

12

THE CEREMONY OF RECLAIMING AGENCY THROUGH WONDER

Catherine Tàmmaro



FIGURE 12.1 The Red Canoe

DOI: 10.4324/9781003199816-16

uⁿdawa?—Riding the Currents

On the shore of “Niwa’ah Onega’gaih’ih”¹ or “Little Thundering Waters,” also known as the Humber River on the western edge of Toronto, Canada, lies a brilliant red canoe made by the Brothers Bastien in the middle of the 20th century in Wendake, Québec; the home of the Huron Wendat First Nation. The surface of the vessel is made of soft canvas covering the skeletal struts and gunwales hardened by layers and layers of carmine paint, brilliant against the muddy brown river water on this dull autumn day. The rich reddish brown cedar innards gleam with old varnish ... the light just catches the struts, as reminders of our MoonWater Song.

We’re both; canoe and I, waiting to travel to a place between the worlds on this day of honouring the death of the year. My two companions are young and able-bodied, the canoe and I, relatively the same age. It is October 31, 2020. We are all in semi-lockdown, following new protocols for social distancing, masked, gloved, and coated with antiseptic gel; protected too, from even this river-infused atmosphere. This transitional day marks the end of the agricultural year when the harvest had been completed and stores laid in for the coming winter months. Here in the Great Lakes region, it is a full Moon—the Blood Moon.

My young friends, two spirited world-bridgers, are there to help carry me across. Quiet, I have gone deep inside to a seeming timeless place of the renewal of my relationship with water, into the beautiful space of preparedness for ceremony. We are three, young, older, and oldest; birth, life, and death and we are there to honour this beautiful red canoe which has come to the homeland. I climb stiffly in and immediately feel both sadness and love for my older body and remember my first step into Lily the Red Canoe, some 29 years ago, in 1992, in Frontenac County, Ontario and the countless reasons this red canoe means so very much to me.

The pull into Spirit is powerful and my consciousness begins to shift just as it did then; at the time in my life, I began to realize that I may have Indigenous blood. I know there is a connection to Ancestral memory here but I couldn’t begin to articulate how I know this. It is part of what I *now know to be true* and then, was not something I could be certain of. Suffering the recent loss of my dear husband, I want to connect with him as a newly made Ancestor, which is part of the reason I am on the water. Before we even depart the shore, into timeless rivers of moments, moons, and seasons I’ve gone, as if I might have taken some tincture designed to carry me to embracing spaces and I instantly feel soothed and at peace in this beautiful watercraft. I am quietly empowered; held within immediate upward surges of grief and release; bodily memories of water; swimming and swimming all the way, moment to moment through my life. Water is life, water is the Matrix (the Mother) of my being.

I sit within both the canoe and myself. Heart centering, coming to balance in the subtle stabilizing movements. My hips loosen and rock along with the water rhythms. I feel her begin to make headway like just ... nothing. Managing herself almost, with ease; the paddlers sensitively caressing this beauty along the soft river, responding to upwellings and troughs as the green-brown waters allow us forward. The Wendat had created her with great skill and abundant connectedness with the spirits of water. I feel the makers’ water-wonder and both canoe and I meet with the Niwa’ah Onega’gaih’ih. I go deeper to my heart’s centre and the tears flow as we make our journey to the places which silence one with reverence. The rhythmic movements of paddle strokes are like the pulsation of blood inside the body, almost

as if one is indeed the river. I feel as if I am entering the flow through the mandorla-shaped canoe, the entry point into the feminine. On the heart-shaped deck of the canoe sits a small tobacco offering, soon also to be released. I see the red heart against the reflective waters. Sanguine. Sacred.

