

*A View of Transformative Reconciliation:  
Strange Multiplicity & the Spirit of Haida Gwaii at 20*

Indigenous Studies and Anti-Imperial Critique for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*A symposium inspired by the legacies of James Tully*

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**Introduction: Gift, Gratitude, Reciprocity**

*1. Giving thanks for the gift of this symposium*

Thank you to Edward and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund, Yale Group for the Study of Native America, Department of History and the Department of Political Science.

I would like to thank Logan Mardhani-Bayne for all the work he did in organising this symposium. Moreover, I would like to thank everyone who has come to speak and to discuss the amazing growth of the field of Indigenous Studies over the last two decades, where it stands today, and future directions.

Most of all, I would like to thank Ned Blackhawk for everything he has done to create the idea of the symposium and to bring it to life.

I would also like to thank Seyla Benhabib and the 2015 Yale Critical Theory Roundtable for including my lecture as part of their roundtable this year. I am most grateful because one of my objectives in *Strange Multiplicity* was to bring Western political theorists and intellectual historians around to see the history of European and Euro-American imperialism, and the traditions of European political and social thought that have served to legitimate them, from the perspective of those who have been subjects of Western imperialism; not only the Third World of the Middle East and the Global South; but, **primarily**, the fourth world of 400 million indigenous people of the world.

The major objective of the symposium is to attempt to survey the rich field of indigenous studies since *Strange Multiplicity* in 1995. It is not a symposium on *Strange Multiplicity* but on what has happened since then. As you all know, the field of indigenous studies has grown immensely since 1995. I look forward to learning from the panels tomorrow about all the developments in the field since 1995 by the amazing group of scholars gathered here.

I see my lecture this afternoon as one small contribution to the exploration of the field of indigenous studies. I would like to say a few words about the genesis of *Strange Multiplicity* and what I hoped to achieve in giving it as a Seeley Lecture and publishing it. However, the main theme of my talk is how I am thinking today, in 2015, about two themes I first addressed in *Strange Multiplicity*.

## ***2. Reciprocal elucidation cycles***

When I wrote *Strange Multiplicity* there were a number of ways of writing about indigenous peoples with respect to European expansion, settlement, dispossession and colonization.

However, my concern was somewhat different. It was to learn to listen to what indigenous people have been saying about two things: (1) their own social and ecological lifeworld and lifeways on the one hand; and (2) how they understand a good relationship with the settlers on their traditional territories on the other hand.

I see these two themes as distinct from their forms of resistance to imperialism and cultural genocide; that is, as ***the normative or generative ground of the forms of indigenous resistance and resurgence***.

Hence, my approach is a kind of educational dialogue of reciprocal elucidation between non-indigenous and indigenous interlocutors: where listening to and working with them helps to free myself from my Western prejudgments; then to try to see if I can articulate what I am hearing in terms that would be understandable to a Western audience; and then, *in reciprocity*, to see if I could find a way of relating to indigenous partners from my own traditions that might be a reciprocal good relationship of peace and friendship in both theory and practice.

Well, this attempt at an ongoing dialogical relationship of reciprocal learning began in the 1980s, then to the Oka Crisis, the setting up of a course at McGill, inviting Ellen Gabriel and others to come and speak, indigenous students at McGill, and on to the RCAP.

At the RCAP I was invited to listen and discuss issues with hundreds of indigenous people from across Canada over a three year period. This kind of dialogue of reciprocal learning has continued down to today, and I hope will continue for years to come.

Thus, the first thing I would like to do is to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the indigenous and non-indigenous partners in these relationships of reciprocal elucidation inside and outside the academy. Many of the partners from whom I have learned the most are present today.

I am from Vancouver Island. The Coast Salish peoples on the island always begin a meeting by giving thanks for all the gifts they have received from both human and more-than-human others; so that we all see ourselves located in the social and ecological relationships and life-cycles to which we belong and on which we all depend. So, it is my great honour and pleasure to start by engaging in such a welcoming gift-reciprocity relationship today - of giving thanks to the indigenous and non-indigenous interlocutors from whom I have learned so much.

