

EDITING MY OWN DRUM

Adrienne Adams

ABSTRACT

The author examines her art and poetry practice exploring how the “Badlands” of Alberta, Canada, in particular Áísinaípi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park), are “the bones of the earth”. She looks at the visual and linguistic poetry within them and examines her wording to decolonize her practice and learning/unlearning from the land and the cultures; Blackfoot and Settler, and peoples that inhabit it. She highlights how her process of editing a specific poem “My Own Drum” prompted and echoes an examination of her practice that leads to the writing of a new poem written during this process, revealing some of her findings. The original, edited and new poems show her process and struggles with fear, knowledge, skill, experience, art, poetry, nature and decolonization as a descendant of white settlers on Treaty 7 land. This is her first attempt to de-colonize her practice and she hopes that sharing her journey will inspire others to do so as well.

BIO

Adrienne Adams is a poet, artist and curator dedicated to creating safer inter-sectional space to honour the feminine. She is published in Antilang, FreeFall, Politics/letters live, Polyglot, Wax Poetry and Art, Rose Quartz, NōD, New Forum, The Last Petal, Mothering Anthology (Inanna Publications), YYC POP: Portraits of People and others. She curates Woolf’s Voices (aka Virginia), joking that it’s an excuse to howl in public. She has performed her work extensively including at South Country Fair, The New Beat, Storytellers, Expressions, FlyWheel, PPF, Ignite, and co-curated for Single Onion, CiSWE, and The Indie YYC. Her artwork has been shown around Alberta and is in the permanent collection at The Alberta Children’s Hospital. Ms. Adams has worked as an artist in residence and art teacher in the community for over 20 years. <https://adrienneadamsartandpoetry.com/>



Image 1. Adams, A. (2020). [Process shots In-situ]. Áísinaípi, Canada.

I began a body of work in 2008 called *Written in the Bones*, drawing the “poetry” I came across when examining how our bones look like other things. Drawing these I contemplate what that could mean for our collective and individual histories.

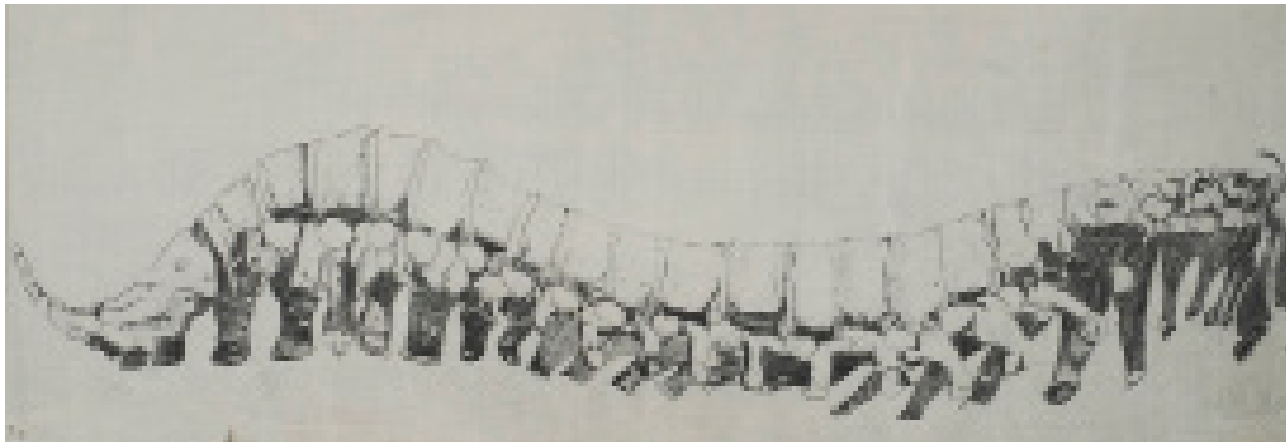


Image 2. Adams, A. (2008). [Pencil on Jade Rice Paper, Caterpillar Spine]. Calgary, AB, Canada.

In my artist statement for that show at The Epcor Center, I state,

Written in the bones, buried in the channel of our bodies. A shoulder blade like a wing wanting to take flight - once played by our ancestors as one of our first instruments. Mammoth skulls were once used as drums...

Animals buried in our spines. I can see a face, a mask, a butterfly all hidden, buried in my vertebrae and the cow bones I possess. A cat face in a cat spine. Our bones, so similar and related to each other and to our fellow vertebrates. My hand becomes a spider that I use to crawl across your back. My forearm is a hammer, my pelvis becomes a butterfly wanting to take flight in your arms (my sacred bone - sacrum), your spine becomes a snake intertwining through time.

What stories are hidden in the bones of human history? What poetry can we deduce from the fact that shoulder blades are like wings, vertebra like shape shifters, the spine like a snake, a guitar, a telephone wire? Are bones really gargoyles in disguise? Examining objects to see what other things they look like I create drawings exploring what the bones - human and those of our cousins the animals - have to tell us about ourselves.... (Adams, 2008)

Following this I began to think about how, if the earth is a geological body, its bedrock or stones could be considered its bones. There are several places on earth where I feel a very special and sacred connection to the land. The “Badlands” of Alberta, particularly Áísínai’pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park), is one such place. I began to think about how the Badlands are the bones of the earth; warehouses of shifting images or spirits passing through, as the rocks change shape, over the centuries. I wanted to explore what this, in turn, might signify for our collective human histories. In 2012 I applied for a permit to go into the restricted areas of the park as an artist and draw the stones.

Working in the park I became overwrought with fear – of my lack of knowledge of rattlesnakes and how to spot them, of my lack of Indigenous heritage; of whether, in doing this work, I was trespassing on sacred ground. I constantly thought I was hearing rattles when really it was the buzzing of the grasshoppers. I was overrun by my

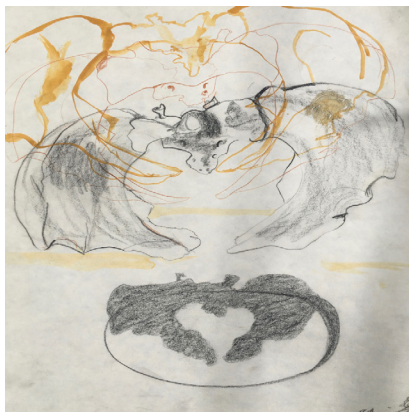


Image 3. Adams, A. (2008). [Pencil and Watercolour on Paper], Bat Pelvis]. Calgary, AB, Canada.

increasing doubts about the project, given my growing knowledge of the history of the place and its sacredness to the Blackfoot people. Though often matching; these beliefs sometimes contradicted my own direct experiences of the place, which were, and are of course, influenced by my own upbringing as a colonial settler in this land. I found it very hard to relax and draw.

