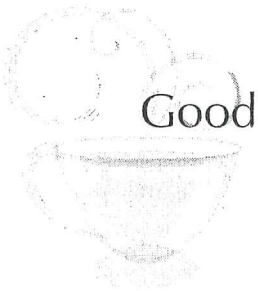
sang and swayed their lush hips. The dipping and swaying of all those women pulled and aroused his manhood; the man hesitated, then he saw the children scampering toward the women and he left.

He returned as soon as winter was over. The women were at the edge of the river's mouth. This time they all sang and danced and enticed him to shore. He grew so excited he nearly capsized his canoe. Before they retreated to the lean-to, the first woman told him that they needed a home because their lean-to had almost toppled in a storm; he agreed to build another lean-to. They gave him a lusty look and purred, "Not a lean-to, a dry and warm home, a big home, a long house." As they trailed their fingers along his arms, down his back, across his thighs and pressed their breasts and hips against his chest, his legs, his back, they cajoled him into agreeing to build a Longhouse. It didn't take long before he agreed.

As soon as they had his promise, they retreated one at a time to the lean-to with him. He managed to satisfy the first two but was exhausted by the time the last woman entered the lean-to. He could not arouse himself. He felt so guilty, but the last woman cooed, "That's okay: you have good hands, long thick fingers." He wasn't sure what to do, but the woman seemed to know, and soon she, too, was satisfied. She wasn't worried; he wasn't going anywhere for a while and she would have her chance to become pregnant.

He saw the new babies and again asked where they got them. The women giggled, touched his thigh, his chest and his arms and said, "You don't know?" They all purred.

To this day, no Salish woman has ever broken the promise they made to each other. I know, because every time I told my Salish husband I was pregnant he responded with shock: "How did that happen?" And like all good Salish women before me, I just said, "You don't know?" And I traced my fingers along his arms, his chest and his thighs—and just smiled.



Goodbye Snauq

Raven has never left this place, but sometimes it feels like she has been negligent, maybe even a little dense. Raven shaped us; we are built for transformation. Our stories prepare us for it. Find freedom in the context you inherit; every context is different; discover consequences and change from within, that is the challenge. Still, there is horror in having had change foisted upon you from outside. Raven did not prepare us for what has happened over the past 150 years. She must have fallen asleep some time around the first smallpox epidemic when the T'sleil Waututh Nation nearly perished, and I am not sure she ever woke up.

The halls of this educational institution are empty. The bright white fluorescent bulbs that dot the ceiling are hidden behind great long light fixtures dimming its length. Not unlike the dimness of a Longhouse, but it doesn't feel the same. The dimness of the hallway isn't brightened by a fire in the centre nor warmed by the smell of cedar all around you. There are no electric lights in the Longhouse, and so the dimness is natural. The presence of lights coupled with dimness makes this place seem eerie. I trudge down the dim hallway; my small hands clutch a bright white envelope. Generally, letters from the Government of Canada, in right of the Queen, are threateningly ensconced in brown envelopes; this is from a new government—my own government: the Squamish First Nation. Its colour is an irony. I received it yesterday, broke into a sweat and into a bottle of white wine within five minutes of its receipt. It didn't help. I already knew the contents, even before Canada Post man-

aged to deliver it; Canadian mail is notoriously slow. The television and radio stations were so rife with the news that there was no doubt in my mind that this was my government's official letter informing me that "a deal had been brokered." The Squamish Nation had won the Snauq lawsuit and surrendered any further claim for a fee. The numbers are staggering—$92 million. That is more than triple our total GNP, wages and businesses combined.

As I lay in my wine-soaked state, I thought about the future of the Squamish Nation—development dollars, cultural dollars, maybe even language dollars, healing dollars. I have no right to feel this depressed, to want to be this intoxicated, to want to remove myself from this decision, this moment or this world. I have no right to want to curse the century in which I was born, the political times in which I live, and certainly I have no right to hate the decision makers, my elected officials, for having brokered the deal. In fact, until we vote on it, until we ratify it, it is a deal in theory only. While the wine sloshed its way through my veins to the blood in my brain, pictures of Snauq rolled about. Snauq is now called False Creek. When the Squamish first moved there to be closer to the colonial centre, the water was deeper and stretched from the sea to what is now Clark Drive in the east; it covered the area from Second Avenue in the south to just below Dunsmuir in the north. There was a sandbar in the middle of it, hence the name Snauq. I lay on my couch, Russell Wallace's music CD, *Tso'kam*, blaring in the background—Christ our songs are sad, even the happy ones. Tears rolled down my face. I join the ranks of ancestors I try not to think about—wine-soaked and howling out old Hank Williams crying songs, laughing in between, tears sloshing across the laughter lines—that was the fifties.