Chronologically from the early 1990s

McGill and RCAP

Ellen Gabriel, Dale Turner, Ned Blackhawk, Ardith Walkem, Taiiaki Alfred, the many interlocutors at RCAP; and Charles Taylor and Tony Laden at McGill

UVic, IGOV, Law, POLI

Richard Atleo (Umeek), a truly great Nuu-chah-nulth philosopher

Charles Elliott, elder, Tsartlip First Nation

IGOV, Law and POLI students at UVic

Paul Patton, Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Robert Nichols, Jakeet Singh, Johnny Mack,

John Borrows, Val Napoleon, Hadley Friedland, Heidi Stark, Jeremy Webber, Nancy Turner

Transformative reconciliation

Global Interlocutors on the critique of imperialism and alternatives to it

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Tony Anghie, Antje Wiener, Amy Allen, Rainer Forst, Jeanne Morefield, Duncan Bell, Robert Nichols again

The power of nonviolence as a counter-modernity

Akeel Bilgrami, Jonathan Schell, Karuna Mantena, Taiaiake Alfred, Dennis Dalton

Present generation of students

Aaron Mills, Keith Cherry, Isaiah Wilner, Russ Meyers, Sarah Morales, Rachel Flowers, Deanne LeBlanc, Gina Starblanket, Josh Nichols, Ryan Nicholson

I call this kind of engaged research ‘public philosophy in a new key’ or, adapting Foucault’s phrase, “reciprocal elucidation”: of working up ideas through critical and comparative dialogue and testing them out in practice, and then returning to reflection, correction and improvement of it through renewed dialogue and renewed application – in what I hope are virtuous cycles of ongoing learning and practice.

I think of it as akin to an indigenous feast on the Northwest coast in which stories are shared and mutual learning achieved. Each brings the gift of their own way of looking at things to the dialogue, each is grateful for the other’s gifts, and each reciprocates in turn: It sets in motion a *virtuous learning cycle of gift-gratitude-reciprocity*.

**3. *Land and Treaties: 1995 and 2015***

*Strange Multiplicity* grew out of the early stages of this dialogue: of the Oka Crisis, classes on indigenous rights, the Rare Books Room in the Redpath Library, my own dialogue with the Western tradition at Cambridge, and especially the dialogue of learning at RCAP.

The RCAP was set up in response to the Oka crisis. Recall that the Oka Crisis gave a new voice to two major unresolved issues on Great Turtle Island.

The first was the land question: the municipality of Oka Quebec tried to take unilaterally some of the traditional land of the Kanesatake Mohawk community for the purpose of expanding a golf course. The Mohawks refused to allow this violation of their traditional territory and defended it.

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The second was the treaty question: how should the relationships between indigenous peoples and settlers over sharing Great Turtle Island be worked out. As Oren Lyons answered, not by stealing Indigenous land and sending in the army, but by nation-to-nation treaty relations.

These issues of land and treaties were taken up and responded to by RCAP in terms of **4 basic questions**:

1. What is a sustainable relationship to the living earth?
2. What is a sustainable relationship to each other – indigenous and settler – in sharing the land?
3. What is the internal relation between the way we relate to the earth and to each other?
4. How do we transform the present destructive and unsustainable relationships to the living earth and each other (double decolonization) into sustainable relationships?

This is what I call **transformative reconciliation questions**. *We are still working on them today.*

*In response to the land question*, indigenous people from across the continent said that the land question is not simply one of dispossession without consent. Rather, and more fundamentally, it is a question of a whole different way of relating to the land from the western way of Crown sovereignty and capitalist private property (the commodification of the earth) that the settlers brought with them.

Indigenous knowledge keepers said that “the land does not belong to them” as either private property or eminent domain. Rather, “they belong to the land”. That is, they belong to the living earth in the sense that they are participants in lifeways that are carefully woven into the ecological lifeworlds or ecosystems that sustain all forms of life on Great Turtle Island. This is TEKW.

*In response to the treaty question*, indigenous people from across the continent said that the way of establishing good relationships between indigenous peoples and settlers is through *Kaswentha* – the form of treaty relationship embodied in the two row wampum belts of peace and friendship exchanged with the settlers since 1623, recognized in the RP 1763, affirmed in the Treaty of Niagara in 1764, and referred to ever since. This is the fundamental constitution of indigenous-settler relations throughout the Americas.

Moreover, in response to the third question, traditional elders explained that the relationships to the living earth and to human beings are internally related; the latter grows out of the former. And, in response to the fourth question, that these two relationships hold the key to the means of transformation of the current colonial relationships into sustainable relationships of peace and friendship with mother earth and each other: that is, of transformative reconciliation.

#### 4. *Strange Multiplicity and the Spirit of Haida Gwaii*

*Strange Multiplicity* was my first sustained attempt to try to understand these great ideas and to articulate them in ways that are true to what I was being told and also might be understandable to an academic audience in my field of political thought and its history.

