.
Last year's pole in the circle remains,
Eaglebone whistle still rings
In the heart of a spirit dancer.

Fall and I've lost my skin and eyes
It's hard to find my brother.
Childless harvests ring empty and joyless.
Ghost faces with firelit stories
Haunt dreamlike, thin echoes, then vapour.

Snow, the earth fragile beneath my feet
Like ice on a winter puddle.
Intestines, blood and organs
Sucked out and burned, smoke stinging
Ears ringing with half sung songs.

Still I know how to find you
Through the violent mist and the mud.
Death by isolation,
We know our own relations
By their star-quilt made of ghosts.

And still, the little pipe sings.

Stars

Trillions of endless miles of them; numberless solar wind-whipped flashes of stars, a thousand space-lulled galaxies of stars, a hundred rippling universes, every ripple a gleam of scarlet or amber, emerald or turquoise, multicolored as rainbows, the colours shivering over time and space in drops and splashes, the stars, some bright, some dim, some pulsating, some steady making their own energy as they live. There are star clusters where their great light shines in intensity the strength of ten Earth suns; there are star constellations whose formations merged with ancient people's minds, when ancient peoples studied them and told stories of their gods. Stars, where learned men and women foretold the future, where young men and women sat and stared and fell in love, dreaming of things that might be. Romantics all, of course. No scientists would stare at stars and dream. Scientists have CD Roms for that, if they relax at all.

Stars. Orion, the big dipper, Libra and Cancer. The Milky Way, the path of souls where departing spirits travel on their way to the other side. A progression of souls stopping to show their existence and their way to the happy hunting grounds, leaving a sparkling sweep of God's stellar paintbrush stroke of his creation. Multi-coloured sequins sailing against the backdrop of northern lights.

"Northern lights, Native spirits dancing in the sky."

"How did they get there, Grandpa?"

Here, there, wide-scattered across the limits of time and space, are the villages of our dead ancestors, walled to keep the living at bay. Each village you can visit in dreams. Each village your long departed relations that you will recognize from unremembered dreams.

"You'll know these places from tiny glimpses when you were living."

"Is it heaven, Grandpa?"

Here, there, are your memories as wide scattered and elusive as the stars are to scientists. Heaven is a lot closer for those who dream.

OUR BLOOD REMEMBERS

The day the earth wept, a quiet wind covered the land crying softly like an elderly woman, shawl over bowed head. We all heard, remember? We were all there. Our ancestral blood remembers the day Sitting Bull, the chief of chiefs was murdered. His white horse quivered as grief shot up through the crust of hard packed snow. Guardian relatives mourned in our behalf. They knew our loss, took the pain from our dreams, left us with our blood. We were asked to remember the sweeter days, when leaves and animals reached to touch him as he passed by. You know those times, to reach for a truth only the pure of heart reflect. Remember the holy man – peace loving. He was a sun dancer – prayed for the people, water, land and animals. Blessed among the blessed, chosen to lead the people. He showed us the good red road, the one that passes to our veins from earth through pipestone. Our blood remembers. He foresaw the demise of our enemy, the one with yellow hair. Soldiers falling upside down into their camp, he told us. Champion of the people, a visionary, he taught us how to dream, this ancestor of our blood. He asked us to put our minds together to see what life we will make for our children – those pure from God. Remember? Pure from God, the absolute gift, from our blood, and blessed by heaven's stars. And, we too, pure from god, our spirit, our blood, our minds and our tongues. The sun dancer knew this, showed us how to speak the words and walk the paths our children will follow. Remember?

(On December 15, 1890, Sitting Bull was murdered outside his home in South Dakota shortly after his arrest was ordered. He is remembered by his people as a great man, a holy man and a leader.)

LANGUAGE

INDIAN TALK: Are You Listening?

Nearly five hundred years ago Cortes landed on the coast of Mexico with 400 Spanish Freebooters. He sweet-talked a young Mayan girl into serving as an interpreter and informer and, with her help, persuaded thousands of Mexican Indian Warriors to join him in conquering Mesoamerica. Gathering other Indians to his cause he succeeded in looting the land and delivering it to The Crown of Spain.

Such is the power of words!

With the continued encroachment on Native American boundaries, it is important to control the tongue.

“As silent as an Indian” is a well known phrase. Everyone knows that the Native American is practically mute. Everyone, that is, except the Native American. For, with the Cherokees, there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. The time to be silent is when in the presence of strangers. And when nobody is listening anyway. It is not good to talk merely to enjoy the sound of your own voice. The time to speak is when you have something to say.

Among the Cherokees the art of oratory was much prized — right up there on a par with killing enemies in battle and stealing horses. Any feat of bravery was followed by a ceremonial dance, and everyone had a chance to tell the whole story of it — not once, but over and over again if it was exciting enough. In fact, Cherokees are probably the most talkative people on earth. The language is very complex. There are twenty ways to say, “I think it’s gonna rain.” Folks have been known to spend a whole evening just discussing the details of the language itself. There are different words for your grandparent on your mother’s side and the one on your father’s side. This is more important than you might think, for, in the old days, one could marry only into those two clans. There are any number of words for your brother — depending on whether he’s older or younger than you, and whether you’re a boy or a girl.

A verb does not have the usual tense of past, present, future, and so on. The Cherokees have a different conception of time—it goes round in a circle instead of in a straight line. One verb form designates whether you personally observed an action, or if you only heard about it from someone else. This has brought about an interesting conversation piece among present-day Cherokees. Many observed the moon-landing on their television screens. The question is: Did we actually see it with our own eyes, or just a photograph that was relayed on to us by someone else? Is it possible that some Sneaky Pete has perpetrated another gigantic hoax?

Much of the Cherokee speaking ability has been lost in translation from one language to another. There was an old Cherokee man hauled into an English-speaking Court of Law. When the Judge (through a Translator) asked him, “Do you beat your wife?” he started out speaking gently, but as he got into the spirit of the thing, he rose and gesticulated wildly for a quarter of an hour, ending up by slamming his fist on the rail before he at last sat down.

The Translator translated into English: “He says NO.”

From the Indian viewpoint, here are some statements from The Drum, a nineteenth century Cherokee Chief:

“White people talk too much and too loudly; they never take time to listen.”

“Silence is the language of wisdom.”

“In silence we can hear the voices that must be felt with the heart rather than with the ears.”

“In silence (The Great Spirit) gives us his most important messages.”

Which is remarkably the same as the Judeo-Christian Bible quotation: “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10).

Cherokees strive for a balance: half talk and half silence. An interesting conversation between two people is when one person talks only half the time and listens the other half; so that the second person is given equal time. Talking should be a sharing experience, not a monologue.

Only if I spoke with forked tongue would I demand both halves in the Time-Sharing of a conversation. I have filed in my mental computer one of my mother’s sage sayings: “Keep your eyes and ears open, and your big mouth shut!”

And: “Speech is silvern; silence is golden!”

However, all seriousness aside, I was brought up on this humorous quip:

WHEN WE TAKE THE COUNTRY BACK FOR THE INDIANS,
WE'RE NOT GONNA SHOOT NOBODY ———
WE'RE GONNA TALK 'EM TO DEATH!

Our Language

this is a word
this is a worLd

your I is an eye

This Page

Dearest paper,

I can see how an oral tradition is connected to environmentalism.

Native Literary World Views: A Personal Essay

An impressive title, but what does it mean? I've taught native literature to native students for five years, and am just starting to see more than the proverbial trees in the forest. I wonder how much more difficult it must be for non-natives to see the forest. I think about the difficulties in bridging the gap between traditional native storytelling, and writing as a method of expression. The two are separate and distinct, each with its own internal complexities, each with its own directions.

Then I pick up the newspaper and find yet another non-native analysis of native literature. And, yes, the predictable result. Of the five books reviewed, the reviewer likes the only book written by a non-native. The four native writers are judged lacking in some way. There is a deficiency in their world view. They don't use the same techniques – or they use literature in a different way, and towards a different purpose, than those techniques with which the reviewer is comfortable.

The result? White writers one, native writers, zero.

As a writer myself, I search for analogies. It's like a doctor being criticized for her work by a carpenter. Or like a carpenter's work being criticized by a doctor.

Or perhaps it's like they insist. Don't censor white writers. Don't tell them what to write, or not write. Freedom of expression, man. The individual's right to express their personal views over those of their communities. You've heard it before. The same logic is used to tedious (and devastating) effect regarding the gun laws in the United States.

They know not what they write.

Maybe it's good to be representative of your culture – even when your culture is running desperately short of answers. If your culture is falling apart, and the 'nuclear' family is breaking apart, then maybe your writing should reflect Yeats' maxim – where the centre is no longer sought in the community, but in the individual.

But I'm part Shuswap, part Okanagan, two native cultures in which the group, and its importance, is reflected by, and in, the individual. The person belongs to the family, and to the tribe, and finds his or her meaning within those groups. Finding answers by

leaving home isn't the answer. Returning home is. Different cultures. Not European, nor the descendant of Europeans.

So I struggle to explain this to students looking for something more than the European model of literature.

As a writer, I try to express this in the only way I can. Through analogies.

Storytelling is a group process. A person tells a story to the group, and the way he/she tells it depends upon the nature of the audience. The heart of storytelling lies in the concept of sharing. Not sharing in the European sense of sharing, but in the Okanagan sense of sharing. People matter. The group matters. If not more than, then certainly as much as, the storyteller.

I think of the effect of 500 years of European literature, freed at its rebirth by Gutenbergs's printing press. For a time it was glorious. Sweeping canvases, the full range of characters, the complete range of society.

It lasted for more than three hundred years, until the centripetal forces of writing overcame the centrifugal forces. Until the needs of the inner person overcame the needs of the social world around the writer.

I'm putting this poorly. Let's put it another way. Shakespeare and Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Proust, Dickens and Balzac – they all faced the world they lived in. They wrote about the paupers as well as the kings, the beggars as well as the kings, the beggars as well as the aristocrats. They faced outward as much as they faced inward, faced their demons and angels, and saw pieces of each in everyone.

But the years passed. Writers gradually sought answers less in the world around them, than in the world within themselves.

Perhaps this was inevitable. Literacy, and its effects, are centripetal, are highly individualistic processes. Consider yourselves. When was the last time you read anything to someone else, even your closest friend or family member? When was the last time you saw an author writing anything public? Reading and writing are mostly private acts, best done in the privacy of one's own space, and best assimilated within that same privacy.

Consider generations of such behaviour. Consider that what's passed on from generation to generation are the best thoughts and feelings of people writing for invisible audiences. The centripetal

forces I mentioned earlier.

We're a world away from tribal storytelling. Perhaps the problems of this world stem from people looking inwards for answers. For example, should one have the "right" to own a semi-automatic, when its only purpose is to kill people? Should such "rights" be defended at the cost of the greater good?

I have a difficult time with literacy. I circle it like a predator, trying to make words say what I mean. Looking outwards towards the community is difficult to control. There's so much out there. Maybe that's what modern literature reacts to. There's so much out there that it's frightening, or can be. People react by withdrawing. The vision narrows to just those types of people one knows. Middle-class perspectives become "world" views, are considered world-class.

We colour the rich as decadent, immoral, corrupt. We ignore the desperately poor, or simplify their struggles into a process of nobility. We retreat to suburbia, like modern cities, and create worlds of porcelain, where character studies become supreme. Look inwards, not outwards.

We deserve better from our writers. It can be done. It is being done. But not so much in North America as in South America, not so much in Europe as in Africa and New Zealand.

Harsh words, perhaps, and words which I'm not that comfortable with, for they draw lines in the sand. The *I dare you* syndrome. So I pull back. As a teacher, I owe it to my students to discuss why Europeans and their descendants feel comfortable appropriating other cultures in the shaping of their own world views. Never mind the contexts. That's another argument.