I began writing this essay as a journey to edit a poem I wrote there where I struggle to reconcile my desires to have a relationship with Áísínai'pi, connect with the land and create art, with doubts about my right to do so as a colonial settler on this land. This process echoes my journey of overcoming my fear of the poetry editing process itself. Editing is something I used to be deathly afraid of. Over the process of several years of consulting with many fellow poets and seeking suggestions I gradually came to the point where I actually enjoyed it. This felt like a ritual cleansing of my fear through practice and engagement.

I discovered as an artist, poet and teacher of art who has not written an academic essay in 20 years, that I had much to learn about academic writing itself, at the same time as attempting to unlearn its' colonial conventions and decolonize my writing and my practice. I examined my use of language through the lens of many books, articles and feedback and consultations with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, colleagues and poets. This involved learning and unlearning (Donald, 2020) in a continually evolving feedback loop.

Over the process of editing this poem, and writing this essay, I went through several waves of fear, overwhelm, and discouragement. I realized just how deeply my language and thinking are embedded in colonial culture and how much learning and unlearning I have yet to do. With a determination to try again and face and overcome my fears of not doing or saying the right thing, I came back continually and looked at what I was saying and doing.

Decolonizing one's language and thinking takes time, patience, study and attention; just as any good relationship does. It's important work.

Here, I present the edited and unedited versions of the poem side by side, followed by an in-depth examination of a few of the changes in language that I made and why. Notably, I changed the title from "My Own Drum" to "One Drum, Many Voices" influenced in part, by Richard Wagamese's (2019) posthumous book, "One Drum". It is my hope that this may serve as an example to other poets and writers to look at their own work, while I recognize that I still have a lot to learn myself. The more I learn the more I see things differently. This process has helped me to shed my fear and recognize that this work is a lifelong journey. Colonization took hundreds of years to be passed on and embedded in our thinking. One essay, and one edited poem cannot do all the work of unlearning, but it's a start.



Image 4. Adams, A. (2008). [Pencil on Jade Rice Paper, Detail - Caterpillar Spine]. Calgary, AB, Canada.



Image 5. Adams, A. (2012). [Pencil on Canvas, Untitled]. Writing-on-Stone, Provincial Park, AB, Canada

Áísínai'pi which means "it is pictured" (Alberta Parks, 2017) is a very sacred place to the Blackfoot, and if I am to work there, I need my relations around my work to be respectful and appropriate. As park interpreter Desiree Yellowhorn said in the Vagabrothers video (2015) "The Blackfoot Nation",

The Blackfoot believe that this area is inhabited by many spirits often called Grandfathers and Grandmothers. The Valley here actually belongs to them, it's their home. This area is considered very sacred. So you can equate it to such places as Jerusalem or Mecca. ... [the park contains] thousands of petroglyphs, hundreds of pictographs. Writing on stone here was a way for them to actually communicate with the spirits. So some of the rock art here is believed to be created by the spirits as messages for the people. We haven't really counted them all, mainly because everytime we decide to go exploring we always find something new. It's a way for us to teach our ways of life and share. Around twenty or thirty years ago First Nations were depicted as "the other", but now we're not seen as "the other". We're seen as all together. We're all interconnected. (1:41 - 2:47)

One Drum, Many Voices

(edited and revised in March 2020)

I have been learning,
and unlearning,
lessons about
leading and following,
internally and externally.

What's written in the stones?

These parks are sacred land,
gathering stories,
The humbling rock giants cow me.
Spirit grandstands the rodeo;
overlooks the valley
of little people, common folk
rocks.

A foxy sphinx
springs the vale, alive.
Big enough to move,
small enough to breathe.
I prefer to crawl amongst
rocks I can scale.
Here I find,
my own visions;
interpretations.
I realize the connection I sought
in the big valley
is open with these smaller humble rocks.

My Own Drum

*(Original Poem: Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park,
August 2012)*

I have been learning lessons
about not following
someone's else's drum.

Writing on stone
No Grand need here
I am more comfortable amongst
the little people,
common folk,
mushroom grandfather's with kindly, old
wrinkly faces,
foxy sphinx's
overlooking the valley
with all the fresh, aliveness
of being big enough to move
and small enough to breathe
No humbling giants for me,
I prefer to crawl amongst rocks I can identify
here I find
my own visions
Interpretations
I love the vast beauty of the great rock valley,
true.
Though intimidated
It becomes hard to find my own imaginings
There, I keep seeing

Mushroom Grandfather winks at me
Their kind wrinkly eyes beckon, smiling.
Soon, they will find their way,
onto my canvas.

I love the vast beauty of the great rock valley,
but – intimidated,
it becomes hard to find the way
to my own images.
I keep seeing
Grand Chiefs,
Eagles,
Bears,
All the warriors
that have lived and died and fought here.
Sought visions of their own.
They speak to me in Big Silences; towering.
Even the large stately
Great Grandfather who welcomed me,
renders my pencil; mute.

(in slips Baba Yaga) laughing.
Hissing with snake breath
she challenges me;
rattling grasshoppers in every sound second,
charming my snaking fears,
so that I cannot sit still,
and draw.

She summons me;
a gift to see a woman – finally,
after failing Great Grandfather,
in these cold sand rocks.

She is fierce and old and kind.
Her teeth are falling out.
Her smile's a grimace.
Her hair, a river of Babushka
flowing over stone.
Her mouth a cavernous shadow
of chin, hollow so hollow.
She sucks you in to the body of the snake
sidling by.

Grand Chiefs
All the warriors
that have lived & died & fought here.
They speak to me in Big Silences making me
cower.
Even the large stately Great Grandfather
I found who welcomes me
I realize the opening I sought to reconnect
with is also of small humble folks paling -
at least in comparison to GRAND daddy!
a kindly fellow
he beacons, smiling at me
& will soon find his way onto my canvas.
The Grandmother I finally found is laughing at
me the hiss with the snake breath of Baba Yaga
Challenging me
Snake fears charmer's fears of my own
addictions to men who aren't good for me - if
that can be classified as an addiction,
that is,

But Oh! The rush of hormones
is so greatly profound
& I so love to feel my body
alive, electric
So flowing with juices,
Baba calls to me
a gift after
sustaining my own fear - drawing Great
Grandfather in & finishing him
A gift to see a woman -finally
in these cold sand rocks
after all this time.
She is fierce and old and kind
Her teeth are falling out
A Toothless grimace, her hair
is a river of Babushka
flowing over the stone
her mouth a cavernous shadow of a chin
hollow so hollow
to suck you in
like the body of the snake
would if it could

I imagine being like that,
so close to the earth –
my body hugging the ground
in constant worship.
I admire her movements as she slivers off
the grass.