*Strange Multiplicity* is a story of indigenous peoples of America prior to European settlement; of an early period of treaty relationships, of the gradual dispossession, internal colonization, cultural genocide and assimilation of indigenous peoples by the settler states erected over their traditional territories and lifeworlds.

It is also a story not only of resistance against monumental odds. It is also a story of intergenerational efforts to sustain and regenerate indigenous lifeways and traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom in grounded practices on traditional territories. It is also a story of indigenous peoples' countless attempts to transform the colonial relationship into a peace and friendship relationship of reconciliation between equal yet different partners.

Most of all, it was an attempt to bring non-indigenous readers around to see the importance of learning to listen carefully to what indigenous knowledge keepers were saying about treaty relations and relations to the land – without translating what they were saying into a western modernization framework.

Finally, although I did not see this at all clearly at the time, it is also a story of how the regeneration of indigenous lifeways and lifeworlds provides the reciprocal ground of genuinely transformative treaty negotiations of reconciliation. I think I have a better view of the transformative power of treaty negotiations of reconciliation grounded in indigenous lifeways in practice today. I have this better view today thanks to the ongoing dialogue with many interlocutors that I mentioned earlier.

I began to see that my understanding of what indigenous knowledge keepers were saying was superficial, and thus that my articulation of a renewed and genuinely transformative relationship to the living earth and each was superficial.

And, in our research, we all began to see that the processes of reconciliation set in motion were also superficial – in the sense that they served to integrate indigenous peoples even further into destructive and unsustainable processes of economic, political and cultural modernization that the elders at RCAP.

And, this **double neo-colonialism** replicated the history of the earlier twentieth century.

Let me explain what I mean here:

Parallel to indigenous people, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that modern relations of the domination of nature went along with dominating social systems. They and Marcuse argued that some kind of Marxist revolution could bring about a genuinely transformative reconciliation to nature and to each other.

However, the Third World violent decolonization revolutions, the Non Aligned Movement and the New International Economic Order in 1974 (NIEO) did not bring about transformative reconciliation, but, rather, heavily armed and indebted states, the primacy of unequal command-obedience relationships among humans (individual and collective), and rapid economic development and exploitation of the living earth. And, the former colonies continued the colonization of indigenous peoples.

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That is, the former colonies were integrated into the destructive global systems that has given rise to the global sustainability crisis: **that is, to the unsustainability of our dominant destructive relationships to the living earth and to living communities.**

This double tragedy of post-colonial enlightenment led to a whole set of research networks around the continuation of informal imperialism, the ecological and social crisis of globalization, and the search for alternative modes of transformation of the colonization of the Fourth World after the failure of violent revolution of the Third World and the failure of internal reform since the 1970s.

First, it led to the study of nonviolent ways of transforming our destructive relationships to the earth and each other, and so to Gandhi and Schumacher, and to nonviolent indigenous traditions.

Second, it led to the study of the global sustainability crisis and transformative responses to it.

The work of Glen Coulthard, Johnny Mack and Robert Nichols has been absolutely fundamental in this regard. But, also, Art Manuel, the son of George Manuel, who attended the Bandung Conference in 1959 and wrote the text The Fourth World, John Borrows, the great Anishinaabe legal scholar, Russ Meyers, Tsilhqot'in chief, and Richard Atleo, Nuu-chah-nulth elder, have been of enormous assistance

The Indigenous Peoples Working Group on Climate Change, the environmental law center at UVic, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Tony Anghie, Akeel Bilgrami, and Jonathan Schell & Karuna Mantena at Yale, among many others, helped us to see the depth and scope of the problem we are facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: that is, the need to transform the destructive and unsustainable system that the settlers brought with them to Great Turtle Island and spread around the world.

All this intense reciprocal elucidation has helped us to gain a deeper understanding of the four questions I was struggling with inadequately in 1995 – and of their contemporary importance.

I will try to set out this clearer view of transformative reconciliation in my talk today.

***My paper is divided into four parts, although I may not discuss all four in the talk***

1. “We belong to the living earth”: an indigenous understanding of belonging to the living earth and to treaty relationships
2. The contemporary convergence of Indigenous knowledge and several Western social and natural sciences
3. “The earth belongs to us”: the destructive and unsustainable dominant global system
4. A vision of the transformative reconciliation with the living earth and each other

***Part 1. “We belong to the living earth”: indigenous understandings of belonging to the living earth and belonging to treaty relationships***

In this section, I will

- (1) present my revised understanding of what indigenous knowledge keepers mean when they say: “the earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth”.
- (2) I will then show how belonging to the earth is the ground and prototype of good human relations; that is, of treaty relationships.
- (3) I will then show how these two types of relationships are internally related; and, finally,
- (4) How they provide the way to transform unsustainable earth and human relationships *into* sustainable relationships: that is, transformative reconciliation.