The Goddess of the Lake

Some 29 years ago, in 1992, I walked down the woodland path from the beautiful Buddhist House in the forest in Frontenac County, Ontario, through the sharply descending twists and turns of the trail. I climbed over the Canadian Shield, all pinky-grey granite, jutting up out of the earth and finally propelled by the downward slope to the lake, heavily strode onto the dock and managed to stop moving before being pitched into the water. I loved the sounds my footfalls made on the wood and how the dock rode the waves my weight created. The scent of pine and cedar and the gorgeous colour of the water were like blood to the bone! The immersion into the varied greens and the movement of everything; clouds, water, tree limbs, medicines, water guardians; what bliss! I took my otter tail paddle in hand and put myself into the old red canoe with my dear friend. In old Cataraqui Territory, down the lake we paddled, hugging the shoreline, heading toward the beautiful shallow bog, thick with budding waterlilies. There were strange yet familiar feelings surfacing at every stroke of the paddle. Travelling through the deeper waters along the way, under pine arches and smiling cedar trees—freshness all and everywhere; those greens echoing across the water in 27 million shades and hues. Taking our sweet time, feeling the tipping back and forth of the canoe as waves broke close to us along the shore. Moving through patches of light down by the strange Triangle Rock, The Collapsing House, and SHE, the Goddess of the Lake. We stopped at the large Earth Mother rock formation to look up at and honour her. We felt the need to make an offering; a spirit plate but had no food in the canoe.

We had named her; we revered her. My dear friend spontaneously took the bubble gum out of his mouth, jumped out of the canoe onto the rocky base there and quickly made a large pink vulva to stick to her front, at the foot of this immense 80-foot-tall rock formation. We laughed with glee at our bubble gum Lake Goddess's new adornment, placed there in reverent and somewhat comical fashion. A very creative ceremony honouring the Earth Mother, the Lake, and all life therein, the diatoms and the duckweed, the bladderwort and the water snakes. We were delighted by our own laughter too. There, I began to home in on who I really was and so many childhood mysteries began to unravel.

Clan and Clay/Surface Tension²

When one asks what Clan are you in Wyandot, one essentially asks what fire are you from? “What chimney?” Clan and clay have the same root stem in our language. Think about that for a moment. My Clan is known as Keeper of the Heavens and the Carriers of the Fire—The People of the Little Turtle. The spots on her back were thought by our Ancestors to represent the stars in the night sky, thus she is part Wonderworker in our Stories of Origin. Our cosmogony.

The story goes like this ... the Great Turtle held a Council, and all the animals came together to give Sky Woman a place to live on its back, afloat on the surface of the waterworld.

It was She, the Little Turtle, who made the heavenly bodies for Aataentsic by rubbing bolts of lightning together. It was She who moved through the heavens creating the heavenly orbs. She was speckled and splendid with stars and went about her business carrying the fire for the Young Woman Fallen from Above. Aataentsic had fallen through a tear in the celestial ceiling; perhaps descending within a great beam of light from the Sky World. Little Turtle moved through the heavens and her back reflected the cosmos that she helped create.

After Grandmother Toad brought mud from the ocean floor, her sister and brother animals readily swam to assist Aataentsic to prepare the back of the Snapper for the planting of seeds in her hand, which were to sprout the corn and berries, to nourish the People and provide the tobacco for their ceremonies. They danced in ancient patterns, moving the earth on the Turtle's back; an activation of love and community; of kinship. The deep waters cradled the great Moss Back Turtle as the waterfowl had cradled Aataentsic, down onto the blue-green island within the vast primordial sea.

In this new-to-me, yet much-earlier-made, red vessel on the water, through the early evening fading light, I move through the vast cosmic ocean of stars and waves in my mind's eye. Out of the abyss I emerge, out of the dark womb into the most profound realization of my own existence. The cosmos is reflected upon my back as I move through the night sky and over the indigo waters. I have been reborn as the small speckled one; I keep the heavens, I carry the fire. Before me, are the faces of those yet to be born; generation upon generation—along the great trail of Turtle Time. Behind me, my Ancestors. I have planted the stars in the great night sky—and we are all of one mind. I glide on the river and traverse the twilight sky. This is why I needed this canoe. This wonder of wonders, this sacred vessel of rebirth. The Ancestors know my Clan name—I spark into the night and I, too, am filled with love.

Lily and the Snapper

We set out again in old Lily in the middle of the night under a brilliant full moon. The starscape is incredible in the blackness of the night. Fire over water. I feel such nourishment, I am star-starved in the city. This blackness is deep and endless, the heavenly orbs fill me in indescribable ways—I might have come from there, I may return. They may be long gone but their light has only just arrived. Little did I know my own Wyandot cosmogony and the journey along the Milky Way the spirits travel to the Village of the Dead out of the Western Gate. We are all connected. We are made of carbon; both the stars and us.