I struggle for analogies. Circle in the ways of my people, tackle issues from different angles. Is cultural appropriation simply an extension of land appropriation? Is it so deeply rooted in the conqueror soul of Europeans that it becomes inescapable? Inevitable? Invisible because unspoken? An inherent right? The bully who gets his way by being the strongest and meanest? Is there no European equivalent of protocol? Guilt? Shame?

What can one say to people whose principle language uses a single word for the meaning of "right" and "proper" as well as the concept of "theft" and "taking things by force," as English does with the word 'appropriate'?

The analogies continue.

At 2 a.m. on a night just before I began writing this, I sat awake in bed, my wife asleep beside me. My mind went back to the time I began writing my first published novel. To write it, I became a hermit, a recluse, spending days teaching and nights alone with my computer, writing the novel that demanded to be written. Two years of solitude. Two years focusing my energies inwards for expression.

Reading and writing demand such solitude. Remember the famous adage about writing – that you don't have to live in an ivory tower to be a writer, but you had better write in one.

Academics have it wrong. Storytelling and creative writing are fundamentally different. Storytellers take the germinal of an idea and shape the story to suit their audience. Different audience – different emphasis, different words, different techniques, different words. It's an organic process, an inclusive one shaped by the need to communicate one-to-one with groups of people.

The writer's published story creates one story for all of his or her readers, regardless of who they might be. They may interpret the story differently, but that's a reflection of the reader, not the writer. The words remain the same. The story is essentially static, not dynamic.

Storytellers tend to use stock characters. It's the story, the message, which is important, not the messenger. North American writers tend to emphasize characters rather than plots. South American writers haven't fallen for that trap.

Back to my main theme. I owe my students more than to present European literature. The carefully-crafted literary essay has a deadness about it, a deadness that's shaped and reshaped in the writer's own isolation and solitude. And don't think I don't see the irony of crafting my essay, either.

There's a wonderful energy in changing the message to suit the audience. I've talked about storytelling to forty or fifty different groups, and each time my message is worded differently, because each time audience has changed, my students are different.

I talk about the use of repetition as a storytelling technique. In essays, repetition isn't stressed, because the reader can always return to a page or passage. Not so in storytelling. Imagine stop-

ping a play in mid-act because you missed what the characters were saying or doing.

The use of repetition is the steady beat of a drummer. A rhythm is established, a context involved. Each time the drummer comes back to a certain beat, the drummer comes at it from a different direction and time, with the accumulated force of repetition. The music gains power. The message becomes more important. And it's out there, absorbed by its listeners. The drumbeat goes on in their minds after they've left the circle. It beats in their minds for the rest of their lives, maybe never to resurface, although when it does, it does so with the force of epiphany.

I talk about Coyote, Sn'klip, always changing, always demanding, always unpredictable. It's a character trait, and it's a technique most teachers discourage in creative writing. Stock characters. But Sn'klip continues to challenge boundaries, testing the limits of protocol and good judgement. His experiences are lessons in life, and there's always a comic twist, always the need to face life uninhibited. He talks, but so does the rest of creation.

Not children's stories so much as world views encompassing children and adults, youths, elders, grandchildren and grandparents. The storyteller tells stories again and again, ensuring that at some point the listeners fully understand what's being said. You can't repeat the story until you "own" it, until you understand what's being said. Beneath the still surface of words, there's an ocean of life.

I've taken a breather, and I'm back into the essay. I've looked at what I've written, and I realize that it's loose and rambling. It wanders, and my first instinct, in true European literary fashion, is to take my marker and begin editing. Go for the jugular. Get to the point. Tighten the essay. Voices from my past training. Then I remember the way my grandmother used to tell stories. She spoke Okanagan, and it used to drive us kids nuts, because she always circled around and around. We were forced to pay attention to every word, because she never explained what she was saying. She just spoke, and the words would circle in my mind for days. I worried at each line, each phrase, gnawing at it, trying to understand why she said them in the way she said them.

I've just spoken with my wife. She likes my drum analogy. Her name is Beth, and she's one of the voices of her people, the

Crees. It's important in the family and tribal sense to acknowledge those for whom you care. And I care so much for her. She's crystallized my thinking, and I'm ready to move on. Without family and tribe, you're nothing.

A final analogy in this essay. It circles in my mind.

Two years ago I walked into a classroom, where the English instructor was non-native. The students were a mixture of natives and non-natives. They'd been discussing the evaluation of native literature. For the non-native students, it was a matter of catching up. The allusions and reference points made by such writers as James Welch, N. Scott Momaday, and Leslie Silko were matters which they had to come to terms with. On the other hand, the native students understood these allusions and reference points. Their questions were shaped differently.

I began my presentation, and realized that the students weren't listening. So I changed my approach. Asked them questions. And their questions were questions which dominate native literature today.

The native students were angry. How could non-natives properly assess native literature if they didn't understand the allusions, reference points, and contexts upon which native stories depended? How could non-natives take ideas and materials out of context, and use them in their own writings? Where was the respect, the following of protocol? Did appropriating materials for literary purposes come naturally for non-native writers? I've softened the tone of their questions, but the reader can understand their anger only if they understand the processes and contexts involved in the treatment of native by non-natives.

In the Okanagan way, I attacked the question through indirection. Should natives write about non-natives? At what point does creative expression become appropriation? At what point does storytelling take on the aspects of cultural theft?

No firm answers came from this process, at least not in class. But that wasn't the point, no more than my grandmother wanted us to leave with all the answers. Each student of literature should come up with their own answers to these questions. The problem is that so few non-native students and teachers feel the need to question the European processes I've attempted to write about in this essay. Can native literature and education be delivered by, or

controlled by, non-natives? Would black American or Maori institutions allow themselves to be controlled by non-Natives? No, because at some point black educators and writers stood up and insisted upon complete control of their own education and writing. By and for their own people. They felt strongly that they had the tools and people to control their own destinies, rather than be controlled, however obliquely, by others.

Non-natives may ask, "What's the problem?" or "Shouldn't the best qualified teachers be hired regardless of their nationality or race?" or "Why can't we have the freedom to take ideas and processes to use for our own purposes?"

Traditionally, if you didn't follow protocol, if you didn't ask for permission, you were asked to leave the village. And certainly you were never allowed to control the village as a chief, as storyteller, or as elder, if you didn't come from that village.

So, is this the kind of essay I encourage my students to write? Yes, and no. Learning to come to the point has its advantages. Learning to develop characters is important. But there are other issues involved. It's important that native students understand that there is such a thing as native literature, and that it isn't the same as non-native literature. Nor should it be measured with the same tools and techniques as non-native literatures are measured by.

Cultural relativity? Damn right it is. Our voices are important, and need to be heard over those non-native "experts," writers, and teachers who have interests and control over who native peoples are, and what they believe in.

Listen to the drums, and the stories that circle. Listen to the voices of native writers, and understand that they come from different world views. Don't turn them into apples, into good little brown white writers who depend upon the good graces of their big brothers. Turn them into writers who seek to understand their own cultures. If you're non-native, listen to what they have to say, "even" if they're only students without the academic or professional credentials of their white counterparts.

Our voices are different. To try to make them the same is the process of assimilation and control which the Canadian government has failed so miserably at.

Indian Names

I was visiting and travelling in California one year, and was surprised to meet so many Indian people who told me their Indian names were made up or borrowed from some other tribe. I felt sorry, because they wished they had their family Indian names and could receive personal Indian names in the traditional ceremonial way.

All Native nations, clans and families have traditional ways for acquiring Indian names and in turn these names are passed on through the generations. At one time our people were known only by their Indian names, and some had two Indian names. One name was received during childhood, and the second after they matured and/or accomplished a great deed. One's Indian name identified who you were.

Among the L/Dakota, Indian names came individually through a very spiritual and ceremonial process. We were named after a revered ancestor, after a vision, or according to a personal dream.

A very private and sacred naming ceremony, in the Sioux Nation, was to ask a "Winkte" (literally, a man who acts like a woman) to give a secret name to our child. When this was done the child would always be healthy and have a long life.

Those of us who have gone through a traditional naming ceremony never forget the experience whether we are the recipient, the giver, or a member of the family. We are charged not to forget, because it is also our responsibility to help the recipient uphold their name. Along with the name comes a ceremonial gift.

We lived by our Indian names, upheld and honored them. Names were so important, we dared not dishonor them. Yes, we made mistakes, we are human, we all go through a learning process, but we lived and were guided so we would not go out and intentionally dishonor our names.

In some of the "Tiospaye" (generally, like a clan), a L/Dakota person's name is so revered it is only shared in prayer times, like in the "Inipi" (generally, a sweat lodge) or "Yuwipi" (generally, tying up) ceremonies. This is because they are identifying themselves to the spirits.

On the Sioux reservations, we all know what happened to our identity in the 1800's when the U.S. government and church groups took our names and gave us foreign names. Some names were forced on us, with others there was little choice. We had the names of presidents, missionaries, companies, traders and Bible characters.

I think of all the suffering my ancestors went through when they lost their names. They not only lost their names, they lost the language of the name, they lost their birthright – to be able to grow with it, and they could no longer daily identify with the essence of the ceremony.

Some of my ancestors, whether it be because of chance, prayer, or being headstrong, were able to keep their Indian names. Some of those names stayed in the L/Dakota language, such as "Wakan" – Holy, or "Mahto" – Bear. Some Sioux names were translated into English, like my great grandfather's name, "Hehaka Duta" – Elk (painted) Red.

But, traditionally, Red Elk could not be my name to use because it was my great grandfather's vision name. When my ancestors were put on reservations they were told, "You will use the name Red Elk as the family name and pass it down as a surname." But, I know this history, I know my culture and ceremonies, and I am comfortable with what is called a maiden name. I also have two ceremonial Indian names known only to my family, close friends and those with whom I pray.

I'd like to share a story about names which was told by one of my relatives. It happened when our names were being taken away from us and we had to decide which name we wanted.

“Ho tunkasi, neja caje”
(Grandfather, what name)
“wazi du he kta”
(do you want, going to have?)
“tukte caje yacin he?”
(which name do you want?)

“Ho, takoja, caje wan”
(Grandchild, a name)
“eyotahan wastehca”
(above all, the very best)
“Ho, he wacin”
(that’s what I want)
“Jesus, emakin yapi wacin”
(Jesus is the name I want.)

“Ho, ho, tunkasi, he caje kin”
(Grandfather, that name)
“nina eyotahan waste”
(it’s too good.)
“Tuwena yuhi sni!”
(Nobody has that!)

“Hiya takoja!”
(No grandson!)
“he caje kin wacin.”
(that’s the name I want.)

The relative did not get the name, but he got his point across. His own name was his prize possession, he lived by it and honored it. The only other name, he thought, that could compare with his, was the name Jesus. Nobody said anymore about taking his Indian name away.

I suggested to the Indian people I met in California, “Research your traditional Indian names and take them back. Also, ask one of your elders to give you an Indian name in the ceremonial way. They’re waiting for you.”

Indios for 500 Years BUT NO MORE

It was at Galway
in western Ireland
1477 was the likely year
a man and a woman
from America
were there seen
arriving by raft
or dugout boat

Colombo to be called Columbus
Christopherens self-named
saw these people there
with his own eye
magnificent ones
he wrote
in a book
which still survives.

People from Cathay, Catayo he recorded
sailing towards the east
ending up in Hibernia
at Galway
for Colombo believed
all his life
that Catayo
China we call it
lay due west
of Europe
just across the Atlantic

And Catayo
the miscalculator, Colombo
believed was part of India
for what was known then
as India extra Gangem

or India beyond the Ganges
ran eastward through
Southeast Asia to China
and to all of the spice islands of
the Indies.