Johnny Mack and I are exceptionally fortunate in being able to learn from *Nuu Chah Nulth* Elder Richard Atleo (*Umeek*). He explains the mantra - “The earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth” – in the following way.

The first part of the mantra refers to the relationship to the living earth that the settler brought to this continent and imposed over their indigenous social and ecological lifeways. This is the view that the earth belongs to us as our private property; as commodifiable resources. They reject this system. It is vicious and unsustainable; the primary cause of the global sustainability crisis all

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around us. From their indigenous perspective is a relationship of dispossession, alienation, exploitation and eventual self-destruction of the conditions of life on earth.

Indigenous people could see what is wrong with the settlers' system because they have often generated vicious and unsustainable relationships to their ecosystems and to each other. However, over millennia, they have learned by trial and error how to repair these unsustainable ways and to relate to the earth in sustainable ways.

This indigenous way of being in the world is captured in the mantra: "We belong to the living earth".

Umeek explains this in terms of three basic features:

1. *Heshook-ish tsawalk*: the basic character of creation is (dynamic) unity
2. The basic logic of this dynamic unity is gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships and cycles
3. We become aware of our life-giving participation in these gift-reciprocity relationships and of our responsibilities to sustain them through *practice – engagement in them*.

### 1. *Gift-reciprocity ecosystems*

To belong to the living earth is to see and experience ourselves as participants within the larger-than-human ecosystems that comprise the living earth. We are plain members and citizens of its webs of ecological relationships and cycles, just like all other forms of life on earth. (Recall that this is also the phrase that Aldo Leopold uses in Sand County Almanac.)

These ecological relationships are relationships of deep and complex interdependency, intradependency and interaction of all forms of life on earth. As a result all forms of life, human and nonhuman, are our *relatives*.

This is a kincentric way of being in the world, as the distinguished Potawatomi Biologist Robin Kimmerer puts it in Braiding Sweetgrass and ethnobotanist Nancy Turner in Earth's Blanket.

**The central insight of traditional ecological knowledge is not only that we are embedded in relationships of complex interdependency. It is also that these are relationships of co-sustainability.**

**The lifeways of the members and their interrelationships have evolved for the most part in ways way that are not only self-sustaining, but, they also sustain themselves in ways in that co-sustain the interdependent lifeways of their relatives. (They integrate what we call the “environment” into their lifeways.)**

To belong to the land is to belong to complex interdependent lifeways and life-cycles that co-sustain all life on earth since time immemorial (3.5 billion years). Hence, the terms ‘mother earth or living earth’.

When you participate in and experience the sensuous world in this co-sustaining way, the world is brought forth to you as a “kincentric worldview”: of all forms of life as our interrelated and co-sustaining kin of various kinds.

Next, life-giving and life-receiving relationships of interdependency and co-sustainability are called **gift-reciprocity relationships, networks and lifecycles.**

The ways that plants, animals, photosynthesis, fungi, nutrients, ecosystems, sun and rain, soil and rivers, interact in giving and receiving the conditions of life from each other appear as complex cycles of gift exchange.

As Robin Kimmerer puts it, ***Life sustain life by means of gift-reciprocity systems:***

“Reciprocity - returning the gift – is not just good manners; it is how the biophysical world works. Balance in ecological systems arises from negative feedback loops, from cycles of giving and taking. Reciprocity among parts of the living earth produces [dynamic] equilibrium, in which life as we know it can flourish. When the gift is in motion, it can last forever.”

The symbiotic gift-reciprocity relationship is thus the common feature or logic of the relationships that sustain life on earth in all its diverse forms. **It is the ‘animacy’ or aliveness of the living earth.**

It is the greatest power on earth since it has sustained and generated life for over 3 billion years. It is far greater than the forms of power that humans have created.

## ***2. Gift-reciprocity social-ecological systems***

Traditional knowledge keepers have learned how the living earth sustains life through 150,000 years of trial and error. As John Borrows and Aaron Mills have taught me, the word for “education” in many indigenous languages, and in Ojibway in particular, literally means “to look towards and learn from the living earth”.