My Ta'ah intervenes. Eyes narrowed, she ends the party, clears out the house sending home all those who had a little too much to drink. She confiscates keys from those who are drunk, making sure only the sober drive the block to the reserve. "None of my children are going to get pinched and end up in *hoosegow.*"

Addled with the memory, my brain pulls up another drunken soiree, maybe the first one. A group of men gathers around a whiskey keg; their children raped by settlers, they drink until they perish. It was our first run at suicide, and I wonder what inspired their descendents to want to participate in the new society in any way shape or form.

"Find freedom in the context you inherit." From the shadows, Khahtsahlano emerges, eyes dead blind and yet still twinkling, calling out, "Sweetheart, they were so hungry, so thirsty that they drank up almost the whole of Snauq with their dredging machines. They built mills at Yaletown and piled up garbage at the edges of our old supermarket—Snauq. False Creek was so dirty that eventually even the white man became concerned." I have seen archival pictures of it. They dumped barrels of toxic chemical waste from sawmills, food waste from restaurants, taverns and teahouses; thousands of metric tons of human sewage joins the other waste daily. I am drunk, drunk enough to apologize for my nation. So much good can come of this, so why the need for wine to stem the rage?

"The magic of the white man is that he can change everything, everywhere. He even changed the food we eat." Khahtsahlano faces False Creek from the edge of Burrard Inlet holding his white cane delicately in his hand as he speaks to me. The inlet was almost a mile across at that time, but the dredging and draining of the water shrank it. Even after he died in 1967, the dredging and altering of our homeland was not over. The shoreline is gone, in its place are industries squatting where the sea once was. Lonsdale Quay juts out onto the tide and elsewhere, cemented and land-filled structures occupy the inlet. The sea asparagus that grew in the sand along the shore is gone. There is no more of the camas we once ate. All the berries, medicines and wild foods are gone. "The *womans* took care of the food," he says. And now we go to schools like this one and then go to work in other schools, businesses, in Band offices or

anyplace that we can, so we can purchase food in modern supermarkets. Khahtsahlano is about to say something else. "Go away," I holler at his picture and suddenly I am sober.

Snauq is in Musqueam territory across the inlet from T'sleil Waututh, but the Squamish were the only ones to occupy it year round, some say as early as 1821, others 1824, still others peg the date as somewhere around the 1850s. Before that, it was a common garden shared by all the friendly tribes in the area. The fish swam there, taking a breather from their ocean playgrounds, ducks gathered, women cultivated camas fields and berries abounded. On the sand bar, Musqueam, T'sleil Waututh and Squamish women till oyster and clam beds to encourage reproduction. Wild cabbage, mushrooms and other plants were tilled and hoed as well. Summer after summer the nations gathered to harvest, likely to plan marriages, play a few rounds of that old gambling game Lahal. Not long after the first smallpox epidemic all but decimated the T'sleil Waututh people, the Squamish people came down from their river homes where the snow fell deep all winter to establish a permanent home at False Creek. Chief George —Chipkayim— built the big Longhouse. Khahtsahlano was a young man then. His son, Khahtsahlano, was born there. Khahtsahlano grew up and married Swanamia there. Their children were born there.

"Only three duffel's worth," the barge skipper is shouting at the villagers. Swanamia does her best to choke back the tears, fingering each garment, weighing its value, remembering the use of each and choosing which one to bring and which to leave. Each spoon, handles lovingly carved by Khahtsahlano, each bowl, basket and bent box must be evaluated for size and affection. Each one requires a decision. Her mind watches her husband's hand sharpening his adze, carving the tops of each piece of cutlery, every bowl and box. She remembers gathering cedar roots, pounding them for hours and weaving each basket. Then she decides: Fill as many baskets as the duffels can hold and leave the rest.