On another trip to that same lake, my friend found a large dead Snapping Turtle down in the bog. I needed the shell although I wasn't sure just why. In my upswelling of Ancestral memories, my paintings were adorned with bone and natural animal parts. We paddled down to the bog, and I lifted the huge dead animal out of the water on the end of my paddle. She was so heavy! We placed her in a rock cairn and waited for three years, checking several times every summer, until she had been stripped of flesh by time, scavenger beasts, and insects of the forest. I brought her shell back to the city. Some 28 scutes around the edge; one for each lunar day and 13 in the middle of her back, one for each Moon. A total of 39 Moons had come and gone.

Time is so deliciously good at breaking things down and turning them into other things, into ceremony, grey hairs, rattles, and stars. I kept the shell for many years, it was a Snapper. Huge. Just like Turtle Island, I painted pictures of it with Hawk Feathers all before I knew

of my Indigenous blood. I eventually let go of it ... like other talismans in my life, they are markers of change and they come and go. Time is medicine.

Ceremonies for the Dead/Ceremonies for the Living

I went back to the sacred site for our People; the place where the Jesuit Brebeuf made first contact with the Wendat who were engaged in preparations for the Great Kettle Feast; The Feast of the Dead as has been illustrated and written about in the Jesuit Relations. This was my first visit to the homeland after the death of my husband. He allowed himself to let go of this life with graciousness and lack of fear, but I needed the comfort of that space to grieve. I sat with the Ancestors and as I unwrapped the bundle and made preparations to smoke, I could feel the presence of my Ancestral Sisters there, as they circled me, like the smoke rising and curling around my head, washing over my crown, penetrating my consciousness. It was such a wonderfully comforting ceremony of heart and mind, that warm slow tears began to track their way down my cold cheeks that crisp day. I drove south, back to the city thinking about time, as I always do ... is time reversible, I wondered? Could I regain lost time—or even penetrate the Multiverse, the land of love and dreams—to be with my husband again not only in my unconscious or memory but in actual time? Could the grief-worn lines etched into my skin suddenly vanish? Could I reclaim the disruption in my own life and experience the world anew, as Aataentsic must have?³ Could I be “anywhen” in the great Multiverse?

I took the Big Turtle shell home finally and worked at it, peeling away any leftover flesh, painting the underside with red ochre to mark it as sacred. I had no knowledge of such practices at the time, other than for the entombed dead. I was acting on impulse. I put it in the garden. I honoured that death with incense and flowers. It was a beacon, a ceremonial item with special significance. Part of my ceremonial bundle, now long gone.

In 2013 I attended one of the most momentous experiences of my life. The reinterment of some 1,700 Wendat Ancestors in the Greater Toronto Area, graciously hosted by The Huron Wendat Nation, Ontario Heritage, and the University of Toronto. Protocols prevent descriptions of events that took place during those days but at that moment in my history, so much was locked into place. My 90-year-old mother among her kin, finally. Our Ancestors are literally and figuratively imbued in the land. How, therefore, can we not see that every Wendat or Wyandot(te) foot stepping into a canoe sparks a resonant memory of time and place? That every pipe sparked and smoked, every water drum filled, every pot coiled and every shuffle dance, is not a reactivation of ceremonies in time. We are the continuum; we have survived and reunited as one large collective of Clans and families. We are the land.

Through all the transformative change, the deep loss, and the re-cognition of my life, I have reconnected with the ground of my being. My connection to my mother's birth peoples has been riveting and container shaking, in ways I have felt, explored, and resolved. It was a huge expansion of my identity as a mixed-race person. Something I had always intuited but had no proof of. It has been 12 years of forging a new awareness in and of the world. With this understanding comes hope for the future. Like Aataentsic, falling into the consciousness of consciousness, of becoming—being held by the true governing body of this body, the Earth herself and all our beautiful kin whose memories rest therein. This is the ultimate truth of who I am and where I love, in downtown Toronto.

Ontario is a Wendat Word

The Great Lake, Ontario is cold today in steely blue-grey winter light. We see her gorgeous and turbulent, being whipped around by the wind as we zip westward from downtown on the Gardiner Expressway on this first day of winter. We are at the Solstice (Sun Stands Still), the longest night of the year. I am determined to get to High Park to honour the ancient mounds before nightfall. There are many sacred sites in this space, to the millennia-old inhabitants of the western dale of the park ... We are heading that way to check on them and to leave tobacco, to hold space for them and turn the mind toward peace for the Ancestors, for their sleeping time, their dreaming time, in this city-designated space.