Colombo, Colono
the miscalculator
believed at first that Cuba
a long peninsula was
an appendage of
the Great Khan's land
of Catayo
and he called our people
"indios"
and he called the lands
"las indias"
and "india extra gangem."

And on his last voyage
Colon the miscalculator
convinced himself
since Cuba was an island
that Nicaragua was the
very edge of Asia
that Catayo was
just beyond the
mountains of Amerrique.

And so the Spaniards
called our ancestors
indios
people of the India
people of Ind
people of Hind
people of the land of the Indus.

They named our ancestors
indios
people of the Indies
and so they also
named as Indios
the Chinese
the Filipinos
and all of the other peoples from old India
across the broad Pacific
to their New India.

Nova India
some of them called
our land on maps
New India
or West India
and our ancestors
became the New Indians
the West Indians.

But the truth is
and we know it
even if they don't(!)
our land is not part of India
it is not West India
it is not India Nova
and we are not really Indios
not really Indians.
American or otherwise.

Our names have been crushed
under booted feet
Our names have been buried
under looted cities
Our names have been corrupted
by foulmouthings.

Still, the Middle Continent of the world
 this Turtle-spirited island
 this Gourd island
 of Maraca
 the sacred island
 of Maiza
 this beautiful island
 of Semanahuac
will one day
 see
 emerging from between our lips
 its real names
 and sacred truth!

Thoughts Right Before Sleep

All the talk
 about understanding
 the words
 and what they
 signify
not resigning themselves
 to the customary cautionary semantics
 feeling within
 the beat of the heart
signifying the heartbeat of humanity
 and life breath
 and the mother of us all

people talkin' the talk more now
 relinquish violence
the new battle cry
no more legacies of hatred
 and petty skirmishes
passed on to generations
already steeped in the confusion
 of those who talk and talk
but continue to evade responsibility
 claiming no prior experience
 is reason enough
 to refuse rebirth
 into wholeness and love.

when we become caricatures
 living out the soap opera
 competing for the starring role
 in As The Tipi Turns
 someone always bitching
 about this one or that one
 doing it wrong

looking mean in the face at one another
cause this one's mad at that one – again
caught up in the grandiosity of our own paranoia
wearing history like a lead sinker on a weak line

and the work doesn't get done
and the young ones die
the death of those
who will forfeit the lives of others

in an imagined war against the wrong enemy
the ricocheting consequences of ill conceived plans
based on misconception and ignorance of honor
leaving riddled spirits
creating a future full of holes.

the struggles of those
already assimilated
now screaming and raging
about imperialism and exploitation
are perhaps the wails of those arriving late to a funeral.

frustrated static humming on the moccasin telegraph
emotional snipers
tiny razored arrows flying
they wound more deeply
than is believed at first glance.

cheap shots bring their own hangovers
leaving us stranded
in the muddied bottoms
of creeks running dry

lopsided triage
the blind man diagnosing the deaf man
recommending major surgery
the deaf man stares in horrified clarity
his powerlessness to make the blind man see
more terrifying to him
than his own inability to hear.

heard someone say the leaders should fix it
right now

using words like seven generations
most times not feeling in the heart
the understanding of their meaning

they are words repeated in the mind as thoughts
that hurry and distract
forgetting to pray
or maybe never knowing how
thinking is different than praying.

there are those who offer themselves
and their gifts may not include haste
they stand between the past
that has defined them
and the future
the people demand
so often denied the moment of today
whose prayer is needed
to breathe life into the gifts they bring.

**INTERNATIONAL
INDIGENOUS VOICES**

Gods of Our Ancestors

I sing of time before,
ka wa mamua

true, love-struck
engraved in light
in song-woven palms
along voluminous falls.

I sing of the far green sea
ka moauli
undulating
the great gods ascending.

I sing of mana
the many-flanked Ko'olau
in darkest blue;
the fierce foliage
of Kane abundant:

'ohe, ulu, kao
'ama'u

I sing of Pele
she who fires islands:
hapu'u, lehua, 'olapa

plumed shores
quivering in birth.

I sing of Akua
Papa-hanua-moku
dense lava mother
swept by storm.

I sing of Hawai'i
'aina aloha

my high dark land
in flames.

Nostalgia: VJ-Day

I.

A wounded morning
crippled by helicopters.
No bulletproof skies
over our "Hawaiian Islands"

where Presidents and
enemies dismember
this charmed Pacific.
Now, the exalted 50th

anniversary of VJ-Day.
Parade of the ancients: Marines,
G.I.s, the all-Filipino
regiment reminiscing

in faded uniform,
feted by a Commander-
in-Chief ascending on bursts
of rhetoric, but deftly

avoiding Vietnam, the wrong
war, inglorious
embarrassment.
And there, our authentic

Japanese Senator, smugly
armless from the great war,
preposterous manikin
of empire, feigning an
accent (American East

coast or late British
colonial) proving
acculturation by
perfect imitation.

II.

At the gravesites, tens
of thousands of tourists;
National Cemetery
of the Pacific: honoring

war dead by waving
American flags
in a far-away land.
Red, white, and blue,

Old Glory, old glory.
At Waikiki and Pearl
Harbor, maneuvers
and air shows: jets,

carriers, even a black
"stealth bomber," modelled
by Star Trek. Ah!
the long ago days

of real war, remembered
with tears, when killing
was simple, and tall,
young warriors went down

in blood and guts:
for democracy, for country
for the great
U.S. of A.

The Broken Gourd

I.

After the last echo
where fingers of light
soft as *laua'e*
come slowly

toward our aching earth,
a cracked *ipu*
whispers, bloody water
on its broken lip.

II.

Long ago, wise *kanaka*
hailed hand-twined
nets, whole villages shouting
the black flash of fish.

Wahine u'i
trained to the chant
of roiling surf;
na keiki sprouted by the sun
of a blazing sky.

Even Hina, tinted
by love, shone gold
across lover's sea.

III.

This night I crawl
into the mossy trunk
of upland winds;
an island's moan

welling grief,
centuries of memory
from my native *'aina*:

Each of us slain
by the white claw
of history: lost
genealogies, propertied
missionaries, diseased
haole.

Now, a poisoned *pae'aina*
swarming with foreigners

and dying Hawaiians.

IV.

A common horizon:
smelly shores
under spidery moons.

pockmarked *maile* vines,
rotting *ulu* groves,
the brittle clack
of broken lava stones.

Out of the east
a damp stench of money
burning at the edges.

Out of the west
the din of divine
violence, triumphal
destruction.

At home the bladed
reverberations of empire.

Ruins

To choose the late noon
sun, running barefoot
on wet Waimanalo
beach; to go with all

our souls' lost yearnings
to that deeper place
where love has let
the stars come down

and my hair, shawled
over bare shoulders,
fall in black waves
across my face;

there, at last,
escaped from the ruins
of our nation,

to lift our voices
over the sea
in bitter howls
of mourning.

Letter Excerpt

...I am sending you this poem... I wrote it at the time of CHOGM:
Commonwealth Heads of Government
which was held in November 1995.

Our political group protested outside Aotea square. We were
filmed during this protest and are no doubt
on file forever.

That year we held an alternative indigenous peoples conference
at Waipapa Marae. Many nations came
and spoke. We were closely monitored by the undercover cops.

Anyway, this poem was what came out of it. We were face to face
with our own Maori people who were
placed in front row positions against us.

I would have been "grabbed" as I was asking our own men why
they were standing against us in our stand
for our lands when their Chief Police Officer ordered them to get
me and shut me up. If I hadn't
mentioned the fact that I knew the law I most definitely would
have been silenced....

Arohanui

The Brothers

Why do you face me with linked arms and ready batons, my brothers!

you all in blue on that side and us, your brothers and sisters on this side.

We've come to tell them no more of their damn trade plans in our lands!

Your master twitches giving you his orders
sending signals to cameras to capture our faces?

You take orders so easily, my brothers?

"Get her! the one with the mouth! ...Get her!"

Hey! they taught me about free speech at your law school!
... yes... I thought
that would calm you... you upholders of the law...

you see, we've come to tell them no more of their damn trade plans in our lands!

We've come to take our rightful place in our ancestral lands...my brothers.

Ngati Kangaru

Billy was laughing his head off reading the history of the New Zealand Company, har, har, har, har.

It was since he'd been made redundant from Mitre 10 that he'd been doing all this reading. Billy and Makere had four children, one who had recently qualified as a lawyer but was out of work, one in her final year at university, and two at secondary school. These kids ate like elephants. Makere's job as a checkout operator for New World didn't bring in much money and she thought Billy should be out looking for another job instead of sitting on his backside all day reading and laughing.

The book belonged to Rena, whose full given names were Erena Meretiana. She wanted the book back so she could work on her assignment. Billy had a grip on it.

Har, har, these Wakefields were real crooks. That's what delighted Billy. He admired them, and at the beginning of his reading had been distracted for some minutes while he reflected on that first one, E. G. Wakefield, sitting in the clink studying up on colonisation. Then by the time of his release, EG had the edge on all those lords, barons, MPs, lawyers and so forth. Knew more about colonisation than they did, haaar.

However, Billy wasn't too impressed with the reason for EG's incarceration. Abducting an heiress? Jeppers! Billy preferred more normal, more cunning crookery, something funnier – like lying, cheating and stealing.

So in that regard he wasn't disappointed as he read on, blobbed out in front of the two-bar heater that was expensive to run, Makere reminded him. Yes, initial disappointment left him the more he progressed in his reading. Out-and-out crooks, liars, cheats and thieves these Wakefields. He felt inspired.

What he tried to explain to Makere was that he wasn't just spending his time idly while he sat there reading. He was learning a few things from EG, WW, Jerningham, Arthur and Co., that

would eventually be of benefit to him as well as to the whole family. He knew it in his bones.

'Listen to this,' he'd say, as Makere walked in the door on feet that during the course of the day had grown and puffed out over the tops of her shoes. And he'd attempt to interest her with excerpts from what he'd read "The Wakefields' plan was based on the assumption that vast areas – if possible, every acre – of New Zealand would be bought for a trifle, the real payment to the people of the land being their 'civilising'..." Hee hee, that's crafty. They called it "high and holy work."

'And here. There was this "exceptional Law" written about in one of EG's anonymous publications, where chiefs sold a heap of land for a few bob and received a section "in the midst of emigrants" in return. But har, har, the chiefs weren't allowed to live on this land until they had "learned to estimate its value." Goodby-ee, don't cry-ee. It was held in reserve waiting for the old fellas to be brainy enough to know what to do with it.

'Then there was this "adopt-a-chief scheme," a bit like the "dial-a-kaumatua" scheme that they have today where you bend some old bloke's ear for an hour or two, let him say a few wise words and get him to do the old rubber-stamp trick, hee, hee. Put him up in a flash hotel and give him a ride in an aeroplane then you've consulted with every iwi throughout Aotearoa, havintcha? Well, "adopt-a-chief" was a bit the same except the prizes were different. They gave out coats of arms, lessons in manners and how to mind your p's and q's, that sort of stuff. I like it. You could do anything as long as you had a "worthy cause," and Billy would become pensive. 'A worthy cause. Orl yew need is a werthy caws.'

On the same day that Billy finished reading the book he found his worthy cause. He had switched on the television to watch *Te Karere*, when the face of his first cousin Hiko, who lived in Poi Hakena, Australia, came on to the screen.

The first shots showed Hiko speaking to a large rally of Maori people in Sydney who had formed a group called Te Hokinga ki

Aotearoa. This group was in the initial stages of planning for a mass return of Maori to their homeland.