I strive to see and follow these visions.
But to learn the land,
I need to be connected,
to my own psyche, first.

My head is so peopled with other culture's
thoughts that this is difficult,
if not impossible,
and, perhaps inappropriate.

Akin to walking into Notre Dame
and trying to establish your own relation-
ship
to those manufactured rocks,
without visions of the Catholic Church
nipping at your heels.
Yet one can sense
the multicolored grandness of the window
stains,
the awed hush of the place;
regardless of one's race or creed.

In Áísinaí'pi's naturally hewn stones
I sense the magnificence of these Chiefs.
Great men who wandered the prairies
unafraid
of the snakes who slithered up
to greet them.
Women who shook the rattle
as if it were their own.

But now I am living out my own legend;
which involves being here,
feeling,
and drawing,
establishing a relationship with the land,

So graceful
I admire his movements as he slivers off the
grass.

I imagine being like that
so close to the earth - my body
hugging the ground in constant worship
I would like that
I strive to be
& see my own visions
realize I need to be connected
to my psyche first,
My head is so peopled with other culture's
thoughts
that this is difficult, if not impossible and, per-
haps somewhat inappropriate
like it would be difficult
to walk into Notre Dame and try to establish
your own relationship
without visions of the Catholic Church nipping
at your heels
Yet one can sense the multicolored grandness
of the window stains
& the awed hush of the place
regardless of one's race or creed.
And here in these naturally hewn stones I
sense the magnificence
of these chiefs,
great men who wandered the prairies unafraid
of the snakes who slithered up to greet them
Women who shook the rattle as if it were their
own
& I realize I do not need to be them –
A Grand Chief

just myself.
I can honour them,
Draw what I see
Perhaps come back later and draw
the beaver,
the buffalo,
& the eagle
Great water, earth and sky beings that they are
but for now

struggling with whispers of self and
cultural doubt.
Weighed down by legacies of colonial
racism,
assimilation,
genocide and gentrification
built layer upon layer within me,
all the rows of mud and bricks,
my forefathers,
laid down before me.

I need to learn more,
about breaking and following,
listening and searching.
reading and leading,
asking and seeking,
offering and making.

Stepping above and beyond
and around these colonial weights

I touch the earth; feet barred.
Soul stretched
across this land,
to be,
here,
now.

I realize I don't need to be grand to
connect; just myself.
I can honour them,
Draw what I see.
Come again,
later, when I have learned enough,
and draw
Beaver,
Buffalo, and
Eagle.
Great water,
earth, and Sky beings.

I am the Ukranian, Polish, Scottish, witch,
artist

I am living out my personal legend
which involves being here
feeling and drawing,
establishing my own relationship with the
land struggling with all the whispers of self
and cultural doubt
the legacies of
racism,
assimilation,
& gentrification
built layer upon layer within me
like all the rows of mud and bricks
my forefathers laid down before me.
Stepping above and beyond and Around that
& touching the earth,
my feet barred, my soul reaching across the
land
to live & be this small piece,
here,now.
My personal legend
I am the Ukranian, Polish, Scottish, Witch,
Artist
who lives on the other side of the Bering strait
Yet senses the terra firma as a living being like
her ancients - the mammoth hunters
I am not native
nor need be
but as an inhabitant of this earth
I am as native to this planet as need be.
We all are.
& Natives most likely have as many varied
beliefs as coexist on Sunday morning
in a Unitarian congregation
who welcomes all
faiths,
religions,
creeds
& sexualities
judging no one based on what they believe
but only on how fervent their search for mean-
ing & truth,
At the beginning of the 21st century
in this, our very agnostic
age of earth.

who lives on the other side of the Bering Strait.
Yet senses the terra firma as a living
being like her ancients –
the mammoth hunters.

I am not Indigenous to Áísínai’pi
nor need be.
As an inhabitant of this earth,
I have earthly roots primed to this planet
We all do
Learning to play
my Indigenous, shamanic celtic, slavic,
harmonic lines while listening,
connecting to
the wisdom of the Elders and
stones of Áísínai’pi,
here on Treaty 7 land
roots conversation on respectful ground,
bearing healing fruit
mending shifting rifts
to reform stoned stories.
Áísínai’pi is currently in Blackfoot territory;
Nitawahsin¹
Over the centuries many tribes
have passed through
these stones seeking,
meeting and guidance.
We are mistaken to assume uniformity.
Indigenous beliefs are as varied,
as those coexistent
on Sunday morning
in a Unitarian congregation;
which welcomes all
faiths, religions, creeds and sexualities,
judging no one based on what they believe;
but only on how fervent their search
for meaning and truth.
At the beginning of the 21st century
in this, our very agnostic
age of earth.

I wrote the first version of the poem *My Own Drum* to wrestle with and come to terms with my struggle. At the time I was terrified editing my poetry would give me writer’s block. For years the poem remained unedited. I abandoned my project. Or so I thought.

Thinking back over the years, I realized that wasn’t entirely true. I may have abandoned the drawings and poems, but like anything that is inside you, and anything you feel is important, or perhaps even anything you are afraid

of, it will keep coming back to you until you deal with it; and do the work. “The land knows you, even when you are lost” (Kimmerer, 2015, p. 36).

As Shawn Wilson (2008) states in the introduction to his book *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, “Research is all about unanswered questions, but it also reveals our unquestioned answers” (p. 6). Editing my poem I’ve realized just how many of my answers I didn’t question back then that I do now. This is an example of unlearning and is reflected in the difference between the two. Wilson goes on to quote Terry Tafoya,



Image 6. Adams, A. (2012). [Pencil, Watercolour and Ink on Wood, Grandvision]. Writing-on-Stone, Canada

Stories go in circles. They don’t go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are a lot of stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen. (Tafoya, 1995, p. 12)

Over the years I kept visiting these places and establishing my relationships with them. I’ve gone on herb walks to learn how to forage with both Métis and non-Indigenous guides. I’ve been learning to identify plants and medicines and studying traditional uses and protocols. I have been very casually teaching myself some Blackfoot and Cree. I have been deepening my relationship with the land and lessening my fear. As Margorie Beaucage (2020) has said, “The Indigenous classroom is the land. It has always been the land (n.p.)”