Swanamia faces Burrard Inlet, she cannot bear to look back. Her son winces. Khahtsahlano sits straight up. Several of the women suppress a gasp as they look back to see Snauq's Longhouses on fire. The men who set the fires are cheering. Plumes of smoke affirm that the settlers who keep coming in droves have crowded the Squamish out. This is an immigrant country. Over the next ten days the men stumble about the Squamish reserve on the north shore, building homes and suppressing a terrible urge to return to Snauq to see the charred remains. Swanamia watches as the men in her house fight for an acceptable response. Some private part of her knows they want to grieve, but there is no ceremony to grieve the loss of a village. She has no reference post for this new world where the interests of the immigrants precede the interests of Indigenous residents. She has no way to understand that the new people's right to declare us non-citizens, unless we disenfranchised our right to be Squamish, is inviolable. Khahtsahlano's head cocks to one side, he gives his wife a look that says "no problem, we will think of something" as the barge carries them out to sea. We are reserved and declared immigrants, children in the eyes of the law, wards of the government to be treated the same as the infirm or insane. Khahtsahlano is determined to fight this insult. It consumes his life.

We could not gain citizenship or manage our own affairs unless we forewent who we were: Squamish, T'sleil Waututh, Musqueam, Cree or whatever nation we came from. Some of us did disenfranchise. But most of us stayed stubbornly clinging to our original identity, fighting to participate in the new social order as Squamish.

The burning of Snauq touched off a history of disentitlement and prohibition that was incomprehensible and impossible for Swanamia to manage. We tried though. From Snauq to Whidbey Island and Vancouver Island, from Port Angeles to Seattle, the Squamish along

with the Lummi of Washington State operated a ferry system until the Black Ball Ferry lines bought them out in 1930s.

Khahtsahlano struggled to find ways for us to participate. In 1905, he and a group of stalwart men marched all over the province of British Columbia to create the first modern organization of Aboriginal people. The Allied Tribes mastered colonial law despite prohibition and land rights to secure and protect their position in this country. He familiarized himself with the colonial relations that Britain had with other countries. He was a serious *rememberer* who paid attention to the oracy of his past, the changing present and the possibility of a future story. He stands there in this old photo just a little bent, handsomely dressed in the finest clothes Swanamia had made for him. His eyes exhibit an endless sadness. A deep hope lingers underneath the sadness softening the melancholy. In the photograph marking their departure, his son stands in front of him, back straight, shoulders squared with that little frown of sweet trepidation on his face. Khahtsahlano and his people faced the future with the same grim determination that the Squamish Nation Band council now deploys.

The wine grabs reality, slops it back and forth across the swaying room that blurs, and my wanders through Snauq are over for today.

A day later, slightly foggy from yesterday's wine, the hallways intervene again; I head for my office, cubby really. I am a teaching assistant bucking for my master's degree. This is a prestigious institution with a prestigious Master's program in Indigenous Governance. I am not a star student, nor a profound teaching assistant. Not much about me seems memorable. I pursue course after course. I comply day after day with research requirements, course requirements, marking requirements and the odd seminar requirements, but nothing that I do, say or write seems relevant. I feel absurdly obedient. The result of all this study seems oddly mundane. Did Khahtsahlano ever feel mundane as he trudged about speaking to one family head then another, talking up the Allied Tribes with

Andy Paull? Not likely, at the time he consciously opposed colonial authority. He too studied this new world but with a singular purpose in mind—recreating freedom in the context that I was to inherit. Maybe, while he spoke to his little sweetheart, enumerating each significant non-existent landmark, vegetable patch, berry field, elk warren, duck pond and fish habitat that had been destroyed by the newcomers, he felt this way. To what end, telling an eight-year-old of a past bounty that can never again be regained?