In the interview that followed, Hiko explained that there was disillusionment among Maori people with life in Australia and that they now wanted to return to New Zealand. Even the young people who had been born in Australia, who may never have seen Aotearoa, were showing an interest in their ancestral home. The group included three or four millionaires, along with others who had made it big in Oz, as well as those on the bones of their arses – or that's how Billy translated into English what Hiko had said in Maori, to Hana and Gavin. These two were Hana Angeline and Gavin Rutene, the secondary schoolers, who had left their homework to come and gog at their uncle on television.

Hiko went on to describe what planning would be involved in the first stage of The Return, because this transfer of one hundred families was a first stage only. The ultimate plan was to return all Maori people living in Australia to Aotearoa, iwi by iwi. But the groups didn't want to come home to nothing, was what Hiko was careful to explain. They intended all groups to be well housed and financed on their return, and discussions and decisions on how to make it all happen were in progress. Billy's ears prickled when Hiko began to speak of the need for land, homes, employment and business ventures. "Possess yourselves of the soil," he muttered, "and you are secure."

Ten minutes later he was on the phone to Hiko.

By the time the others returned – Makere from work, Tu from job-hunting and Rena from varsity – Billy and the two children had formed a company, composed a rap, cleared a performance space in front of the dead fireplace, put their caps on backwards and practised up to performance standard:

First you go and form a Co.
Make up lies and advertise
Buy for a trifle the land you want
For Jew's harps, nightcaps
Mirrors and beads

Sign here sign there
So we can steal
And bring home cuzzies
To their 'Parent Isle'

Draw up allotments on a map
No need to buy just occupy
Rename the places you now own
And don't let titles get you down
For blankets, fish hooks, axes and guns
Umbrellas, sealing wax, pots and clothes

Sign here sign there
So we can steal
And bring home cuzzies
To their 'Parent Isle'

Bought for a trifle sold for a bomb
Homes for your rellies
And dollars in the bank
Bought for a trifle sold for a bomb
Homes for your rellies and
Dollars in the bank

Ksss Aue, Aue,
Hi.

Billy, Hana and Gavin bowed to Makere, Tu and Rena. 'You are looking at a new company,' Billy said, 'which from henceforward (his vocabulary had taken on some curiosities since he had begun reading histories) will be known as Te Kamupene o Te Hokinga Mai.'

'Tell Te Kamupene o Te Hokinga Mai to cough up for the mortgage,' said Makere, disappearing offstage with her shoes in her hand.

'So we all need,' said Billy to Makere, later in the evening, is a vast area of land "as far as the eye can see".'

'Is that all?' said Makere.

'Of "delightful climate" and "rich soil" that is "well watered and coastal". Of course it'll need houses on it too, the best sort of houses, luxury style.'

'Like at Claire Vista,' said Makere. Billy jumped out of his chair and his eyes jumped out, 'Brilliant, Ma, brilliant.' He planted a kiss on her unimpressed cheek and went scrawvling in a drawer for pen and paper so that he could write to Hiko:

'...the obvious place for the first settlement of Ngati Kangaru, it being "commodious and attractive". But more importantly, as you know, Claire Vista is the old stomping ground of our iwi that was confiscated at the end of last century, and is now a luxury holiday resort. Couldn't be apter. We must time the arrival of our people for late autumn when the holidaymakers have all left. I'll take a trip up there on Saturday and get a few snaps, which I'll send. Then I'll draw up a plan and we can do our purchases. Between us we should be able to see everyone home and housed by June next year. Timing your arrival will be vital. I suggest you book flights well in advance so that you all arrive at once. We will charter buses to take you to your destination and when you arrive we will hold the official welcome-home ceremony and see you all settled into your new homes.'

The next weekend he packed the company photographer with her camera and the company secretary with his notebook and biro, into the car. He, the company manager, got in behind the wheel and they set out for Claire Vista.

At the top of the last rise, before going down into Claire Vista, Billy stopped the car. While he was filling the radiator, he told Hana to take a few shots. And to Gavin he said, 'Have a good look, son, and write down what the eye can see.'

'On either side of where we're stopped,' wrote Gavin, 'there's hills and natral vejetation. Ther's this long road down on to this flat land that's all covered in houses and parks. There's this long,

straight beach on the left side and the other side has lots of small beaches. There's this airport for lite planes and a red windsock showing hardly any wind. One little plane is just taking oof. There's these boats coming and going on the water as far as the I can see, and there's these two islands, one like a sitting dog and one like a duck.'

Their next stop was at the Claire Vista Information Centre, where they picked up street maps and brochures, after which they did a systematic tour of the streets, stopping every now and again to take photographs and notes.

'So what do I do?' asked Tu, who had just been made legal adviser of the company. He was Tuakana Petera and this was his first employment.

'Get parchments ready for signing,' said Billy.

'Do you mean deeds of title?'

'That's it,' said Billy. Then to Rena, the company's new researcher, he said, 'Delve into the histories and see what you can come up with for new brochures. Start by interviewing Nanny.'

'I've got exams in two weeks I'll have you know.'

'After that will do.'

The next day Billy wrote to Hiko to say that deeds of title were being prepared and requested that each of the families send two thousand dollars for working capital. He told him that a further two thousand dollars would be required on settlement. 'For four thousand bucks you'll all get a posh house with boat, by the sea, where there are recreation parks, and amenities, anchorage and launching ramps, and a town, with good shopping, only twenty minutes away. Also it's a good place to set up businesses for those who don't want to fish all the time.

'Once the deeds of sale have been made up for each property I'll get the signatures on them and then they'll be ready. I'll also prepare a map of the places, each place to be numbered, and when all the first payments have been made you can hold a lottery where subscribers' tickets are put into "tin boxes". Then you can have ceremonies where the names and numbers will be drawn out by a "beautiful boy". This is a method that has been used very successfully in the past, according to my information.

'Tomorrow we're going out to buy Jew's harps, muskets, blankets (or such like) as exchange for those who sign the parchments.'

'You'll have a hundred families all living in one house, I suppose,' said Makere, 'because that's all you'll get with four thousand dollars a family.'

'Possess yourselves of the homes,' said Billy.

'What's that supposed to mean?'

'It's a "wasteland". They're waste homes. They're all unoccupied. Why have houses unoccupied when there are people wanting to occupy them?'

'Bullshit. Hana and Gav didn't say the houses were unoccupied.'

'That's because it's summertime. End of March everyone's gone and there are good homes going to waste. "Reclaiming and cultivating a moral wilderness", that's what we're doing, "serving to the highest degree", that's what we're on about, "according to a deliberate and methodical plan".'

'Doesn't mean you can just walk in and take over.'

'Not unless we get all the locks changed.'

By the end of summer the money was coming in and Billy had all the deeds of sale printed, ready for signing. Makers thought he

was loopy thinking that all these rich wallahs would sign their holiday homes away.

‘Not *them*,’ Billy said. You don’t get *them* to sign. You get other people. That’s how it was done before. Give out pressies — tobacco, biscuits, pipes, that sort of thing, so that they, whoever they are, will mark the parchments.’

Makere was starting to get the hang of it, but she huffed all the same.

‘Now I’m going out to get us a van,’ Billy said. ‘Then we’ll buy the trifles. After that, tomorrow and the next day, we’ll go and round up some derros to do the signing.’

It took a week to get the signatures, and during that time Billy and the kids handed out — to park benchers in ten different parts of the city — one hundred bottles of whisky, one hundred packets of hot pies and one hundred old overcoats.

‘What do you want our signatures for?’ they asked.

‘Deeds of sale for a hundred properties up in Claire Vista,’ Billy said.

‘The only Claire Vistas we’ve got is where our bums hit the benches.’

‘Well, look here.’ Billy showed them the maps with the allotments marked out on them and they were interested and pleased. ‘Waste homes,’ Billy explained. ‘All these fellas have got plenty of other houses all over the place, but they’re simple people who know nothing about how to fully utilise their properties and they can scarcely cultivate the earth’. But who knows they might have a “peculiar aptitude for being improved”. It’s “high and holy work”, this.’

‘Too right. Go for it,’ the geezers said. Billy and the kids did their rap for them and moved on, pleased with progress.

In fact everything went so well that there was nothing much left to do after that. When he wrote to Hiko, Billy recommended that settlement of Claire Vista be speeded up. ‘We could start working on places for the next hundred families now and have all preparations done in two months. I think we should make an overall target of one hundred families catered for every two months over the next ten months. That means in March we get our first hundred families home, then another lot in May, July, September, November. By November we’ll have five hundred Ngati Kanguro families, i.e., about four thousand people, settled before the holiday season. We’ll bring in a few extra families from here (including ourselves) and that means that every property in Claire Vista will have new owners. If the Te Karere news crew comes over there again,’ he wrote, ‘make sure to tell them not to give our news to any other language. Hey, Bro, let’s just tap the sides of our noses with a little tip of finger. Keep it all nod nod, wink wink, for a while.’

On the fifth of November there was a big welcome-home ceremony, with speeches and food and fireworks at the Claire Vista hall, which had been renamed Te Whare Ngahau o Ngati Kanguro. At the same time Claire Vista was given back its former name of Ikanui and discussions took place regarding the renaming of streets, parks, boulevards, avenues, courts, dells and glens after its reclaimers.

By the time the former occupants began arriving in mid-December all the signs in the old Claire Vista had been changed and the new families were established in their new homes. It was a lovely, soft and green life at that time of year. One in which you could stand barefooted on grass or sand in your shorts and shirt and roll your eyes round. You could slide your boat down the ramp, cruise about, toss the anchor over and put your feet up, fish, pull your hat down. Whatever.

On the day that the first of the holidaymakers arrived at 6 Ara Hakana, with their bags of holiday outfits, Christmas presents, CDs, six-packs, cartons of groceries, snorkels, lilos and things, the man and woman and two sub-teenagers were met by Mere

and Jim Hakena, their three children, Jim's parents and a quickly gathering crowd of neighbours.

At first, Ruby and Gregory in their cotton co-ordinates, and Alister with his school friend in their stonewashed jeans, apricot and applegreen tees, and noses zinked pink and orange, thought they could've come to the wrong house, especially since its address seemed to have changed and the neighbours were different.

But how could it be the wrong house? It was the same windowy place in stained weatherboard, designed to suit its tree environment and its rocky outlook. There was the new skylit extension and glazed brick barbecue. Peach tree with a few green ones. In the drive in front of the underhouse garage they could see the spanking blue boat with *Sea Urchin* in cursive along its prow. The only difference was that the boat was hitched to a green Landcruiser instead of to a red Range Rover.

'That's our boat,' said Ruby.

'I doubt it,' said Mere and Ken together, folding their arms in unison.

'He paid good money for that,' a similarly folded-armed neighbour said. 'It wasn't much but it was good.'

Ruby and Alister didn't spend too much more time arguing. They went back to Auckland to put the matter in the pink hands of their lawyer.

It was two days later that the next holidaymakers arrived, this time at 13 Tiritoroa. After a long discussion out on the front lawn, Mai and Poto with their Dobermen and a contingent of neighbours felt a little sorry for their visitors in their singlets, baggies and jandals, and invited them in.

'You can still have your holiday, why not?' said Mai. 'There's the little flat at the back and we could let you have the dinghy. It's no trouble.'

The visitors were quick to decline the offer. They went away and came back two hours later with a policeman, who felt the heat but did the best he could, peering at the papers that Mai and Poto had produced, saying little. 'Perhaps you should come along with me and lay a formal complaint,' he suggested to the holidaymakers. Mai, Poto and a few of the neighbours went fishing after they'd gone.

From then on the holidaymakers kept arriving and everyone had to be alert, moving themselves from one front lawn to the next, sometimes having to break into groups so that their eyeballing skills, their skills in creative comment, could be shared around. It was Christmas by the time the news of what was happening reached the media. The obscure local paper did a tame, muddled article on it, which was eclipsed firstly by a full page on what the mayor and councillors of the nearby town wanted for Christmas, and by another, derived from one of the national papers, revealing New Year resolutions of fifty television personalities. After that there was the usual nation-wide closedown of everything for over a month, at the end of which time no one wanted to report holiday items any more.