What is called High Park, as I understand it, was bequeathed by John Howard in 1873, to the City of Toronto on the condition that the old Indigenous trails and pathways be maintained. Animal paths became the walkways of Indigenous trade and connection. The space is spiritually presided over by many EarthWorkers and FaithKeepers and maintained by a society of caring people: volunteers, scholars, and settlers who support the Indigenous restorying of these lands. Not everyone agrees of course about what lies therein. Arrowheads have been found, chert, and natural gifts from other places, signifying trade and sacred spaces. Our shared history in the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant Territory is echoed in settler place names and streets. Indian Road, Indian Road Crescent, Indian Grove, Indian Trail, Algonquin Road, and Indian Valley Crescent. None of them are that far from Thunderbird Mound, Bear Mound, and Watersnake Mound. We hold sacred fires and ceremony in the park; we earthwork, we plant seeds, we nurture, feast, and sing to them as we feasted, and sang, and welcomed the canoe into the waters in Toronto. We sing with children: yawastih!

Owls on the Wing

Many years ago, I was asked to caretake Owl Mound because of my family's connections to Owls and it is still part of my sacred responsibility. We honour our sacred connection to the lands and waters in their mystery and sovereignty. Practising the Honourable Harvest and teaching children that they can embody their understanding of the spirits of the land, that they are indeed united with, not separate from all living and non-living; seen and unseen beings that surround them. They revel in the spring thaw, the summer heat, the autumn leaves and the winter snows. We are youth, Elders, and visitors. I carry Deer Horns everywhere I go because little Turtle and the Deer have a special relationship, you see.

Living in the city and watching over Indigenous spaces can be daunting. Regulations, permits, restrictions, chemicals ... the grief of stewardship taken away and the sometimes challenging relationships between Indigenous Peoples and settlers regarding who has what rights, where and why. Most of the time, for me, it involves sussing out campers and the unhoused; picking up cigarette butts, and alerting the park stewards to piles of human waste. I always leave conspicuous offerings of cedar and tobacco to signal to other humans that this space has significance, even if it is not made clear exactly what it is. The Grandmother Tree who has fallen there is doing her job obstructing the paths on beautiful Owl Mound. The incidences of outdoor living folks camping there are fewer and fewer despite the city's growing need for more affordable housing. My clan name connects me to that land and I believe that signifying your relationship with it through art and ceremony, acts as a resonant *energetic signature*.

I believe that the land remembers the languages that have been spoken there, just as the seeds hold those secrets. Reconciliation is needed for the trees as much as the people. When we put through the ceremonies there, I believe that we are reconnecting with those memories and therefore activating our relationship in a deeper way to what is all around us. It is how we are on the land. If you want to know something, just ask the old oak in the Savannah, but be prepared to feel its grief for the wounds to its community. Phragmites are also people. This place, this city, is filled with our Ancestors entombed in the land. Witnessing all we do, every seed we plant and every healing salve we remember, every ceremony we put through, every Mother Tree's child we hug.

Constellations and Ossuaries, the Aurora Borealis

We map out the Fisher Constellation on the gentle slope of a snow-covered rise in Thomson Memorial Park, in sweet small tea lights at Scarborough Museum, in the very eastern end of the city. Volunteers are helping me set up for ceremony as my cousin and Fire Keeper, Two Crows, lights the fire following strict Indigenous protocols. The night is cold and the snow is crunchy beneath our feet. We are surrounded by Victorian farm buildings, charming and quaint in this lovely winter scene. The central square is jammed with people.

Not far from here, is one of the many Wendat sites in Greater Toronto. Tabor Hill, is a very well-known ossuary holding within its earthen womb several hundred Ancestors. The scent of medicines and woodsmoke rises and fills the air as the crowds begin to lean into the space. Closer and closer they get to the table with medicines on it, a silver fox tail, a beaver pelt, tobacco, cedar, sage, sweetgrass, my water drum, and of course water. The children's hands reach out, I caution them gently but firmly. "No." They pull away quickly as if scolded by Mother. They want and need these teachings and are fascinated by the nature they so need. I push out against the energy a little, protecting myself from their hunger, establishing boundaries, and claiming my personal space. They relax a little. Authority is something they understand.