Opening the envelope begins to take on the sensation of treasonous behaviour. I set it aside and wonder about the course work I chose during my school years. I am Squamish, descendent from Squamish chieftains—no, that is only partly true. I am descendent from chieftains and I have plenty of Squamish relatives, but I married a Sto:loh, so really I am Sto:loh. Identity can be so confusing. For a long time, the T'sleil Waututh spoke mainly Squamish. Somehow they were considered part of the Squamish Band, despite the fact that they never did amalgamate. It turns out, they spoke downriver Halkomelem before the first smallpox killed them and later many began speaking Squamish. Some have gone back to speaking Halkomelem while others still speak Squamish. I am not sure who we really are collectively, and I wonder why I did not choose to study this territory, its history and the identity changes wrought on us all. My office closes in on me. The walls crawl toward me, slow and easy, crowd me. I want to run, to reach for another bottle of wine, but this here is the university and I must prepare for class—and there is no wine here, no false relief. I have only my wit, my will and my sober nightmare. I look up at the picture of Khahtsahlano and his son that adorns my office wall, the same picture that hangs in my living room at home. I must be obsessed with him. Why had I not noticed this obsession before?

I love this photo of him. I fell in love with the jackets of the two men, so much so that I learned to weave. I wanted to replicate that jacket. Khahtsahlano's jacket was among the first to be made from sheep's wool. His father's was made of dog and mountain goat hair.

Coast Salish women bred a beautiful long and curly haired dog for this purpose. Every summer the mountain goats left their hillside homes to shed their fur on the lowlands of what is now to be the "Sea to Sky Highway." They rubbed their bodies against long thorns and all the women had to do was collect the hair, spin the dog and goat hair together and weave the clothes. The settlers shot dogs and goats until our dogs were extinct and the goats were an endangered species. The object: force the natives to purchase Hudson's Bay sheep-wool blankets. The northerners switched to the black-and-red Hudson's Bay blankets, but we carried on with our weaving using sheep's wool for a time, then when cash was scarce, we shopped at local second-hand shops or we went without. Swanamia put a lot of love in those jackets. She took the time to trim them with fur, feathers, shells and fringe. She loved those two men. Some of the women took to knitting the Cowichan sweaters so popular among non-Indigenous people, but I could not choose knitting over weaving. I fell in love with the zigzag weft, the lightning strikes of those jackets and for a time, got lost in the process of weaving until my back gave out.

The injury inspired me to return to school to attend this university and to leave North Vancouver. I took this old archival photo—photocopy really—with me. Every now and then I speak to Khahtsahlano, promise him I will return.

My class tutorial is about current events; I must read the letter—keep abreast of new events and prepare to teach. I detach, open and read the notice of the agreement. I am informed that this information is a courtesy; being Sto:loh, I have no real claim to the agreement, but because ancestry is so important, all descendants of False Creek are hereby informed . . .

I look at the students and remember: This memory is for Chief George, Chief Khahtsahlano and my Ta'ah, who never stopped dreaming of Snauq. Song rolls out as the women pick berries near what is now John Hendry Park.

In between songs they tell old stories, many risqué and hilarious. Laughter punctuates the air, beside them are the biggest trees in the world, sixteen feet in diameter and averaging 400 feet in height. Other women at Snauq tend the drying racks and smoke–shacks in the village. Inside them, clams, sturgeons, oolichans, sockeye, and spring salmon are being cured for winter stock. Men from Squamish, Musqueam, and T'sleil Waututh join the men at Snauq to hunt and trap ducks, geese, grouse, deer and elk. Elk is the prettiest of all red meats. You have to see it roasted and thinly sliced to appreciate its beauty; and the taste, the taste is extraordinary. The camas fields bloom bounteous at Snauq and every spring the women cull the white ones in favour of the blue and hoe them. Children clutch at their long woven skirts. There is no difference between a white camas and a blue except the blue flowers are so much more gorgeous. It is the kind of blue that adorns the sky when it teases just before a good rain. Khahtsahlano's father, Khatsahlanogh, remembered those trees. On days when he carved out a new spoon, box or bowl, he would stare sadly at the empty forest and resent the new houses in its place. Chief George, sweet and gentle Chief George—Chipkayim—chose Snauq for its proximity to the mills and because he was no stranger to the place.

By 1907, the end of Chief George's life, the trees had fallen, the villagers at Lumberman's Arch were dead and the settlers had transformed the Snauq supermarket into a garbage dump. The newcomers were so strange. On the one hand, they erected sawmills in a disciplined and orderly fashion, transformed trees into boards for the world market quickly, efficiently and impressively. On the other hand, they threw things away in massive quantities. The Squamish came to watch. Many like Paddy George bought teams of horses and culled timber from the back woods like the white man. Well, not exactly like them: Paddy could not bring himself to kill the young ones—"space logging," they call it now. But still, some managed to eke out a living. Despite all the prohibition laws, they

found some freedom in the context they inherited.