So it wasn't until the new residents began to be sued that there was any news. Even then the story only trickled.

It gathered some impetus, however, when the business-people from the nearby town heard what was happening and felt concerned. Here was this new population at Claire Vista, or whatch-you-m'callit now, who were *permanent residents* and who were *big spenders*, and here were these fly-by-night jerk holidaymakers trying to kick them out.

Well, ever since this new lot had arrived business had boomed. The town was flourishing. The old supermarket, now that there was beginning to be competition, had taken up larger premises, lowered its prices, extended its lines and was providing trollies, music and coffee for customers. The car sale yards had been smartened up and the office decor had become so tasteful that the salespeople had had to clean themselves up and mind their lan-

guage. McDonald's had bought what was now thought of as a prime business site, where they were planning to build the biggest McDonald's in the Southern Hemisphere. A couple of empty storerooms, as well as every place that could be uncovered to show old brick, had been converted into better-than-average eating places. The town's dowdy motel, not wanting to be outdone by the several new places of accommodation being built along the main road, had become pink and upmarket, and had a new board out front offering television, video, heating swimming pool, spa, waterbeds, room service, restaurant, conference and seminar facilities.

Home appliance retailers were extending their showrooms and increasing their advertising. Home building and real estate was on an upward surge as more businesspeople began to enter town and as those already there began to want bigger, better, more suitable residences. In place of dusty, paintless shops and shoppes, there now appeared a variety of boutiques, studios, consortiums, centres, lands and worlds. When the Clip Joint opened up across the road from Lulu's hairdressers, Lulu had her place done out in green and white and it became Upper Kut. After that hair salons grew all over town, having names such as Head Office, Headlands, Beyond the Fringe, Hairport, Hairwaves, Hedlines, Siz's, Curl Up and Dye.

So the town was growing in size, wealth and reputation. Booming. Many of the new businesspeople were from the new Ikanui, the place of abundant fish. These newcomers had brought their upmarket Aussie ideas to eating establishments, accommodation, shops, cinema, pre-loved cars, newspaper publishing, transport, imports, exports, distribution. Good on them. The business people drew up a petition supporting the new residents and their fine activities, and this petition was eventually signed by everyone within a twenty-kilometre radius. This had media impact.

But that wasn't all that was going on.

Billy had found other areas suitable for purchase and settlement, and Rena had done her research into the history of these

areas so that they knew which of the Ngati Kangaru had ancestral ties to those places. There were six areas in the North Island and six in the South. 'Think of what it does to the voting power,' said Hiko, who was on the rise in local politics. Easy street, since all he needed was numbers.

Makere, who had lost her reluctance and become wholehearted, had taken Hiko's place in the company as liaison manager. This meant that she became the runner between Ozland and Aotearoa, conducting rallies, recruiting families, coordinating departures and arrivals. She enjoyed the work.

One day when Makere was filling in time in downtown Auckland before going to the airport, she noticed how much of the central city had closed up, gone to sleep.

'What it needs is people,' she said to the rest of the family when she arrived home.

They were lounging, steaming themselves, showering, hair-dressing, plucking eyebrows, in their enormous bathroom. She let herself down into the jacuzzi.

'Five hundred families to liven up the central city again. Signatures on papers, and then we turn those unwanted, wasteland wilderness of warehouses and office spaces into town houses, penthouses and apartments.' She lay back and closed her eyes. She could see the crowds once again seething in Queen Street renamed Ara Makere, buying, selling, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, yelling, singing, going to shows. But not only in Queen Street. Not only in Auckland. Oh, it truly was high and holy work. This Kamupene o te Hokinga Mai was 'a great and unwonted blessing'. Mind-blowing. She sat up.

'And businesses. So we'll have to line up all our architects, designers, builders, plumbers, electricians, consultants, programmers,' she said.

"'Soap boilers, tinkers and a maker of dolls' eyes'", said Billy.

'The ones already here as well the ones still in Oz,' Makere said. 'Set them to work and use some of this damn money getting those places done up. Open up a whole lot of shops, restaurants, agencies...' She lay back again with her feet elevated. They swam in the spinning water like macabre fish.

'It's brilliant, Ma,' Billy said, stripping off and walking across the floor with his toes turned up and his insteps arched – in fact, allowing only part of each heel and the ball joints of his big toes to touch the cold tile floor. With the stress of getting across the room on no more than heel and bone, his jaw, shoulders, elbows and knees became locked and he had a clench in each hand as well as in the bulge of his stomach.

'Those plumbers that you're talking about can come and run a few hot pipes under the floor here. Whoever built this place should've thought of that. But of course they were all summer people, so how would they know?' He lowered himself into the water, unlocking and letting out a slow, growling breath.

'We'll need different bits of paper for downtown business properties,' said Tu from the steam bench.

'Central Auckland was originally Ngati Whatua I suppose,' said Rena, who lost concentration on what she was doing for a moment and plucked out a complete eyebrow. 'I'll check it through then arrange a hui with them.'

'Think of it, we can influx any time of the year,' said Billy. 'We can work on getting people into the city in our off-season. January.... And it's not only Auckland, it's every city.'

'And as well as the business places there are so many houses in the cities empty at that time of the year too,' said Makere, narrowing her eyes while Billy's eyes widened. 'So we can look at those leaving to go on holiday as well as those leaving holiday places after the season is over. We can keep influxing from Oz of course, but there are plenty of locals without good housing. We can round them all up – the solos, the UBs, pensioners, low-

income earners, street kids, derros.'

'Different papers again for suburban homes,' said Tu.

'Candidates and more candidates, votes and more votes,' said Hiko, who had come from next door wearing a towel and carrying a briefcase. 'And why stop at Oz? We've got Maori communities in Utah, in London, all over the place.'

'When do we go out snooping, Dad?' asked Hana and Gavin, who had been blow-waving each other's hair.

'Fact finding, fact finding,' said Billy. 'We might need three or four teams, I'll round up a few for training.'

'I need a video camera,' said Hana.

'Video for Hana,' said Billy.

'Motorbike,' said Gavin.

'Motorbike,' said Billy.

'Motorbike,' said Hana.

'Two motorbikes,' said Billy.

'Bigger offices, more staff,' said Tu and Rena.

'See to it,' said Billy.

'Settlements within the cities,' said Makere, who was still with solos, UB, check-out operators and such. 'Around churches. Churches, sitting there idle – wastelands, wildernesses of churches.'

'And "really of no value",' said Billy. 'Until they become...'

'Meeting houses,' Makere said. 'Wharenui.'

'Great. Redo the fronts, change the decor and we have all these new wharehousi, one every block or so. Take over surrounding properties for kohanga, kura kaupapa, kaumatua housing, health and rehab centres, radio stations, TV channels...'

'Deeds of sale for church properties,' said Tu.

'More party candidates as well,' Hiko said. 'We'll need everything in place before the new coalition government comes in...'

'And by then we'll have "friends in high places".'

'Have our person at the top, our little surprise...'

'Who will be advised that it is better to reach a final and satisfactory conclusion than...'

"... to reopen questions of strict right, or carry on such an unprofitable controversy".'

'Then there's golf clubs,' said Makere. 'I'll find out how many people per week, per acre use golf courses,' said Rena. 'We'll find wasteland and wilderness there for sure.'

'And find out how the land was acquired and how it can be reacquired,' said Billy.

'Remember all the land given for schools? A lot of those schools have closed now.'

'Land given for the war effort and not returned.'

'Find out who gave what and how it will be returned.'

'Railways.'

'Find out how much is owed to us from sale of railways.'

'Cemeteries.'

'Find out what we've saved the taxpayer by providing land and maintaining our own cemeteries, burying our own dead. Make up claims.'

'And there are some going concerns that need new ownership too, or rather where old ownership needs re-establishing...'

'Sport and recreation parks...'

'Lake and river retreats...'

'Mountain resorts...'

Billy hoisted himself. 'Twenty or thirty teams and no time to waste.' He splatted across the tiles. 'Because "if from *delay* you allow others to do it before you – they will succeed and you will fail",' and he let out a rattle and a shuffle of a laugh that sounded like someone sweeping up smashings of glass with a noisy broom.

The Brother on the Bridge

None of our ope knew his name or where he was from, but he must've had one and he must've come from somewhere 'cause he's Maori. Someone said his name was Bruce, but he didn't look like a Bruce. Another suggested Rawiri, someone else said "...Nah, it's Wi." Well, whatever his name was and wherever he was from, to me he will always be the Brother on the Bridge. He's a hero this Brother and I wish I had got to meet him, to find out what he was like. Sure, I got to see him...but to find out what he was like. ...Nah, not even.

Let me describe to you this Cool Black cat and why he's a hero. He's tall without being heavy. Six foot... Six One, lean as and cut up to the max, his skin a dark chocolate. He has an obligatory MUM tattoo on his left bicep. Facially, the brother has that pahau goatee look. His eyes a deep hazel, the nose aquiline, flared in the nostrils, the lips dark purple and full. And the dreads. A couple of fat ones, some straggly ones but still the meke, tuturu dreads and the brother was wearing them high and proud in a Tiki-Tiki.

So now you know the Brother as well as I do, and in my head, I need to to make up his life story. Something tragic or romantic perhaps that will lend credence to his actions that day.

I'd like to think of him holding up the van back in Manutuke or Putiki or whatever Marae. I can hear Uncle Boy moaning "Where's this bloody fullah...bloody hell we're running late as it is."

Aunty Girlie is groaning also. "How come he's coming with us anyway, blimmin' nuisance. And he better not smoke any of that Wacky-Backy either. And just maybe there's a distant but close cousin who is also aboard the Waitangi bound waka from Putiki or Manutuke or wherever who stands up for the Bro and says "kia ora Aunty and Uncle, he's O.K, so he's a little bit of a hoha, kei te pai tera, he's got a good heart. "But Uncle Boy is adamant, "I smell any of that Mara-jah-warna... psssst, he's outta here."

It maybe unfair, but I sort of think of the Brother as a bit of a

loser. Well not exactly a loser, but definitely a hoha fullah and maybe not entirely trustworthy. Like his imaginary cousin said "So he smokes a bit of Dak, and he's not much of a boozier but if the occasion arises, he's been known to sit around a Keg with the cuzzies and polish it off, no sweat! There's a Girlfriend, a kid, and another on the way and she's always nagging him about commitment. "The Big C is not cannabis" she yells at him constantly.

On a tino wera day, and Tai Tokerau will tell you it's like that every day, 400 more or less, decided to hiko from the bottom marae, across the Bridge and up to the Treaty grounds. But not a hiko like 95. The spitting, the whakapohane, the haka, would be out. Kia tau te rangimarie. Rangimarie that was the buzz word. Well, someone was bound to start up "Ka Mate" somewhere along the line, but Te Kawariki leader Hone Harawira reminded us... Kia tau te rangimarie... and we did, until we met those Babylon Blue Boys with their helmet visors down and their batons drawn, all in formation at the foot of the Bridge.

The previous day, around 7 pm, perhaps a van load of Maori from Putiki or Manutuke or wherever stops at a Mobil in Kamo on the outskirts of Whangarei. Uncle Boy has run out of filters and Aunty Girlie needs to go for a mimi. "Who wants a munch? Are you hungry Cuz?" asks the distant but close cousin. "Sweet as Cuz," says the Brother. "I'm just heading over to that park over there to have a ...well, you know!"

"Well just be careful Bro, don't let Uncle or Aunty catch you."

"Don't worry Cuz," says the Brother tapping the pockets of his Black Leather jacket "I've got the Clear Eyes in this one and the smellies in this one."