This Solstice night, the Museum is unveiling the third of four panels that I created for them, marking the cycles of the astronomical world. Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice, Autumnal Equinox, and Winter Solstice. The 4-foot x 6-foot panel reflects the heavens in the depiction of the Aurora Borealis. True North. It is rendered in metallic copper, bronze, interference green, which turns pink in the changing light and white. It is entitled "n-dekyukqtáhkwihi yari:wa? The Law One Has Begun With" or, "Original Instructions." It is dancing in the firelight, just as the Borealis would. The atmosphere is charged with anticipation. Many Indigenous folk are interspersed with people from all nationalities. Scarborough has many communities of different origins and they are out in full force this evening. What a joy to see faces of people from this metropolis, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world!

The Museum host offers a lovely welcome and one of our quartet offers the audience a very political and extensive land acknowledgement. It's a good one, including all the painful historiography. Things that are most often left out. It is a tough way to begin the ceremony: treaty violations, white supremacy, colonial oppression, residential schools, stolen land, wars and alliances, missing and murdered Indigenous girls, two spirited, trans and cis women, disease and abuse. People are uneasy, feet stamping the snow to stay warm, or dealing with nervous energy. Some feel settler guilt, some shame, some genuine pitiless grief, some awaken to new knowledge about the depths of hurt Indigenous People carry and interestingly,

hearing it from a white academic settler carries a certain weight. The speaker rests and I begin the “yanqōhkwányōhk”—the Thanksgiving Address—and people are quieted, plugging into the reverence and gratitude-guided tones in my voice. The rhythmic formality of The Address is comforting and humbling, it seems, or maybe people are just paying attention. I relax a little and roll into the ceremony. I see the odd tear in an eye here and there, people’s expressions soften and their hearts open. The Address sends out greetings and thanks to many components of the Natural World. We start by greeting each other as people. I invite them to look at each other, to make eye contact with their neighbours. A strange and not habitual practice these days in a big city of almost five million humans. Most respond in a good way and some shake hands—one or two even embrace. Thinking about it now makes me long for those hugs. One by one we greet them, we thank them: The Ancestors, the Stars, Elder Brother Sun and Grandmother Moon, the fishes, the grasses and mighty trees, the waters, the plant life, the medicines, and the keepers of the medicines. Our Enlightened Teachers, the Great Mystery: *the unknown and unseen*, the forgotten. We thank them all and together—we are of one mind. Into the ceremony we go, singing and inviting people to join us in a friendship dance ... and the mural is unveiled to “oohs” and “ahhs”. I have asked them to “sakahkwah šra:wî?! Look up!—(to the stars!)” and hope they continue to do so as this simple ceremony connects them to the Heavens. Little Turtle Business.

Talismans and Fetishes. Gifts of the Earth

As a multidisciplinary artist, I am faced daily with the notion of how to unleash my mind from the constraints of traditional European image-making and let go into pure abandoned expressionism. I also actively try to unteach the colonization of the natural world, in the forms of debunking the idea of the so-called supernatural. We are born into this world with clusters of cell memory, sense consciousness, inherited trauma, or gifts, or both, and so much more and the capability to be in touch with the Natural World in the deepest ways. The beauty of being held in that most sacred of spaces for a period, our mother’s wombs. Like ley lines, sacred energetic hot spots, or tombs in the earth, marker trees, and spiral rock formations, great henges, and even temples—creativity is about connecting to earthly, cosmic, and internal messages. Being an urban dweller, I have always made assemblages with broken car window glass, broken mirror shards, pieces of leather, or painted micaceous iron oxide, bits of my photos, and red ochre. Light shards reflected in the city depict the harshness of urban life, but these reflections offer the magic that transcends concrete canyons and steel towers. Arrowheads can be found almost anywhere in Toronto gardens. I wear one around my neck in my medicine bag. It is apparently thousands of years old. *The earth in my palm, makes me think of you.*