"The settlers were a dry riverbed possessing a thirst that was never slaked." A film of tears fills Khahtsahlano's eyes and his voice softens as he speaks. "After the trees came down, houses went up, more mills, hotels, shantytowns too, until we were vastly outnumbered and pressured to leave. B.C. was so white then. So many places were banned to Indians, Dogs, Blacks, Jews and Chinamans." At one time Khahtsahlano could remember the names of the men that came, first 100, then 1,000; after that, he stopped wanting to know who they were. "They were a strange lot, most of the men never brought *womans* to this place. The Yaletown men were CPR men, drifters and squatters on the north shore of the creek. They helped drain one third of it, so that the railroad—the CPR could build a station, but they didn't bring *womans*," he says as he stares longingly across the Inlet at his beloved Snauq.

I head to my class and enter. The students lean on their desks, barely awake. Almost half of them are First Nations. I call myself to attention: I have totally lost my professional distance from my subject; my discipline, my pretension at objectivity writhes on the floor in front of me, and I realize we are not the same people anymore. I am not in a Longhouse. I am not a speaker. I am a teaching assistant in a Western institution. Suddenly, the fluorescent lights offend, the dry perfect room temperature insults, and the very space mocks. A wave of pain passes through me; I nearly lunge forward fighting it.

Get a grip. This is what you wanted. Get a grip. This is what you slogged through tons of insulting documents for: Super Intendment of Indian Affairs, Melville, alternatives to solve the Indian problem, assassination, enslavement, disease, integration, boarding school, removal.

I am staggering under my own weight. My eyes bulge, my muscles pulse, my saliva trickles out the side of my mouth. I am not like Khahtsahlano. I am not like Ta'ah. I was brought up in the same tradition of change, of love of transformation, of appreciation

for what is new, but I was not there when Snauq was a garden. Now it is a series of bridge ramparts, an emptied False Creek, emptied of Squamish people and occupied by industry, apartment dwellings, the Granville Island Tourist Centre and the Space Science Centre. I was not there when Squamish men formed unions like white men, built mills like white men, worked like white men and finally, unlike white men, were outlawed from full participation. I can't bear all this reality. I am soft like George but without whatever sweet thread of hope that wove its way through his body to form some steely fabric.

I awake surrounded by my students, their tears drip onto my cheeks. Oh my gawd, they love me.

"It's okay, I just fainted."

"You were saying you were not like Khahtsahlano, like Ta'ah. Who are they?"

The room opens up; the walls stop threatening. I know how Moses must have felt when he watched the sea part, the relief palpable, measurable, sweet and welcome.

"That's just it. I thought I knew who I was. I know the dates. I know the events, but I don't know who they were, and I can't know who I am without knowing who they were and I can't say goodbye to Snauq, but I need to say good bye. Oh gawd help me."

"Well, I am not real sure that clears things up," Terese responds, her blond hair hanging close to my face. Some of the students look like they want to laugh, a couple of First Nations students go ahead and chuckle.

"Snauq is a village we just forfeited any claim to, and I must say goodbye."

"Doesn't that require some sort of ceremony?" Hilda asks. She is Nu'chalnuth and although they are a different nation from mine, the ceremonial requirements are close.

"Yes," I answer.

"This is a cultural class, shouldn't we go with you?"

They lift me so tenderly, I feel like a saint. This is the beginning

of something. I need to know what is ending so that I can appreciate and identify with the beginning. Their apathetic stares have been replaced by a deep concern. Their apathy must have been a mask, a mask of professionalism, a mask covering fear, a mask to hide whatever dangers lurk in learning about the horrors of colonialism. The students must face themselves. I am their teacher. The goal of every adult among us is to face ourselves, our greatest enemy; I am responsible as their teacher to help them do that, but I am ill-equipped. Still, Hilda is right. This is a cultural class and they ought to be there when I say goodbye. In some incomprehensible way, it feels as though their presence would somehow ease the forfeiture and make it right.