"Well just be careful... and don't be too long."

On a stinking hot day, and Tai Tokerau will tell you it's like that every day, 400 people and 30 cops reached an impasse at the foot of the Waitangi Bridge. Some Senior Seargent was on his loud hailer shouting about some Bull-Shit law from some Fucked

Up Act and why crossing a perfectly good bridge as a paid up citizen of Aotearoa was temporarily not possible. Call me naive, but I truly believed we would reach the Treaty Grounds that day.

“Surely there’s no law that stops me from crossing this bridge, officer,” I shouted.

“You bunch of Bullies,” someone yelled. “Bully Bastards, Bully Bastards.”

“Shit-head fascist Pigs.”

And to the Maori cops, the cruelest “Kupapa.” And as the sun beat down and tempers flared and push turned to shove, and a rock smashed against some cop’s helmet, and arms and legs clashed with baton, there was a Brother, stoned as the Venus de Milo standing with 3 or 400 spectators on the beach at Waitangi, who came up with an out-of-it idea.

Earlier that morning, here was our van load of Maori from Putiki or Manutuke or wherever, ready to leave Uncle Boys’ cousin’s place in Moerewa for the final 40 minute drive to Waitangi. Aunty Girlie has on her Classic 2-piecer, Hui Black with a cream blouse. Her finest harakeke and huruhuru kete safely beside her on the front seat. Uncle Boy in his Grey strides and Tweed jacket. The shoes, shiny black, kicking up dry Northland dust as he paces back and forth, a roly stuck on his bottom lip.

“Where the hell is this bloody boy? I told him I wanted to be away by 9. Bloody Hell!”

“I told you he was a blimmin’ nuisance,” Aunty Girlie moans. “Leave him behind Dear, he’s been nothing but a hoha since we left home. Always disappearing every time we stop. He never talks just grunts and you know... for someone who looks so paru, he smells too nice.”

And maybe the close but distant cousin speaks up for him again and says “Kia ora Aunty and Uncle, kei te pai, he won’t be long, I think he’s walked up to the shops to get a paper.”

But even the cousin is starting to get pissed off with the Brother. More’s the chance he’s gone up town for some ‘papers,’ rather than a ‘Herald.’

For a Brother to leave his treasured leathers on a beach with 400 strangers, you know it had better be for a damn good reason. Damn good.

How or why no one noticed him sooner is beyond me, but someone shouted out “Hey, who’s that over there?”

“Over where?”

“The bridge ...the middle of the bridge.”

Standing on the top hand rail at the centre of the Waitangi Bridge was our Brother from Putiki or Manutuke or wherever. In all the comotion of the Police and Protestors fracas on the bridge, no one noticed the Brother slip into the water and swim to the middle concrete pillar and by using the criss-cross number 8 wiring that encased it, managed to climb the 5 or 6 meters to the the underside of the bridge. He then must’ve swung Monkey bar style under the bridge before coming up and onto the side. And now, there he stood. Hands on his hips in the classic ‘hope’ position. The Dready hair, proud and high in a Tiki-Tiki. The dark wet skin shining in the hot Northland sun.

It’s an image that will stick in my mind forever. As the crowd on the beach turned their attention to the middle of the bridge, a huge cheer sounded from across the other side of the Estuary.

“Way to go Bro.”

“Give ’em heaps Cuz.”

And those few Warriors that had defied Police orders not to swim across to the other side started up a stirring rendition of Te Rauparahas’ most famous haka, Ka Mate.

It encouraged those spectators on this side of the bridge to join

in and before you knew it, the protestors that had been in a stand-off with Police for 2 hours found new resolve in their own struggle and joined in as well. It was a 600-strong Haka Party and it was dedicated to the Brother on the Bridge. And as Protester and Spectator slapped chest and thigh in unison to stomping feet, the Brother stood precariously on the hand rail, conducting the crowd with a mix of Haka and bravado, all the time the crowd cheering him on. Senior Sargeant Loud Hailer barked an order and 2 Bully Boys were dispatched to deal with this malaprop who had succeeded in getting behind enemy lines. The dummies. Surely they knew they didn't have a hope in hell of capturing him. As the 2 Bullies closed in on the Brother, he turned his head, gave them the 1 fingered sign of defiance... and with a 'Kiss my ass' grin, jumped.

And as the long, black, powerful legs pushed him out safely beyond his assailants, the Brother thought he saw Uncle Boy on the beach. His tweed jacket folded neatly next to a Black Leather one. His sleeves rolled up, he was deep in the throes of his own Haka. And who was that next to him in the classic 2-piecer, Hui Black with a cream blouse? Was that Aunty Girlie with her arms outstretched, her voice carrying the call of welcome to her nephew? And a satisfied grin spread across the face of the Brother as he momentarily reached the zenith of his jump and hung, like Michael Jordan, in mid-air. Then the drop to the bottom and, with perfect timing, the folding of his body to effect the ultimate "Gorilla Bomb."

The effect on the crowd was awesome. The effect on the Protestors even more so, and as they charged the Police at the foot of the Waitangi Bridge, a Brother from Putiki or Manutuke or wherever, idly did the backstroke as the hot Northland sun warmed his body.

Forty Thousand Years Ago

The
First People
Lived
Off their land
Healthy bodies
Healthy minds

Wild
Fruit 'n' vegies
Were
At their
Disposal

Damper
Made from
Nature's seeds
Skirts
Woven from
River reeds

The
First People
Lived Beyond
Their lives
Of allowances

Passing down
The Dreamtime
Encouraging
Little ones
Keep
Eating daily
All
Fruit 'n' vegies

And
You'll always
Be
In latter
Life
Doing the
Corroboree

Dreamtime Stories

Church, prayers
Christian religion
But where
Are
The Dreamtime
Stories

Priest, nuns
And pastors
Missions
And Sunday Schools
But where
Are
The Dreamtime
Stories

A little child
Talks
To God
In prayer
But where
Are the
Elders
And the Dreamtime
Stories

Lawful kidnapping

White man you stole my heritage
You took from me my right to live
Amongst the people of my tribe.
Through you my culture was denied.

You locked me up in institutes
And labelled me as destitute
Who authorised your heartless deeds?
What made you think you knew my needs?

I didn't need your type of living;
I had better than what you were giving.
I never once found in your kind
The commune of love I left behind.

You cut short my time of learning
And left in me a desperate yearning
For lakes and hills, freedom to roam,
When you locked me in your decent home.

Your downfall was my education:
I learnt from you discrimination.
You educated me, you see,
In just how much you took from me.

Can you replace those years I've lost?
Attempt to evaluate the cost?
You've taken children and the land,
Still white man you can't understand.

Reared your way didn't make us white.
If anything it helped us fight
The very day you set us free
To regain our lost identity.

Forgotten

It's sad when my children want to know
Of Aboriginal legends of long ago,
Of dreamtime stories and corroborees,
Things that should have been taught to me.
How do I tell them that I missed out
Simply by being shuffled about
From one white home to another?
And that's how nobody came to bother
To tell me that I had a family tree
Or even that I was part Aborigine.

I had to wait until I was grown
To find my people on my own.
It's impossible to learn in a very short time
The language and culture of these people of mine.
I feel I am selling my own kids short
But how can I teach them what I wasn't taught?
So have patience my kids, I'm anxious too
To know these things as much as you.
Maybe in time we'll still this yearning
But remember my kids, I too am still learning.

Citizenship

When are we going to be free
To live as we see
The future for our lives
When are we going to be free
Like the birds in the sky
Without continuing lies and
Agonising cries.

When are we going to be free
From the white man's burdens
We are strong
No need to be
Put down any longer
Freedom is ours
Let's give it a chance
No matter what they say
We don't want to lie down
On our backs any more.

Citizenship came for us
But we are still the same
Some with different names, silly names
No matter that.

Learning to read and write
White man tries to show the light
Some of us were blinded –
Some of us declined it

Citizenship came for us
But we are still the same
Some with different names, silly names
No matter that.

Assimilation to regain
Mental slavery
Some did not see
The lies and deceptions
They played the white man's game
Never again the same!
Beginnings of classification
Separated within
Rejecting kinship
Walking the white man's road
Citizenship came for us
But we are still the same
Some with different names, silly names
No matter that.

What we want?
Land rights!
What we got?
Fuck all!
Shouts of anger
Shouts of despair
Shouts for the future
Drowning out the past
of white man's dominance
Setting up tent
Near Government House
Raising the flag
Demanding recognition.

Citizenship came for us
But we are still the same
Some with different names, silly names
No matter that.

Tribal Woman

I was born a tribal woman
with my tribal heritage —
women's business
and passing of knowledge
but over years my life has changed.

Growing into a woman
Wishing, wanting, to live
with my tribal images.

White man came —
destroyed my
language, culture
and the beauty of my country.

As a woman I feel sad — lost
but that doesn't matter
I hold my head high.

Warumungu Tribe

Long before our fathers and our fathers
Warumungu tribe was highly intelligent
Upholding their culture – protective.

Warumungu tribe celebrated corroboree,
initiating ceremonies
In the old respected ways
Rules came from the Dreamtime
passed by the elders from generation to
generation –
kinship, marriages, skin group, commitments
Young ones obeying their elders
Keeping language strong, alive.

One big family of brothers and sisters
Holding their culture strictly –
Hunting grounds, sacred places, country –
They owned with strong image,
respect and pride.

My Mother Told Me a Story

Many years ago my mother told me a story
a story about when she was a child
and it goes like this:
It was a cool and sunny day
and all the coloured kids
were playing around in their way.
But coming in the distance my grandmother saw
white people
coming towards the station.

My mother told me this story
a story about when she was a child
growing up on the station –
my mother told me this story.

Some of the mothers started to run
and hide with their kids
down towards the waterhole in the bush –
but they took every half-caste kid in sight.
But my grandmother hid my mother
in an empty hay-sack bag.

My grandmother waited for the whites to go
but it was sadness that day
for the mothers of that land
'cause their children were taken away
from their dreaming and their culture.
This story makes me sad – what my mother told me.

Culture Express

My people walked this land for 40,000 years
surviving on their land where they was born
living peaceful in their land.

Then the white man came
invaded the land
pushed them far away from their sacred place
away from their hunting ground and waterholes
shot and chained up for defending their land —
their blood is spilt on this land.

And their spirits still walk this land
and we are the Aboriginal people of this land.

Our people walked this land for 40,000 years
our language and our culture strong and alive.
We are still walking and living strong
in this land called Australia
which is ours — yours and mine — Aboriginal people of this land.

And that's why we got to have respect for the old people
passing on the knowledge passed on
by their forefathers and mothers
to us young people —
We got to keep our language strong
our culture strong
in this land we all belong.

We are the Aboriginal people of this land
our people walked this land for 40,000 years
our language and our culture is strong and alive.

Witness Testimony (excerpt)

The 1st of January of '94, like a cry of despair, the struggle of the liberation, the National Liberation Army of the Zapatista emerged. The Zapatista National Liberation Army emerged....

...I know the reality of the Chiapas. That's where the petroleum lies in the indigenous regions. That's where wood is. That's where the fish in the rivers are. That's where electrical energy is produced. And in the indigenous communities they only see that the cables go by that transport electrical energy....

...So it is a constant theft in indigenous regions.

...And then there's no possibility of arrangement with ourselves who are now claiming our own autonomy which is an internal sovereignty of our communities and regions. It is not possible and this is in contradiction because we don't only want economic autonomy or cultural autonomy because they only see us as folkloric.

Like the province that we live in, in our regions... extreme poverty is a product of our culture that we have not assimilated from the development of the non-indigenous culture. But we have analyzed that this is not the case. It's not a problem of assimilation, it's a problem of a political nature because our regions, our indigenous communities, are seeds of votes that give power to those that lead the Mexican state.