One summer before returning to Áísínai’pi I spent over an hour listening to the difference between the sound of a rattlesnake rattling its tail; juxtaposing this against listening to the sound of grasshoppers rubbing their legs together. That was the sound I kept mistaking for snakes. I read all the brochures the park had available on rattlesnakes. I then paid attention to these clues on my next trip deepening my relationship with the land while attempting to lessen my fear.

Over the years I have been reading and studying Indigenous literature, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and engaging in conversations about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)² with colleagues who are part of this work. I have deepened my relationships and understandings with Indigenous peoples and my own history and implications as a settler within a framework of a colonial culture. Eventually I decided to edit my poem and to take up this work again, addressing it head on. Although I had paused, the work itself cycled and coiled itself back to me through all I was compelled to do over the years. It came back to me in what our current cross-cultural dialogues and conversations are, working on decolonizing my understanding of the land, my own inner leanings, interests and the ways in which I care about and relate to the world. Also, I’m older and have learned the value of just doing things; of buckling down and doing the work rather than worrying about doing it perfectly.

Maybe I will be called out. Surely I will make mistakes along the way. In fact, I think I already have by not realizing I should have done then, what I am doing now. As Jürgen W. Kremer states in the afterword to Betty Bastien’s (2004) *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing*,

People of European descent or people who have entered the Euro Centered process of consciousness have split themselves off from an ongoing interaction with place, ancestry, animals, plants, spirit(s), community, story, ceremony, cycles of life, and cycles of the seasons and ages.... We engage in acts of imperialism - however subtle they may be - as long as we don’t understand our own shamanic and Indigenous roots, our ancestral alliances and nurturing conversations with our relations. We can only be part of an egalitarian knowledge exchange and dialogue if we know who we are as indigenous people. (p. 185)

And that is precisely why the work is worth doing. It’s important to learn, to try, to edit, unlearn, and revise. To do better. To repair or undo mistakes and start again. To do our work, to live our lives and relationships in the best ways we can. I am learning about what being a good ally means and trying to reflect that in my writing. Like art, and like poetry, this involves study and practice. Trial and error and most importantly then; trying again. As Gregory Younging (2018) writes in *Indigenous Styles*, “Find your way through and show how you have found your way through” (p. 50-51).

Over the years I have come to care very deeply about these issues. I’ve struggled with whether or not I have a right to explore my own relationship with this land where I am a settler. What are the right ways to do so given our colonial history? At the same time how do I acknowledge what I feel very deeply as my connection to the land? As Dr. Dwayne Donald (2020) of the University of Alberta has said,

Colonialism is an ideology.... Colonialism is an extended process of denying relationships...predicated on relationship denial.... The work becomes how do you repair those relationships that have been denied. And then once they are repaired how do you renew them on more ethical terms... That is the fundamental thing we have to recover from if we are going to proceed differently and support, I guess, people living according to different ethics.... I use the phrase ‘unlearning’ instead of decolonization because those are two different

things. We have to unlearn colonialism. (n.p.)

To explore these questions and my learning and unlearning, I present these exploratory poems with my visual art.

Further Reflections on Learning and Unlearning through Editing Poetry

I share, “My Own Drum” in two versions at the beginning of this essay. Below, “When She was All Alone” presents my experience of the land in a rainstorm one summer (see the video link for the performance in footnote 11). In “Worship” I wrote about my relationship to Nosehill in Calgary. I end with a poem I wrote while researching background material to support this essay called, “Colonial ReRead”. The art images and photographs I share in conversation with the poems were created from my visits to Áísínai’pi. From a teaching and learning perspective the reader will be able to see not only my evolving editing skills through “My Own Drum”; but also my growing and evolving knowledge and relationship surrounding the issues which form the crux of the poem, or the problem of decolonizing oneself, in itself.

Examining the past through the present while writing this essay I became conscious of where I was, and also of where I’m at now. The present is informing my memories of my experiences. At the same time, I am learning new things, and forgetting some of what was present back then. Editing I realized, became a vehicle for this process to flow through me; for both my thoughts and relationships to my work and the land itself, to shift and reform. This, in turn, echoes the shifting images that pop up, fade, morph and reform in the stones, as the earth herself performs her own kind of editing and revision through wind and rain, storms and time. I can wrestle with my doubts as I wrestle with words to contain and reconfigure my shifting and growing relationship to the land, Indigenous settler relations, and my work.

Attending workshops this spring through The Calgary Distinguished Writers Program at the University of Calgary with Leanne Simpson,³ Lee Maracle and Gwen Bennaway have deepened my perspective and awareness of my responsibility surrounding these issues. Bennaway opened her workshop by stating the greatest gift she has been given by her Elders as a writer is the question, “Who are you responsible too?” This has influenced my thinking a lot. As a settler I am responsible to myself, my community, my ancestors and all those we have interacted with and affected on our journeys. Summoning the courage to articulate my questions during the workshop, Maracle suggested, “Face it, explore it, and write about it.”⁴ Here, I hope, I’ve at least articulated my questions better. This helps guide my journey.

Back in 2012 “My Own Drum” tried to address some of my doubts. In the present day I am galled by my past lack of humility and also my current lack of knowledge. The more you explore, the more you realize you do not know. For instance, I struggled with my use of the term “Native” in this passage knowing now, it is no longer a respectful way to address Indigenous people:

I am not native,
nor need be.

As an inhabitant of this earth,

I am as native to this planet, as need be. We all are.

Generally, we now only speak accurately of plants being native, not people (Younging, 2018). The metaphor itself however, still holds. As using “Indigenous” in the following verse instead of “Native”, is the correct way to speak

generally of Indigenous people in Canada, I changed it. Speaking of a specific person or group it is desired protocol to address both the region and nation that someone is from (Ossie, 2017). For instance; Kainai of the Blackfoot Nation.

In my present version I changed the “he” of my “Mushroom Grandfather” (see Image 8) to a gender neutral “they” to reflect more possibilities within the gender spectrum as is the Blackfoot understanding of gender as well.⁵ This also opens the poem up, inviting people to make their own associations as is current with present day gender politics, “Mushroom Grandfather winks at me / Their kind wrinkly eyes beckon, smiling. / Soon, they will find their way onto my canvas.”

I also questioned my use of the word “tribes” in the poem, as this is currently contested. Though originally a French word that was used derogatorily, a lot of Indigenous people are reclaiming it. There is no universal consensus within Indigenous communities but an ongoing dialogue and discussion (Younging, 2018). Learning to decolonize my language, and my thinking, I’m realizing, will be a lifelong process. As Dr. Dwayne Donald (2018) says,



Colonization took over 100 years to do its damage so the process of reparations will probably take at least as long. The original intent of the treaties were as peace and friendship treaties. They were signed by both settlers and Indigenous peoples alike. We are all treaty people. Learning to honour and live by their original intentions is a complex and multi-layered endeavour. (n.p.)