I conjure the stretch of trees to the west and south of Snauq for the class; the wind whispers songs of future to the residents. The Oblates arrive singing Gregorian chants of false promise. The millwrights arrive, singing chants of profit and we bite—hook, line and sinker. How could we anticipate that we would be excluded if our success exceeded the success of the white man? How could we know that they came homeless, poor, unsafe and unprotected? Yaletowners accepted their designation as "squatters." This struck the Squamish at first as incredible. Chief George had no way of perceiving of "squatting." It took some time for the younger men like Khahtsahlano to explain to Chief George the perception of "ownership" of the white man: the laws governing ownership, the business of property. Sometimes he resorted to English because the language did not suffice.

"B.C. is Indian land," but I have been speaking aloud.

"There is so much more to history than meets the eye. We need to know what happened and what happened has nothing to do with the dates, the events and the gentlemen involved, it has to do with impact." A sole student, eyes lifted slightly skyward, lips pursed innocent and inviting, strokes my arm.

They all pull their seats forward. "We need to finish this story."

They nod, like for the first time they seem to know what's going on. Even the white students nod, affirming that they too understand.

As I ready to head for the ferry terminal, it dawns on me that no one in this country has to deal with ancestry in quite the way we must. The new immigrants of today come from independent countries, some wealthy, some poor, but all but a few have risen from under the yoke of colonialism. They have nations as origins. Their home countries belong to the United Nations or NATO or other such international organizations. We do not and this court case indicates we never will. The United Nations is debating an Indigenous Right to Self-Government bill, but Indigenous people will never be able to acquire the place other nations hold. Canadians do not have to face that they are still classically colonized, that because settlement is *fait accompli*, we can only negotiate the best real-estate deal possible. Indigenous people must face this while the eyes of our ancestors, who fought against colonial conquest and lost, glare down upon us. "This is an immigrant nation," Prime Minister Chrétien said after the twin towers of the Trade Center in New York were felled. "We will continue to be an immigrant nation." How do we deal with this, the non-immigrants who for more than a century were rendered foreigners, prohibited from participation?

The money for Snauq will be put in trust. We must submit a plan of how we intend to spend it, to access it. The Squamish Nation gets to pick the trustees, but like our ancestors we must have trustees independent of our nation. Our money is still one step removed from our control.

This story is somehow connected to another story, more important than the one going on now. Surrender or dig up the hatchet. The Squamish Nation has chosen surrender. Which way will my journey take me? Do I dare remember Snauq as a Squamish, Musqueam, T'sleil Waututh supermarket? Do I dare desire the restoration of the grand trees to the left and in the rear of Snauq? Do I dare say goodbye?

The ferry lunges from the berth. Students surround. We are on

a mission. We travel to Snauq, False Creek and Vancouver to say goodbye. In one sense I have no choice. In another, I chose the people who made the deal. In our own cultural sensibility there is no choice. There are 15,000 non-Indigenous people living at Snauq and we have never entitled ourselves the right to remove people from their homes. We must say goodbye.

In this goodbye, we will remember Snauq as it was before the draining of False Creek. We will honour the dead: the stanchions of fir, spruce, cedar and the gardens of Snauq. We will dream of the new False Creek, the dry lands, the new parks and the acres of grass and houses. We will accept what Granville Island has become and honour Patty Rivard, the First Nations woman who was the first to forge a successful business in the heart of it. We will struggle to appreciate the little ferries that cross the creek. We will salute Chief George—Chipkayim, Khatsahlanogh who embraced the vision of this burgeoning new nation. I will pray for my personal inability to fully commit to that vision.

The wind catches and lifts the tobacco as it wafts down to the water. As we watch it float, a lone Chinese woman crosses in front and smiles. I smile too. Li Ka Shing, a multi-billionaire, rose as the owner and developer of False Creek. He is Chinese and he didn't live here when he bought it. I don't know if he lives here now, but for whatever reason, I love the sound of his name. "Everything begins with song," Ta'ah says. His name is a song. It rolls off the tongue, sweetens the palate before the sound hits the air. It is such an irony that the first "non-citizen immigrant residents" should now possess the power to determine the destiny of our beloved Snauq. I know it shouldn't but somehow it makes me happy, like knowing that Black Indians now populate the Long Island Reservation in New York.