So what we want is an economic autonomy, and cultural, territorial and of our educational system as well. We see this as part of a whole and if we do not achieve these things, we cannot have autonomy nor anything, because they're only just cheating us.

So we are living a very serious problem and we do not know right now, we are organizing ourselves to have great trust in our own people because, as I mentioned, we are in danger... of being disappeared, made disappeared. Because also the non-indigenous do not accept us as being different and that we are originating from

those lands. And they contribute with their attitudes to try to integrate us or assimilate us through their indigenous policies or *politicus indicanistas*.

They always want to study us and to take things when the things that they bring don't fix our problems. They have not understood that we have the capacity, the maturity, our own institutions, our own internal life, already organized and decided from always, from the oldest of times within our own communities which is the base of where our sovereignty emerges or our autonomy. And that together with our other brothers and sisters of our other communities, we reproduce this way of directing our affairs.

But we always have the interference of the state and this is what has not been understood. And they do not want to abandon us. But we say that we do not want any more paternalism and that from the 1st of January of '94 in which the Zapatista struggle created a resurgence of the strength of the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico, we started with a greater strength of process, of recovery of the dignity that had been stolen from us by the invaders.

Now, we are living through a very important process. And very dangerous because all our regions, all our indigenous regions, all of the indigenous regions, are full of army, of armed forces. Because they know that we want everything. And they recognize that we are in the right but they don't want to accept it and they're scared. But we also want to contribute, with these values that we want, to a new reality ...this autonomy and these ways of our own, of our life in our communities, we want to share it with others. This is an alternative of life for everybody, whether they like it or not. It is a whole alternative because there are many political and economic models that have collapsed, and now there are no alternatives....

...We want to reconstruct a new relationship, even with the Mexican state of coordination. That has not been the case up until now because there we are in cohabitation. It is also a reality that they are there, that they are historical product, those that are not indigenous, but they do not understand this and we are not there

to be submitted. But we are different peoples and we have to enter into harmony through cooperation. This is what we are proposing: that even the Mestizo people be recognized but that we have historical reparations for all the historical damages that are being done to us.

So that is the proposal for the reality of our nation state. We do not know what will happen, we do not know if they will accept it or not. We have decided to recover our sovereignty, our autonomy....

Margarita Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico
Transcript of testimony given April 4, 1996
First Nations International Court of Justice
(Simultaneous translation into English from Spanish)

BACKWORD

up up up stay standing up the ground is sacred

Gathering to form a circle. To hold hands. To dance. To talk together Each voice cherished; youth, elder, familiar voices and new voices, voices across language, across vast ground stretching and across deep waters caressing as many fishes as stars. Each standing ground in their sacred place. Each an electric blue shimmering strand connecting to the awesome dance around the center.

and here in our midst on my allies' ground ground i stand on that day how still it was walking up to the great downed pine across the road the explosion when it hit the truck sent dust swirling in slow motion then the war cries and the shots coming from across the lake echoed and joined the sound of birds calling over the rat tat rat tat tat and long long minutes blurring the shouting voices from the camp and the army's incessant peppercorn multirounds overridden by the apc's roar converging on you encircled so few of you so fragile so fearless they didn't make it to "carry out orders" that september day at ts'peten they couldn't too many prayers deflected the bullets from spilling death blood on sacred ground they couldn't shoot through the shadows standing next to the trees watching out for each movement of our people watching the dancers watching those who came to stop the dance watching the ropes tied to the tree faint shapes felt only as wind through pines but they whispered dance dance for us dance for all earth's precious dance hard the day isn't over there are those still to break free the sun is burning red there is hunger and thirst and the suffering is the dance stay standing up up up dance strong the ground is sacred and each step is heard echoing loud over the barrage of hostility thudding into and bouncing off the sacred tree at our center

Standing ground together is that miraculous dance.

Limlimpt

BIOGRAPHIES

Mahara Allbrett: is from the T'Sleil Waututh Nation (Burrard Band) in North Vancouver. She has been writing poetry since she was fifteen and was first published at sixteen. She had a book published in 1970, *Ka-la-la Poems*. She has given numerous poetry readings, including two on CBC radio and received two Canada Council Awards. She has also performed with Aboriginal Storyteller in Vancouver. Mahara is a Family Counsellor in private practice and facilitates workshops on a variety of topics. She is working on her first novel. She likes to dance (African/Brazilian style) and has a 16 year old daughter, Sarain.

Lee Alphonse: I am 22 years old and in my second year at Malaspina University College. I intend on earning a BA in Creative Writing. I love drawing and hope to keep alive the Coast Salish art tradition of my ancestors. I am Cowichan, Penelakut, and a little Irish, Italian and French.

Annette Arkeketa (Otoe-Creek) grew up around Tulsa, Oklahoma. She has been published in numerous anthologies. Annette currently lives in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Joanne Arnott is a Metis writer, originally from Manitoba. Mother to four young sons, author of four books, she has recently decided to go back to school, and enrolled in the Indian Homemakers Association's Traditional Parenting Program in Vancouver.

Kimberly Blaeser (Anishinaabe), an enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where she teaches Creative Writing and Native American Literature. Her publications include, *Trailing You* which won the Diane Decorah First Book Award for poetry from the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas and *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*, a critical study. Blaeser's work has also been anthologized in numerous Canadian and American collections including *Earth Song*, *Sky Spirit*, *Women on Hunting*, *The Colour of Resistance*, *Returning the Gift*, *Unsettling America*, *Narrative Chance*, and *Blue Dawn, Red Earth*.

Margaret Brusnahan: I was born in Kapunda, South Australia, one of nine children. My mother was formerly Iris Rankine, an Aboriginal woman from the Ngarrindgeri people of Raukkan on the shores of Lake Alexandrina. My father was Arther Woods, a white man of Irish descent, from Kapunda. All my brothers and sisters were taken at an early age and reared in various orphanages, government institutions and white foster homes, not seeing each other for several years at a time. Writing has helped me express myself and deal with the traumas of being in one

culture yet reared in another, an Aborigine raised in a white community. I object to the government system and the unbending institutional direction it has taken for part-Aboriginal children in my time.

E.K. Caldwell's (Tsalagi\Shawnee) poetry and short stories have been anthologized in the U.S. and Canada. She is a regular contributor to *Inkfish Magazine*, *News From Indian Country*, and the *New York Times* Syndicate multicultural wire service. She is a member of the Native Writers Circle of the Americas and serves on the National Advisory Caucus of the Wordcraft Native Writers Circle. Her children's book, *Bear*, will be published by Scholastic in 1996 as part of their Animal Legends and Lore Series.

Dorothy Christian is a member of the Spallumcheen Indian Band in B.C. and is of Okanagan/Shuswap ancestry. While residing in the east, she studied Political Science and Religious Studies at the University of Toronto. For two years, Ms. Christian served as Chair of the Ontario Film Review Board before returning to her homelands. Dorothy has been associated with VISION TV since 1990 and currently produces for the SKYLIGHT Program of VISION TV. Ms. Christian is published in *Gatherings Vol. II & Vol. V*, *News in Indian Country* and *Akwesasne Notes* (Winter Issue 1995).

Crystal Lee Clark, or Miss Chandelier, age 21, currently attends the En'owkin International School of Writing. She was born at Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Pansy Collison is from the Eagle Clan of the Haida nation. She lives in Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

Stolly Collison is nine years old and in grade four. "Stolly" means "precious girl" in the Haida language.

Karen Coutlee is Okanagan of the Upper Nicola Band. Her first published works appeared in the premiere issue of *Gatherings* in 1990 and she continues to pursue her writing. She completed Fine Arts at Cariboo College in Kamloops.

Thomas Edwards is Swampy and High Plains Cree and was born in The Pas, Manitoba over 27 years ago. He was adopted by a non-Native family and raised in a mostly Native northern community. Upon graduating he has since traveled all over the continent seeking the answers to life's greatest mysteries. During the last decade, he has been working with People of Color and Native organizations in such issues of HIV/AIDS, Two Spirits and POC political organizing. Thomas currently works for the American Indian Community House HIV/AIDS Project in New York City.

Jack D. Forbes is professor and former chair of Native American Studies at the University of California at Davis, where he has served since 1969. He is of Powhatan-Renape, Delaware-Lenape and other background. In 1960-61 he developed proposals for Native American studies programs and for an indigenous university. In 1971 the D-Q University came into being as a result of that proposal. Forbes is the author of numerous books, monographs and articles including *Columbus And Other Cannibals*, *Only Approved Indians*, *Apache, Navaho And Spaniard*, and *Africans and Native Americans*. He is also a poet, a writer of fiction, and a guest lecturer in Japan, Britain, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, France, Canada, Belgium, and other countries. He received his Ph.D from the University of Southern California in 1959. Forbes was born at Bahia de los Alamitos in Suanga (Long Beach) California in 1934. He grew up on a half-acre farm in El Monte del Sur in the San Gabriel Valley and in Eagle rock, Los Angeles, California. Professor Forbes has served as a Visiting Fulbright Professor at the University of Warwick, England, as the Tinbergen Chair at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, as a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Social Anthropology of Oxford University, and as a Visiting Professor in Literature at the University of Essex, England.

Aztatl (Jose L. Garza) was born in San Antonio, Texas. He is of Coahuila, Lipan Apache and Mexican heritage. He worked in the automobile and steel factories for six years. After college Aztatl worked as a social worker and a visual artist for nine years until he decided to devote full time to creative writing and a serious return to his Nahua native roots and religion. He and his wife, Kathe A. Kowalski have one child and a five year old full blood male Siberian Husky dog named Walking Bear. Aztatl has published three books of short stories and poetry, *Momentos*; *Masks*, *Folk Dances and A Whole Bunch More*; and *Apple Comes Home*. He has been published in over forty anthologies, literary magazines, newspapers and small press publications. Aztatl currently gives workshops, lectures and readings on indigenous writing and using our own positive native writing to expose negative racial stereotypes.

William George is Coast Salish from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (also known as Burrard Inlet Indian Band) in North Vancouver, B.C. He lives and writes in the Okanagan. William George has been published in *Gatherings* Volumes III, IV and V. He has also been published in *WHETSTONE* Magazine, University of Lethbridge and *absinthe* Magazine in Calgary, Alberta.

Michelle Good is of Cree ancestry from Red Pheasant, Saskatchewan. She is an activist and UBC law student. Michelle is an education writer and former editor of the Lummi Tribal News. She was also past radio host of Ryerson.

Patricia Grace is an internationally acclaimed and respected writer from Aotearoa (New Zealand) and is of Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Toa and Te Ati Awa descent. She has published five collections of stories, three novels, four children's books, and the text for *Wahine Toa, Women of Maori Myth*. Her work has been widely anthologized in Aotearoa and internationally. Ms. Grace has won numerous awards including the Hubert Church Award, Children's Picture Book of the Year, and the New Zealand Book Award. Her story "Ngati Kangaru" is from her latest collection *The Sky People and other stories*.

David A. Groulx is Anishnabe, living in Thunder Bay and attending Lakehead University, where he is working on a BA in Indigenous Learning. He is 26 years old and has been writing since he was 16.

Margarita Gutierrez's nationality is Hnahnu, Chiapas, Mexico. She is the Negotiating Intermediary for the Zapatista movement. Margarita was also a witness at the International Court of Justice in Ottawa, Ontario.

Raven Hail is an active member of the Cherokee nation. Her poetry and essays on Cherokee culture have appeared in various publications. She has also written three novels and a cook book. Raven has been published in *Volume V of Gatherings*.