It is a good project that we are all engaged in, as Treaty people.



Many Blackfoot names for places reflect their view of the earth as a body. Places such as Nosehill, Head Butte, Heart Creek, Elbow River etc. When I go back to Áísinaí’pi again I want to draw the stones that I now know that the Blackfoot people actually think of as the bones of the earth. For at least 3000 years (Government of Alberta, 2016), the Blackfoot have had a special relationship with this sacred place. Áísinaí’pi has had relationships with people of various “tribes” for over 20,000 years (Johnston, 1987). During the various rock art tours I took at the park, some Elders spoke to this relationship with various people over the ages. I need to find a way to explore my relationship with the bones of the earth through my art and poetry that fits within ethical relationality (Donald, 2020). This involves forming relationships with others who are also connected to this land and respecting their connections, as well as my own.

Image 7 [Stone Slider]
Image 8 [Mushroom Grandfather]. Adams, A. (2012). Writing-on-Stone, Provincial Park, AB, Canada.

I also think it’s about listening to the land; not only in those places where I feel a special connection, or Alberta Parks, or Parks Canada have deemed special; but everywhere. Listening to the land in my backyard, the Bow River in Calgary, the earth under the highway byway strip or the mall parking lot, and the soil in my garden; hearing what it has to say, whether that land is viewed as being in a sacred place or not. That said, I do feel a calling to explore the bones of the earth specifically. The land itself has much more to say; everywhere, and to everyone.

Vicki Kelly (2019) has talked about how her wonder at her lived experiences in nature turned to reverence once

she surrendered to them, “my job was to withstand the intensity of my lived experience” (p. 20). I believe that this is where some of my fear comes from; what happens if I become one with the rattlesnake? Do I know enough about snakes to walk safely and knowledgeable amongst these lands? Can I withstand the intense energies I feel at Áísinaí’pi even when I don’t understand them? In the lower valley the energies are gentler and park guides have often talked about these being more open to the general public than the restricted areas which are viewed as more Sacred to the Niitsitapi. I don’t feel as if I am trespassing there but rather that I am welcome. This is where most of my drawings have actually come from. The kindly “Mushroom Grandfather” in my poem (see Image 8 and 12), and recently the “Queen” and “Peaceful Daughter” (see Image 1) both whom I communed with and drew on my most recent visits this summer. To draw the rock Eagle, Bear and Buffalo of the Great rock wall in the restricted area I would need to develop my relationships more and ask if and when that would be appropriate. The most intense challenge I received in the Great rock wall came from the “Baba Yaga” Grandmother I saw on the rock wall who is known a trickster of sorts in my own historical Slavic culture, as well as the rattlesnakes. I have my work cut out for me in figuring out what Baba Yaga and the snakes are challenging me to learn.

This year I kept seeing butterflies of all sorts everywhere which has never happened to me before at the park. I actually saw a rattlesnake sleeping just under a rock ledge below the great rock wall. Curiously, actually seeing her for the first time, I wasn’t afraid. I was a safe distance away and she looked so vulnerable. Rattlesnakes are an endangered species so that vulnerability is real. And also knowing where the snake is helps; a lot. You know then that you are not going to accidentally step on the snake or have one catch you unaware. Right before seeing the snake I had the honour of hearing a meadowlark in the wild for the first time. It was quite special and I think opened me up to seeing the snake with less fear. Not that I carry any delusions about just how powerful she is as a rattlesnake.



Image 9. Adams, A. (2018). [Pen, Sketchbook, Insistence]. Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. AB, Canada.

Image 10. Adams, A. (2012). [Digital Photography, Kiss]. Writing-on-Stone. Provincial Park. AB, Canada.

Amongst the hoodoos, particularly at Áísinaí’pi, I have often felt like the stones were speaking directly to me. Elder Leroy Little Bear says that “the hoodoos are listening to us” (cited in Hill, 2008, p. 41). The Blackfeet believe that Spirits did the writing on the stones. On a personal level I have felt more of a relationship with the actual

formations of the rocks than the petroglyphs and pictographs. Perhaps because I am not Blackfoot or perhaps because my imagination roams more freely around the organic rock formations; though the mystery and the stories the Elders tell around the carvings are certainly food for the soul. Yet that is not where I, myself, feel called to communicate and draw. Rather, the faces and animals I see in the rocks, and encounter in the park, are loud in my imagination and spirit.

As I reflect in my poem, “When She was Alone” (see at end of essay), the wind and rain are always blowing through the park and changing things. “Wind is understood in Blackfoot as *sopo*”, (Little Bear cited in Hill, 2008, p. 41) something that goes through everything. “Think of their age,” Little Bear marvels, the primordial history of the rock and the hoodoos at Writing-on-Stone self-evident. “The stuff they must know!” yet the “teaching rocks” are somewhat careful about sharing their counsel” (cited in Hill, 2008, p. 42).

This reflects my own experiences in seeking counsel. Both in 2012 when I asked one of the Blackfoot interpreters at the park and did not get a direct answer, and when consulting with Dr. Dwayne Donald via email about this essay and project in hopes that he could help me to know how to connect with an Elder. It also reflects the worldview of Indigenous people of teaching through stories to let listeners come to their own conclusions and encourage independent thinking (Indigenous Canada Course, 2020). So instead Dr. Donald asked me,

How do you approach WOS as a living relative? How do you honour the presence there? How do you feed the life that resides there? To me, these are very important questions for you to consider. The thing is, Elders will likely not automatically share this with people they don’t know very well. You need to earn their trust and guidance. They will need to know what you will do with what they share with you.⁶

As Little Bear (2008) says of the stones “Like a stranger, they will not sit down and tell you everything immediately, ... only when the rocks begin to know you will they tell you their story” (cited in Hill, p. 41).

And it makes sense. If what the Elders, and what the stones have to say is sensitive, why would they impart that knowledge until they trusted you? Trust is developed through time and experience; like relationships. That is a key element of ethical relationality. Especially when dealing with traditional sacred sites. In any mystical system, certain knowledge is not imparted (we hope) until the student is ready. Perhaps this is even part of the fear I experienced in picking up on energies I didn’t fully understand. Like listening to the land, if I hope to consult with an Elder, I need to more deeply develop my relationships with the Blackfoot people and their knowledge systems.