The Chinese were subjected to a head-tax for decades. Until sixty years ago they were banned from living outside Chinatown, though I met Garrick Chu's mother who grew up at Musqueam Reserve. They were restricted to laundry businesses and teahouses economically, once white men burned Chinatown to the ground.

For decades, Chinese men could not bring their families from China to Canada. Periodic riots in the previous century killed some of them and terrorized all of them. Underneath some parts of Chinatown, they built underground tunnels to hide from marauding white citizens who were never punished for killing Chinese. They endured quietly, like the Squamish, until assuming citizenship in 1948. For one of them to become the owner of this choice piece of real estate is a sweet irony. "It was sold for a song by Premier Vander Zalm," the court records read. That too is a piece of painful, yet poetic, justice. I want to attend the Chinese parade, celebrate Chinese New Year, not for Li Ka Shing, but because one of life's ironies has given me hope. On the other coast, 5,000 miles from here, a group of Mi'kmaq bought land in Newfoundland and gained reservation rights. Another irony. They thought they had killed them all, and 350 years later, there they were, purchasing the land and setting up a reservation. There is hope in irony.

I am not through with Canada. I am not a partner in its construction, but neither am I its enemy. Canada has opened the door. Indigenous people are no longer "immigrants" to be disenfranchised, forbidden, prohibited, outlawed or precluded from the protective laws of this country. But we are a long way from being participants. I am not anxious to be a part of an environmentally offensive society that can preach "thou shalt not kill" and then make war on people, plants and animals to protect and advance financial gain. The hypocrisy marring Canada's behaviour toward us is still evident, but she struggles for maturity and while she struggles, I accord myself a place. This place is still at the bottom, as the last people to be afforded a place at the banquet table, the attendees of which have been partaking for over 500 years, but still there it is, the chair, empty and hoping I will feel inclined to sit in it. The invitation is fraught with difficulties. Although today I must say goodbye, tomorrow I may just buy one of the townhouses slated for completion in 2010. Today, I am entitled to dream. Khahtsahlano

dreamed of being buried at Snauq, I dream of living there.

We proceed to the unfinished Longhouse at the centre of Granville Island, a ragged group of students and their teacher. I break into song: Chief Dan George's Prayer Song. "Goodbye Snauq," I boom out in as big a voice as I can muster. The passing crowd jerks to a split-second halt, gives us a bewildered glance, frowns, sidesteps us and then moves on. The students laugh.

"Indians really will laugh at anything," I say as the tears stream across my face. The sun shines bright and turns the sky camas blue as we drift toward the Co-op restaurant to eat.

Raven has never left this place. Sometimes it feels like she has been negligent, perhaps she fell asleep and maybe never woke up. But Raven has not left this place.

Blessing Song

As the boat chugs away from the dock, the salt sea air surrounds us; it invades the very pores of our skin. The sun dances across the ocean's breast. Puget Sound, home of the giant octopus, resting place for the killer whale on its migration to California, is the garden of generations of Salish people. We are witnesses who have journeyed from the sky world to this place of continuous transformation, this place of physical engagement of the sea. Mountains rise sharp, snow-capped and deep green. They circle the sound, cradling this bowl of ocean that is very nearly landlocked. The depths of the sound comfort the whales; an abundance of sockeye and spring salmon attracts them here. Two of the longest and most powerful rivers on this continent drain into the sound.

We have come to watch the whales, my granddaughter, my daughter and myself. My daughter stands more erect than I have seen her stand for a long time, a smile etched on her face as she looks out toward the sea. She rocks gently back and forth, while her daughter darts about, taking pictures with her small camera—a gift from her aunt. Tania turns to look at me; the richness of her joy is contagious. We laugh out loud. We are where we were always meant to be, on a small boat plying the ocean waters off the west coast of British Columbia and Washington State.

It strikes me as odd that we have opted to take a holiday that is so modern and tourist-like, and yet we feel so old and so Salish for having done it. She slips her thin arm in mine, looks across at me, eyes brimming with tears of joy. We stay like that, rocking back and

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First Wives Club: Coast Salish Style

Lee Maracle