A. Allison Hedge Coke: (Huron, Tsalagi, French Canadian, Portuguese...). Her first full-length poetry collection (*Look at The Blue*) is forthcoming from Coffee House Press. She has published a chapbook of poetry and poetry and prose in: *Gatherings (IV, V, & VI)*. *Neon Pow Wow*, *Caliban*, *Subliminal Time*, *Voices of Thunder*, *Santa Barbara Review*, *eleventh muse*, *13th Moon*, *the Little Magazine*, *Bomay Gin* ('92 & '93 editions), *Abiko Quarterly*, *Both Sides*, *Tree in the Sky*, *Looking at The Words of Our People*, *Skin Deep: Women Writing About Race and Colorism*, *Speaking for the Generations and the Lands*, *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, and many others. She received her MFAW Vermont College ('95), AFA Institute of American Indian Arts, PPPC EHAW. She is the winner of several literary awards. She teaches Master Classes at Cal State University Long Beach, and is Area Coordinator for the California Poets in the Schools (where she has taken long-term residency for the past eighteen months), and additional residencies throughout the plains and west coast.

Travis Hedge Coke is fifteen years old and is the son of A.A. Hedge Coke.

Barbara Helen Hill is from Six Nations Grand River Territory, located in southern Ontario. She has been published in *Gatherings Volume VI* and has completed a manuscript entitled *Shaking the Rattle*, which will be published by Theytus Books in the Fall of 1996.

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias was born on the Neyaashiinigiimig (Cape Croker) reserve in Ontario, where she now lives and works. In addition to being an award winning writer, Lenore is a traditional storyteller, culture worker, and the Chairperson of the Chippewas of Nawash Board of Education.

Michael Fitz Jagamarra is of the Warumungu tribe in Australia. He has lived in Tennant Creek most of his life. Writing poetry has helped him to put the troubled times in his life behind him.

Shoshona Kish, an Ojibway from Toronto, is a recent graduate of the En'owkin International School of Writing and Visual Arts program.

Dr. Arvol Looking Horse is Keeper of the Sacred Calf Pipe of the Lakota, Nakota and Dakota Nation. His speech was given to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in January 1995.

Randy Lundy is of Cree, Irish, Norwegian and Scottish descent. His maternal roots lie in Northern Manitoba, along the eastern shores of Reindeer Lake. He grew up in Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan and has been living in Saskatoon since the fall of 1987. Randy is currently enrolled in a Master of Arts program in English and plans to complete a thesis on Native Literature.

Nora McAdam (Sitting on Mother Earth), is from Leoville, Saskatchewan. She recently completed the Pelican Lake ABE program there.

Debbie McHalsie, age 18 is of the Sto:lo Nation, Chawathil Band and currently attending the Seabird Island Community Learning Centre. She enjoys being with friends, writing poetry, going for coffee, going to the longhouse and pow-wows. She dislikes liver, rumours, prejudiced people, people who like to hurt others and really nosey people.

Melvina B. Mack (Nuxilhtimut) completed the two year Creative Writing course at En'owkin in the spring of 1995. Melvina returned home to the Nuxalk Territory taking an active role in the protection of the land from Interfor, a logging corporation. She was arrested in the fall of 1995 for ignoring an injunction to leave Ista (King Island). Melvina's current writing comes from her own ongoing experience while she awaits trial in British Columbia's Women's prison, her poems Ista and B.C.C.W. dispossable are written from there. And, logging continues....

Rashunah Mardsen: MFA, BA, Graduate Diploma Design, Teacher Certification, Impressario, Globetrotter. Resides in Vancouver with her son. Rashunah currently works in Marketing, Media/Writing, Curriculum Development.

Teresa Marshall is an urban Mi'kmaq living in Victoria, B.C. Born between two worlds, she has necessitated an intense and critical exploration of her identity which she explores through writing, artmaking, theatre and research. She has exhibited her artworks throughout Canada, participates as a cultural researcher and educator in her community and will publish her first written works in *Kelusultiek*, an anthology of east coast Native women writers.

Leonard Martin is a member of the Bear Clan, within the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation in Manitoba, where the Roseau River empties into the Red River. Leonard is a member of "Sage-First Peoples' Storytellers." This writer's group is a part of the Winnipeg based Aboriginal Arts Group. "Let us live today. For the pains of yesterday have given us the knowledge of a beautiful tomorrow." L.M.

Louisa Mianscum My friends know me as Louisa. I speak Cree, English and French. I was baptised with the name Emily Louise Mianscum. I was brought up on the land and taught to respect everyone's spirituality. I am currently living in Northern Quebec.

Henry Michel is Secwepemc from the Sugar Cane Reserve in central British Columbia. He has poetry published in *Seventh Generation*, Theytus Books Ltd, *Voices Under One Sky*, Nelson Canada Ltd. and Volume V of *Gatherings*.

Marijo Moore, of Cherokee descent, grew up in the extremely small western Tennessee town of Crockett-Mills. During her twenties she moved to Nashville, Tennessee and attended Tennessee State University. While there, she authored a chapbook of poetry, *Clarity of Purpose* and co-authored with Benjamin Cummings, an Oglala Sioux

from the Pine Ridge Reservation, a non-fiction book entitled *Beside R Singing Star-The Last Four Years With Willie Nelson, Jr.* Her play, *Your Story* was produced at Lancashire Community Theatre in Preston, England, 1991. While living in England, she was directed by dreams to move to the mountains of western North Carolina to research her Cherokee roots. Her latest book is *Returning To the Homeland-Cherokee Poetry And Short Stories*. She now resides in Asheville, North Carolina where she has recently finished a forthcoming book of poetry, *Spirit voices of bones* and a children's book, *Amonetta, gourd Sam and the Cherokee Little People*. She was recently awarded a literature grant from the NC Writers Network, and another from Buncombe County, Asheville, NC Regional Art Council. She is currently gathering material for a seven-part novel on American Indian women, co-authoring a non-fiction book with Jonathan L. Taylor, principal chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokees (1987-1995), and teaching workshops on American Indian Spirituality and Writing. She serves on the Board of The North Carolina Writers Storytellers. Her work has appeared in several publications.

Dawn Karima Pettigrew is a graduate of Harvard University in Cambridge, MA. She teaches English at the Ohio State University and is presently working on her M.F.A. She is of Cherokee, Creek and Chickasaw descent, which in the United States, is enough to make anybody start to tell stories. She tries to pray as often as she breathes.

Rosemary Plummer was born at Phillip Creek Mission in Central Australia. She is a Warumungu woman and one of the traditional owners of the Tennant Creek area. She is Chairperson of Papulu-Apparr Kari, the Tennant Creek Language Centre, and is studying linguistics at Bachelor College.

Mickie Poirier is a self-taught artist, using what she has learned in photography, emcology, botany and ornithology to enhance her art.

Stephen Pranteau I was born, on a cold (when isn't it cold on) February 3, 1949, of Cree parents, where the Saskatchewan River empties into Lake Winnipeg, in Northern Manitoba. I know little of the life that my parents experienced. My traditional education was interrupted by a massive Hydro Dam project. Prior to that I had to speak Cree, on the "Keemootch" which meant, "on the sly, or at least without the knowledge of...whomever, in this instance...teachers." I attended school at Cranberry Portage, in Northern Manitoba, the University of Brandon, in 1969 and The University of Winnipeg. Lack of commitment to education as well other priorities such as a new born daughter helped me decide to leave

university early. I've been working recently as an evaluator of a program in the North Shore in Vancouver. My prior experience has been with child welfare in Manitoba and Ontario as a worker, director, actively involved in policy development and analysis. I was employed for a number of years as a probation officer and a parole officer.

Brenda Prince is Anishinabe born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has also lived in Calgary, Victoria, Vancouver and Penticton where she graduated from the En'owkin School of Writing. She is one of three recipients of the 1995/96 Simon Lucas Jr. Scholarship award. Brenda has also been published in *Volume VI of Gatherings*.

Sharron Proulx-Turner of Calgary, Alberta is a member of the Metis Nation of Alberta (Mohawk, Huron, Algonquin, French and Irish ancestors). She is currently working on her second book, which is a book of poetry, "*she is reading her blanket with her hands.*"

Lois Red Elk, Yankton, Hunkpapa, Santee Sioux, is an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Sioux Tribe and lives on her reservation in Northeastern Montana. She is an award winning actress (*TNT's LAKOTA WOMAN*, 1994), and has written poetry since the age of twelve. She also practices the traditional art of porcupine quill embroidery and enjoys playing the piano. She has a degree in Human Services and is presently a freelance writer.

Paora Ropata. Born in Lower Hutt New Zealand in 1961, Paora Ropata grew up in Porirua, a working class town that eventually became a city a half hour's drive from the capital of Wellington.

His Whakapapa (genealogy) links him to the Iwi of Ngati Toa Rangatira, Te Ati Awa, and Ngati Raukawa from his father's people, and from the Ngati Porou Iwi of Te Tai Rawhiti (the East coast) on his mother's side. Divorced with 1 son and 2 daughters, he likes to use humour to drive home certain points throughout the narrative. In 1995, Paora won a National short story competition for new Maori writers but has been writing infrequently as his work in Maori (The Indigenous People of Aotearoa) Language Broadcasting takes up his time. He is working on a collection of short works to be published in 1997.

Armand Garnet Ruffo is Ojibway from Chapleau, Northern Ontario. His first book of poetry *Opening In The Sky* is published by Theytus Books Ltd.

Lillian Sam I am a graduate of the Creative Writing Program at En'owkin International School of Writing in Penticton, B.C. My tribal origins are from the Carrier Nation. In the past I worked for various Tribal organizations in Northern Central B.C. I worked as a Family Care Worker in my community of Fort St. James for close to eight years. Other jobs I had were gathering data for Land claims issues, and working with the Nak'azdli Elders Society taping elders and transcribing oral stories. During 1984 I worked with the National Indian Veterans Association in Prince George. In my job as a researcher, I compiled data, organized travel throughout the interior of B.C., and interviewed Native veterans who had served in World War I, and World War II.

Marlowe Gregory Sam is a rancher and his tribal affiliation is Wenatchee/Okanagan from Desautle, Washington. He is a cultural instructor and works in conflict resolution.

Moana Sinclair's tribal affiliation is Rangitane, Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Toa Rangatira, Ngai-Tahu and Maniapoto. She has a strong background in the Maori sovereignty movement and is a solicitor at the Youth Law Project. She attended the Maori university Te Whare Wananga O Raukawa. Moana is the editor of the *Youth Law Review* and co-founder of the Te Kawau Maro, an activist group opposed to the Fiscal Envelope and the Government's denial of Maori sovereignty. She is currently working on a novel called *Muri and Mahana*.

Faith Stonechild is from Saskatchewan and is of Sioux and Cree ancestry. She has two children aged 25 and 13, and one granddaughter named "Sage." She enjoys sewing and her writing includes stories and her life experiences.

Alf Taylor is an Aboriginal poet from Australia. Two collections of his poetry *Singer Songwriter* and *Winds* have been published by Magabala Books.

Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask is a professor, the Director of the Centre for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i, a leader in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, and the author of *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, a collection of political essays, and *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, a collection of poetry.

Richard Van Camp is a Dogrib Dene from the Northwest Territories. A graduate of the En'owkin International School of Writing, he is currently finishing his degree at the University of Victoria in Writing. His first novel *The Lesser Blessed* will be out in October of 1996 with Douglas & McIntyre.

Gerry William is a member of the Spallumcheen Indian Band, in south central British Columbia. *The Black Ship*, the first in a series of novels under the general title of Enid Blue Starbreaks is being published by Theytus Books Ltd. Gerry is currently completing the third novel in this series.

Kenny Williams is an Aboriginal poet from Australia. Born in Tennant Creek, Kenny has worked as a teacher's aide. He writes to tell people about the past and to show that there is a positive future.

Chandra Winnipeg was born on the Siksika rez some years back (1967). Aside from work and school she loves to read and writes in personal her personal journals.

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