In Don Hill’s 2008 Alberta Views article, Little Bear talks about our relationship with the land in terms of renewal. What am I giving to the land in exchange for my experiences there? Taking Dr. Donald’s advice for example, I have been taught by Metis herbalists that when I forage for plants, to first ask permission of the plant to gather it or not, and then leave some strands of my hair (or something else, such as food) as an offering in exchange when I don’t have tobacco. The way I see it, when I offer my hair as a substitute, I am literally offering the earth a piece of my own body and DNA and so reciprocal communion takes place. Recently a friend gifted me some tobacco plants which are now growing in my garden as a way of generating this offering without supporting the commercial cigarette industry. This act of growing, and then offering, becomes a way of renewing my relationship with the land. I want to share my experiences of *Áísínai’pi* through my art and poetry because they are profound and beautiful. What does the land itself want in return? Currently the Milk River has nearly dried up because of the St. Mary’s river canal collapsing (Edwardson, 2020). What is the land trying to say through that?



Image 11, Sphinx; Image 12, Mushroom Grandfather; Image 13 Great Rock Wall. Adams, A. (2018). [Digital Photograph], Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, AB, Canada.

Little Bear believes there is an unspoken language that makes it possible to bridge every worldview, a language that can be learned through dialogue—the willingness to set aside preconceived ideas and listen not only with your mind but with your heart. And if the way forward begins with a commitment to genuine dialogue, Little Bear teaches that the exchange of conversation must not only occur between human beings but also between all the creatures and plants and spirits that connect us to and with the earth (cited in Hill, 2008).

While researching and editing this essay I wrote “Colonial Re-read”, reflecting on my relationship to land as a settler. Growing up I was obsessed with the Little House books and olden times. They were a big part of me learning how to read. Reading “My Prairie Year” by Brett Harvey right after listening to “The Marrow Thieves” by Cherie Dimaline was a sharp contrast that really brought home the effects of intergenerational trauma from residential schools and racist portrayals of Indigenous folks in pioneer histories. It has made me reflect, less romantically, about my own Ukrainian and Scottish immigrant ancestral pasts as people who struggled through much hardship and racism of their own; to build a life for themselves here on this land. But also, as people who benefited from displacing and attempting to sever Indigenous people from their long-cultivated relationships with this land. All the more reason to do this work as Dr. Dwayne Donald so clearly states.

What it means to be a human being living in a particular place. ... I use that image of the treaty handshake. So what does that mean? ... We have... local Indigenous understandings of what it means to live in a place and what's the wisdom associated with how to live well there. ... I try to promote a way in which this handshake can be honoured and my view is that it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, if you live in this place where I live, where I gather students, ... then you are part of this treaty agreement and so it's your responsibility as an educator to learn how local Indigenous people understand themselves as human beings and what that has to do with the ecosystem.... The ecosystem is very interconnected to the knowledge system and the stories that come from the knowledge system describe the ecosystem and how to live well there.... The way I imagine this is kind of like this extensive web of relations that I try to bring my students into. And try to help them overcome all their fears about you know, “I'm not Indigenous. I don't have the right to do this”. I try to show them that there's actually kind of an urgency for them to begin to accept that the ecosystem, the place where they live might have something to do with their own identi-

ties. So unlearning comes through this process... where I tell as many stories as I can because one thing I say is that if you want to know the land, if you want to know the people, you've got to know their stories. So... the other thing is that in ethical relationality and unlearning... I try to honour the fact that they don't just learn in an intellectual way. Their bodies can learn. Their spirit needs to be addressed. Their emotions need to be supported. (Donald, 2020, n.p.)

Listening to podcasts by Dr. Dwayne Donald where he stresses the importance of doing this work and reading "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer I've realized that the way we view the land influences our relationships with "it" and with each other. This work of reconciliation is not only something we do with the Indigenous peoples of this land, but something we do with the land itself/herself. Honouring the earth as sacred; exploring my relationships with "her" heals a rift forged by colonialism that I, as a descendant of settlers, can also explore. "For the sake of the peoples and the land, the urgent work of the Second Man may be to set aside the ways of the colonist and become Indigenous to place" (Kimmerer, 2013, 207). We all need to do good work here as Dr. Donald reminds us.

It's important to say that... Indigenous people do not have copyright on ecology... there are people all around the world who have their own traditions and own ways of doing it and just because you're not Indigenous doesn't mean you don't have access to this or an understanding of this. There's examples all around the world... this is a human desire that we have to try to connect in these ways and that not to make it about a particular people with a particular propensity... to make sure that they understand that this is a shared human desire. (n.p.)

I realized it's not about whether or not I have a right to do this work; it's about establishing my relationships and working on them. My relationships to the land herself, to my art, poetry and writing, to people and cultures who have lived and worked with the land for thousands of years and generations before me. I do feel like I need to ask permission; not to do my art or poetry, but to work with the land. "To be native to a place we must learn to speak its language" (Kimmerer, 2013, 48). I need to ask the land herself. I do see the earth or land as female, or feminine; more specifically of creative generative force. Kainai Elder Saa'kokoto was our park interpreter on the rock art tours I did this summer and he kept talking about the heartbeat Na'á as Mother Earth and how we do ceremonies such as offering tobacco to the earth as self care.⁷ For me as a feminine identified woman calling the land feminine helps me to connect, resonating deep within. Readers may have different connections. My task is to listen, learn, unlearn and ask questions. Sit with the land, read books, listen to podcasts, talk with and visit and learn from Elders. While writing I googled whether the word Elder should always be capitalized. And yes, it should, when referring to a spiritual leader as a sign of respect, though, not when referring to an Indigenous senior who is not a spiritual leader (Anonymous, n.d.).

My editing was interrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic. While writing I was longing to connect with an Elder somehow but was cut off from my community connections that would allow me to do so. In my research, options I came across include; approaching my local Native friendship center, visiting The Elders Guidance Circle at my local library and consulting with The Alberta First Nations Governance Center.⁸ Finally towards the final editing stages I was able to re-visit Áísinaí'pi and briefly connect with Saa'kokoto, an Elder there, who confirmed that there were some things I needed to do first. Such as offering the homegrown tobacco I had brought directly to the land herself, both from me and from/for him, instead of giving it to him as I had intended. This was a small start towards learning to respect and honour the cultural protocols of a place. In 2012 I didn't realize I also needed to consult with Elders and the Blackfoot people directly. This has been part of my learning. This essay was peer

reviewed by Artizein reviewers and editors as well as some of my Indigenous and settler colleagues.⁹ In a way I'm backtracking and doing now what I realize would have been appropriate to do at the very first. Just as I applied in 2012 to the provincial park itself for a permit to work in the restricted areas which developed a conversation with the park rangers and Indigenous cultural interpreters and guides in the park at the time. The work itself can then become a conversation with itself and with others. As Kimmerer (2013) reminds us "Listening in wild places, we are audience to conversations in a language not our own" (p. 48). I am held responsible to do my best; to do the work in a good way. Making an offering to the land and then sitting and listening to it before working or writing or drawing establishes a bond that allows the work to flow through me rather than me being an outsider reflecting or recording impressions of the land. Instead I acknowledge that I, as a human, am part of the land and all of creation, not separate.