Fire over Water

I am organizing an installation for Crawford Lake, an early Wendat site within the Greater Toronto Area; a show in collaboration with Professor Kathryn Magee Labelle honouring several of our Ancestral Sisters. It is my favourite place to hang out, amid Longhouses and Indigenous planted spaces. For the installation I am planning, I send one of my students out to find a red canoe just like the one I entered all those years ago in Frontenac County. I want to create a video installation called Fire Over Water. It will float on the meromictic lake, a

fire bowl within the canoe sent out into the middle of the mist-covered lake, as temperatures drop in the autumn sunset. This lake has little oxygen at the bottom. One that acts as a time capsule to corn seed. One that honours human occupation of the area surrounding it for at least 500 years. One that seems a portal to other places and marks the Anthropocene Epoch. People lived in the Village in layers, just like the core sediment taken from the bottom of the lake. One village on top of the next. All in all, 11 Longhouse footprints have been found next to the lake. Wolf Clan, Deer Clan, Turtle ... perhaps 11 layers of clans, families, deaths, burials, children, infants, stewardship. Women tending the cornfields, horning and dehorning Chiefs. I want to honour them all with music, images, and installations showing some personal interpretations of lifeways among the People—My student was lucky! Three friends and I bought the canoe, sharing costs. This afternoon we are trying desperately to get it into Evergreen Brickworks where my studio is. It won't fit. Up and down, around the stairs, trying this way and that to guide it into the elevator without nicking the precious surface or scratching the sides. No punctures please! As they approach me to let me know we will have to find another solution, my friend extends their left hand. In it is a red cardinal feather, something I have been searching for, like my Mother's lost family, for 50 years. I am stunned! This is another solution. A token, a red flash in a blue sky—a found canoe, a red cardinal feather from the place I sought comfort. The woodland spaces in exurban Ohio where the Wyandot lived, where I remember discussions about my Mother's absent heritage. After the Snowy Owl appeared and Indigenous art started making its presence known in the house we lived in, where I first recognized and loved Cardinal calls—it's almost as if the Natural World was alerting me to the Ancestors' presence. Toronto was where I was born, in Old Wyandot territory I began to realize myself within the Natural World. While falling asleep one night I heard a little voice ... that didn't seem to come from me. A dream voice that said, "Cathy go home!" I came home.

Jouskeha and Tawihskarq?⁴

Aataentsic, in various versions of our Creation Story gave birth to—or was the grandmother of the twins ... Tižuská?ah and Tawihskarq?. In our rich Narratives, it appears that the Twins, to avoid conflict, divided the land, half to each. As they are called in different versions of the story; Jouskeha or Tižuská?ah, secured the East and Tawihskarq? the Western lands, wherein they were both to utilize their creative powers. The "good" twin, Tižuská?ah made the surface of the earth smooth and the "bad" one, Tawihskarq?, corrupted his beautiful work, covering the surface of the earth with flint, boulders, and mountains—and placed brambles, vines, and thorns into the lush woodland forests Tižuská?ah had created.

Tižuská?ah, brought the Wendat and Wyandot People down from The Sky World but in some versions, they created the People together, perhaps explaining why humans have such complex behaviours. Twins are referred to in other Indigenous Peoples' creation stories as well—Glooscap the "Man [created] from only speech" and his twin brother Malsumis "who seeks evil to this day" (Wabenake).

The Twins might stand as a heroic metaphor for the challenges we face in re-establishing our traditional life and death ways in this new urban world. After contact—foreign systems were imposed upon our perception of the natural order of things. The overturning of old insights and observations, practices of living in relationship with the Earth, which we had understood for millennia, brought a resilient people havoc and adversity—punishing us for

embracing our lifeways and language, creating discord and dispersal, and casting our agency and self-determination into “every man for himself” models of civilization and commodification, rather than the stewardship of nature: never all, never too much, never the first and always offering gratitude. The honourable harvest. The oldest teachings.

Our strong, resilient Clan Mothers; decision makers and leaders, were oppressed by Eurocentric models of female subservience. Aataentsic was declared a witch. Eurocentric religious world views, imposed notions of shame and degradation into the Indigenous, holistic bodymind, thus intergenerational grief and trauma became the legacy of generations; the illness contained within Ancestral memories. How then were we to overcome the punitive and destructive forces of an unequal, non-circular society? How could we revitalize our Ancestral birthright and repair and honour our Ancestors, in service of the People? Our teachings contain metaphors for opportunism, survival, and balance but also pragmatism or expedience; death and rebirth *and the reason unseen things are given their proper place in this world*. Something that was originally holistic, and relationship-focused, was co-opted; holism became dualism and “power-over” nature was used as a device to turn our lifeways into superstitious fetishism. Circular became linear, pressing for advantage, perhaps born from suffering.