Finally, I realized all of my learning and unlearning is part of decolonizing; owning the fact that I can feel the intense energy of the land when I'm in *Áísínai'pi*, that I feel it speaking to me, and not being embarrassed, or fearing that others will think I'm crazy. Those are colonial dialogues that encourage a disconnection from the land. As Jürgen W. Kremer states in the afterword to Betty Bastien's book "Blackfoot Ways of Knowing",

We need to engage and recover what might be called a nurturing conversation, in other words: seek that deep still place that Indians know about. 'Such quality of inquiry and conversation means that I make myself present to the current moment and to what went before, to present and past; it means to be present to the cycle of the seasons, the celestial movements, the weather, the land, the past of the land, the plants and animals, and to fellow human beings; it means looking at shadow material as well as acknowledging and healing denials and splits (internal and external). It means not just thinking about rights, but also obligations. It means discovering spirits in symbols and using metaphors to create the possibility of spiritual presence. And then there is the creative play of chance, vision, and insight, the movement of tricksters. Visionary narratives of this kind are boundaries by the land lived on, by the seasons, by the movement of animals, now seemingly chance, now predictable. Tradition, when alive, is mirror and inspiration, it challenges and is challenged as old vision rubs against new.... Engaging in inquiry and conversation of the quality just described means recovering connections to my own indigenous roots, the times and places where such nurturing conversations or balancing ways may have occurred.' (pp. 187-188)

Connecting to my own ancient shamanic celtic and slavic indigenous roots alongside reading and studying about other Indigenous cultures such as the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) or Nehiyawak (Cree), which I live amongst and alongside in Treaty 7 land, is important so that we may connect, and understand each other on respectful ground.

For instance, long have I had a relationship with Baba Yaga, who could be characterized as the "trickster" of slavic folklore and mythology. Obsessed with fairytales and my slavic and celtic roots I've also done tons of research on her over the years. This is probably why she showed up for me in the stones, laughing at me, and also why she is key as a figure who challenges me in my poem. My relationship to her is about my connection to my own indigenous slavic roots as much as I've been able to explore thus far. She is an important ancestor figure for me, as is my own late Baba who I have tried to maintain and deepen a relationship with over the years through remembering and connecting with her through gardening, learning how to forage, making pysanky and a myriad of other Ukrainian traditions I have learned to practice throughout my life. The thrill I received when researching my genealogy and tracing my 6th Great Baba back to a particular unassuming grass grown over alleyway

in Ukraine that I saw on google earth is unspeakable. As is the subsequent grief and confusion. I have no direct connection or experience of my ancestral land but that is where my slavic indigenous ancestors are likely from; the ancient Ukrainians. I do however have direct lived experiences of Treaty 7 land, and hence the tension. That is the dissonance of trying to heal my severed relationships with my own indigenous roots and the severing caused in part by my own more recent settler ancestors here.

What is important is owning these roots, which my more recent ancestors lost touch with through the gradual colonization of their own shamanic cultures over the centuries. Then, not being ashamed to claim these more ancient ways of knowing about the world through wisdom embedded in myths, folklore and the land herself. For example, getting over my fear that others will think I'm crazy if I talk honestly about how the stones "speak" to me. This is overcoming my own internalized colonial attitudes and heals a rift permeating our culture which separates us from the natural world preventing us from seeing rocks and trees, animals and the land as equal to us as, "All our relations" (Kelly, 2019, p. 20). Stones, for instance, as our ancient ancestors who have much to teach us if we will listen.

Áísínai'pi resonates deeply within me as geological ancestors, though they are more directly Blackfoot ancestors than mine. I am learning to ask humbly to relate to them. Examining "My Own Drum" poem and engaging this research and writing process I now understand my own writing better than I did when I wrote it years ago. Part of this has been a process of dealing with my own shame of being a settler. This is both the struggle and the gift of editing your own work. Part of my process was going from seeking permission, to giving myself permission, even while being challenged by the editing process, as if my very thoughts themselves were being edited.

Vicki Kelly states, in her 2019 essay on Indigenous Poesis that the process involves offering, asking, making, having, sharing and celebrating. A lot of this essay has been spent in the offering and asking stages so that I may make with good hands and heart in order to learn from Áísínai'pi and share and then celebrate what I have learned. She wrote,

Asking is really a prayer.... True learning requires deep motivation, down to the marrow of one's bones, with one's whole heart, soul and spirit. This initiates the process of making ready, preparing the ground, physically, emotionally, mindfully and spiritually.... it creates the good hands, good heart and good mind of the Indigenous Poiesis process. (p. 22)

Going back to the park this summer and drawing, I saved some of my tobacco to offer to the specific rocks I would draw. I found a queenly mother and her peaceful daughter, made an offering to them and drew (see Image 1). I realized a few things in the process. One of the reasons I feel the need to draw the stones is that I have a profound dialogue with them as I do so. Our conversation is as real to me as the unspoken but shown and verbalized communication that I have with my cat when she asks for food or water or to cuddle or go outside. Words may not be exchanged but conversation happens. The stones at Áísínai'pi are teaching me it's just a conversation that happens in a language not my "own". Happiness came to me then, in the process of communing with the rock Grandmothers I drew (see Image 1, 5 and 10), resting in the knowledge that I had made my offerings and asked and was granted a conversation. While drawing, I felt blessed and at peace with my making and being. I hope to become more fluent communicating with the land through time and experience.

Similarly, gathering support from others while editing, editing has now, years later, lost its edge. My fear of what I don't know evaporates. I become hungry and excited to know and explore all I can. Through sharing this essay

with Indigenous and settler colleagues and Elders I hope to have further discussions and reflections come out of it that will continue to inform my art and poetry practices and relationships.

This then will allow us to explore the stories embedded in the bones of the earth, finding poetry in their shapes and rhythms. Listening and examining hoodoos to see what other things they look like, delving into what they have to tell us about ourselves and our collective histories on this plane.