In the Longhouse, the Clans sit together divided into different kinship groups of Clan animal. They sit in circular awareness, as community—like a beautiful, embroidered flower. At Green Corn our Ancestors are revitalized and remembered—in their language and honoured, and thanks are given for the first fruits of the harvest.

To attain the balance The Twins represent, we must overcome our trained resistance toward practising our very own traditions, as they are the earth from which we spring. Our land-based pedagogy; life and death ways celebrate our passion for the truth of what is observed and how we are to be; the changing seasons, the first fruits, the dark, sleeping winter, the re-empowerment of our Clan Mothers and FaithKeepers—without fear, growing within the womb of Mother Earth and looking onward to the Star Ancestors ... and in acknowledging these cycles and enlivening these beautiful practices, we allow ourselves to continue in their ways—and they in ours. Newly challenged city governance must release old notions of inequality and strive for that same balance.

Grandmother Toad and Futurity

Which ceremonies count? Who establishes the rules of conduct in the natural world? Policy makers or Earthworkers? Mother Nature herself? Who and where do we turn in moments of climate crisis despair and how can we practise the Honourable Harvest when our kin are so distressed? How does one hold that balanced state of reciprocity when burdened with intergenerational grief and trauma? How can we maintain life not much less, living with all we need? How can we rectify this horrendous loss with healing and recovery? Is a simple Address enough to start that activation of intentionality toward shifting our understanding of the Natural World within the urban landscape? Can we rely on Indigenous teachings to take us where we need to be? Are we aware of the scientific *and* spiritual base of Indigenous lifeways? Can we start privileging Indigenous reworlding instead of settler legacies (for non-settler and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPoC) Communities?) How do we reworld this space and all spaces in time, to save what we hold so dear? Can you imagine life without Turtles? Without plant medicines? Without those enlightened teachers? Without ceremony to honour them? It would not be long before we would all perish and yet responsibilities and

obligations to decolonize this land are largely unknown by most settler folk. There is active resistance toward Indigenous bodies taking up space in white dominant paradigms of privilege. It is hard to shake loose that perception of “power-over,” when no one wants to give up what little or large power they perceive they have. “Power-over” nature is a fraudulent and erroneous concept. Indigenous Peoples also struggle with these notions in attempts to decolonize themselves and relieve themselves of internalized racism and grief. Some never will. It is a long road heading toward that new and better world for all beings. Do we even dare to dream city-civics can be built on a foundational understanding of Sacred Natural law?

Like Grandmother Toad we must rise with that rich black earth in our little fists. That handful of good earth, we cannot let stream through our fingers and wash away. We must hold on tight to raise that vision of reworlding in the newly born Sacred Civics Movement. We must plant the seeds in our governmental bodies and foster them, carry them through to harvest to be put through like ceremony in the next cycle of growth. Policies must be rewritten; compassion must guide us. We must shift the collective mindset from taking all into being thankful, from war into peace and from commodification into resonance and reverence. We must forgo selfishness, greed, and destruction and not set humans against each other. We must renew our capacity to wonder. Speaking truth to power, in one great Friendship Dance we must circle round until we get it right; before all we have is lost to us. This is old news, and these are ancient teachings. We all have something to offer in the path we’re forging into new understandings of very old knowledges for the world we must fashion for ourselves and our kin. Grandmother Toad, the Ancestors, and the Clan Mothers from All Nations will be our guides.

Notes

- 1 Linguistic assistance for this chapter was provided by Dr. Craig Kopriss.
- 2 Adapted from an original reflection piece entitled *Dreaming Creation* by Catherine Tàmmaro (2021), in Magee Labelle, K., the original *Daughters of Aaetentsic: Life Stories from Seven Generations*, McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- 3 Recollet, K. (2019). Personal communication.
- 4 Adapted from the original conference presentation by Tàmmaro, C. (April 11th, 2018). *47th Symposium on the American Indian* at Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

References

- Recollet, K. (2019). Personal communication.
- Tàmmaro, C. (2021). *Dreaming Creation* in Magee Labelle, K., the original *Daughters of Aaetentsic: Life Stories from Seven Generations*, McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Tàmmaro, C. (2018). *47th Symposium on the American Indian* at Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. April 11th.