Endings as Beginnings: Learning as Unlearning

My journey shows a spiraling back to the past, and to the land, to retrieve and re-examine; like a snake coiling back into and out of itself again. I begin this last section with a poem called “Worship” that I wrote years ago about my relationship with Nosehill in Calgary, which reflects my connection to the land and also very obviously references my Catholic upbringing.¹⁰ “When She was Alone”, was a poem written during my 2010 visit at Áísínai’pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park). The last poem “Colonial ReRead” is an invitation for others to join in the practice of rereading all our relations in the aftermath of colonialism.

Worship

& I realize that my way of
praying
is touching the earth.
That there is,

something sacred about the strength,
in my legs
that carries
me up
this mount.
something of a sermon
in the width and sturdiness of my thighs,
that opens up when
I praise pleasure with sky high cries.

Something about this
that makes my heart beat with more than
the exertion and exhilaration
of being up,
on this hill & when
I stop, I see a pasque flower
bright, in my favourite hue.
Reborn again, I am
sitting, feeling the warmth of this earth
mound radiating up my veins,
as the sun sets & the moon rises,
I know,

that worship, is something,
you more feel,
with your heart, than say.

Nosehill, May 2012

When She was Alone¹¹

On a hot summer day
surrounded by her beauty
Bamboozled, entrenched
Deep, deep within
the caves of her cracks
The spirits
Whisper to me
visions of their past
my future
lulled & lured
Presently seduced
by the heat
incarcerating in
the walls of her womb
I swoon...
deeply held,
cradled
& the rock-ing of the warm earth
swaying back & forth
a lullaby swing
my, our bones
Howl
AWE-Struck!
Steamy
DEEP within her cracks
her visions show
often hot
Today she has showed me ALL her weather
– that she can be cold
when the wind blows through
your soul

Like a howling Wolf gale
storming your skies
your mind
oceans of clouds
That open up
& pour
torrents of tears
melting
weathering
sculpting
Tearing
In perfect surrender
I – Trust.

I
Howl
for all that has been lost
to lust
All that has emptied out of
the universe
She shows me
to this
strange, cold
side of her verse
Tears so desolate,
so lonely,

You could
be the only
eagle flying
Inside the cracks of her time

Torrents pouring
down her sides
slides in wet
juicy slickness
not hot
but fluid
flowing
glowing, growing.

This is how her visions are fashioned
How the spirits came to palpitate the soul of the land
This is how her beauty is carved,
Recorded in Stone

To mesmerize us
in the hot
sun, cradle
& dazzle
Sparkle & laugh
appear & disappear
Seducing us with the beauty
of her cracks
she alone knows
How these were formed

When she was cold
When the wind rattled
through ALL her bones
She knows
She knows
This is how her beauty
was carved
when she
was all

Alone.

Áísínai'pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park) Summer 2010

Colonial ReRead

I now read my prairie year through the little house's colonial lens
It's just as hard but not as romantic
The banality of evil seeps into my glasses
And I drink
A toast to my ancestors who endured
And perpetuated before me.

Fresh eyes prairie brown skin wizened
By the same history of the sun
Rerun, reread, rewritten
Burnt
Umber skies hail down
Cry wolf
And sheep
As won
How have we begun?

In one night I juxtapose
#NotYourPrincess against Cassie's Year
Braiding Sweetgrass against Orion
the Journals of Susanna Moodie and My Prairie Year
are
Whispering in the Shadows
of A Rain of Nightbirds
trailing The Marrow Thieves
of ancestral memory
across my sight
blurring the lines
of wrong and right

Am I a daughter, no, *Son of a Trickster?*¹²

My Kleenex falls into my whisky teacup,
and I wipe their covers polishing
Dust and grime and guilt and shame
Until they shine
Golden,
A wavering vast,
Prairie sun.

Calgary, Alberta. June 2020

My efforts seem to have borne fruit. On the day after the last full harvest moon in early September 2020 I was visited by a bright sun and new leaf coloured butterfly that came to rest on my torso while I was drawing, then by a female deer nibbling amongst the berry bushes. Emerging from my drawing conversation with the stones, there was a double rainbow, spawning the valley (Image 14). Nothing has ever felt more like a beautiful blessing from the land to me and my work than this. I am thankful to Na'a and Áísinaí'pi for these gifts.



Image 14. Adams, A. (2020). [Digital Photograph, Double Rainbow Valley]. Writing-On-Stone, Canada.

ENDNOTES

1. Alberta Parks. (2017). Blackfoot Glossary. Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park. <https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/south/writing-on-stone-pp/education-interpretation/blackfoot-glossary/>
2. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was formed in 2015 to investigate claims of abuse and deaths that occurred in Indian Residential schools from 1831 until 1996 and begin the process of making reparations to Indigenous survivors and their families. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Government of Canada. Retrieved April 2020. <http://www.trc.ca/>
3. See Simpson, Leanne. (2016). *Islands of decolonial love: Stories & songs*. Arbeiter-Ring Publ.
4. The Calgary Distinguished Writers Program at the University of Calgary Free Exchange Master Class February 29th 2020. <https://uofcfreeexchange.wordpress.com/2020/02/27/you-are-cordially-invited-to-the-2020-free-exchange-conference/>
5. See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323857899_Blackfoot_Gender
6. Dr. Dwayne Donald, personal email, June 23, 2020.
7. Saa'kokoto (Randy Bottle) on tour at Áísinaí'pi July 27th 2020. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvDu6wYmlN0&frags=wn>
8. The Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre (AFNIGC) is a leader in strengthening First Nations Sovereignty in data and information governance for the well-being of the sovereign Nations, members, and Peoples of Treaty 6, 7, and 8 in recognition and respect of each distinct knowledge system. <http://www.afnigc.ca/main/index.php?id=home&content=home>
9. Special thanks to Tereasa Marie Maillie, rhean murray and Michelle Meier, Artizein reviewers and editors, Drs. Barbara Bickel and Darlene St. Georges and Dr. Dwayne Donald.
10. Originally published in: Adams, Adrienne. (2013). "Worship," *Weekly Poem #2: Wax Poetry and Art*. Kirk Ramdath. <http://waxpoetryart.com/weeklypoem/issues/02.html>
11. To see this poem performed go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeKhcywoxNU&list=PLmcK6gGJOzr-tJ9rxX-NgY-LuQX-Fl85Wg>
12. The *italicized* writing in this poem references the following books: *My Prairie Year* by Brett Harvey, *Little House* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale, *Cassie's Year* by Brett Harvey, *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Orion Magazine*, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* by Margaret Atwood, *Whispering in the Shadows* by Jeanette Armstrong, *A Rain of Nightbirds* by Deena Metzger, *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline and *Son of a Trickster* by Eden Robinson.

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