Once humans learn that they are interdependent members of life-sustaining gift-reciprocity relationships and cycles, then they can see what their responsibilities are as citizens who belong to and depend on the living earth. Their responsibilities is to connect (or reconnect) with the animacy of the ecosystems in which they live in self-sustaining and co-sustaining ways:

1. To accept and use with gratitude the gift of clean air, plants, trees, animals, water and so on to sustain themselves; but, always also
2. In reciprocal gratitude for these life-giving gifts, to use them in such ways that co-sustain the non-human life systems and cycles in which these gifts are embedded and on which we and other forms of life co-depend.

As fellow inhabitants, we design our socio-ecological systems in reciprocal care and synchronicity with the larger gift-reciprocity systems in which they are embedded and on which they depend. That is: not to **take**, but to care-take.

That is, in general, socio-ecological systems should always be **gift-gratitude-reciprocity systems**.

And, thus, as Val Napoleon has shown in her teaching and research, indigenous peoples draw on their stories of the larger-than-human world and human interactions with it to derive their laws and forms of self-governance.

For millennia, then, Homo sapiens have co-evolved with their bioregions as cooperative apprentices; learning by trial and error. Their lifeways and life cycles are “indigenous” in the precise sense of this term of being in dynamic equilibrium with the place in which we dwell.

### ***3. Gift-gratitude-reciprocity treaty relationships***

Indigenous knowledge keepers say that the ecological gift-reciprocity relationships that co-sustain all forms of interdependent life are also the model for human social relationships with one another, individually and collectively. They too are countless varieties of gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships among human kin, as in families, clans and so on.

Since first contact, indigenous peoples have been inviting settlers to enter into treaty relationships in order to work out how to live with each other as different yet interdependent relatives in co-sustainable ways.

The model for gift-reciprocity treaty relationships has been the **Kaswentha Two Row Wampum treaties** exchanged between Iroquois and settlers from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to today.

Treaty negotiations begin with ceremonies of giving thanks to mother earth for all her gifts and the exchange of gifts before entering into the exchange of stories and arguments and proposals in the negotiations.

The gift exchange at treaty talks reminds the partners that they should see themselves as both embedded in natural cyclical gift relationships and bringing into being new ones in the negotiations. Just as the living earth consists of gift-reciprocity relationships that sustain the living members, so humans should relate to the living earth and each other in their social relationships in the same general way. That is: a gift is given; the recipient expresses the emotion of gratitude and the giver perceives this; and the emotion of gratitude moves the recipient to reciprocate by giving a gift to the giver or another in reciprocity. In so doing, participants bring into being and continue gift-gratitude-reciprocity networks and cycles that co-sustain all participants: treaty and social networks that mimic self-sustaining ecological networks.

If, conversely, they fail to reciprocate with the living earth or with their treaty partners, appropriate and use the gifts with ingratitude, then they break the cycles that sustain life in both cases, destroy the cyclical networks that are the conditions of life for their neighbours and themselves, and eventually destroy themselves.

Accordingly, the exchange of gifts before and after treaty talks reminds the participants that they have shared responsibilities to connect or 'reconnect' the gift-gratitude-reciprocity circle that sustains all forms of life.

As Taiaiake Alfred has taught me, the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois confederacy), for example, explain their 'call to consciousness' before treaty negotiations in the following way:

The original instructions direct that we who walk about on the earth are to express a great respect, and affection, and gratitude towards all the spirits which create and support life. We give a greeting and thanksgiving to the many supporters of our lives – the corn, bean, squash, the winds, the sun. When people cease to respect and express gratitude for those many things, then all life will be destroyed, and human life

Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance with each other and all living things. So now we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People. Now our minds are one.

Every human being has a sacred duty to protect the welfare of our mother earth from whom all life comes (Chief Shenandoah, UN 1985)

This is what indigenous people have been telling settlers at treaty talks for 400 years. If you wish to settle here, share this beautiful land, and live in peace and friendship with all your relatives, then interact with the living earth and your treaty partners in gift-gratitude- reciprocity ways.

Settlers came with another system; one in which “the land belongs to humans.” From within this system, they thought indigenous people were negotiating the sale of land they owned in the treaty negotiations. Treaty relationships were thus seen as contractual relationships. And treaty negotiations were seen as bargaining to get the best deal for themselves. This still remains the dominant understanding today.

#### ***4. Relationship among three gift-reciprocity systems***

In summary, to live in such a way as to “belong to the land” is to learn to live within three interdependent living systems that manifest the same basic gift-reciprocity logic:

1. The larger-than-human living world on which we all depend;
2. The socio-ecological systems through which humans interact and co-evolve with the larger-than-human world;
3. The sustaining social relationships among humans; especially treaty relationships among peoples living together in peace and friendship.

These three types of life systems make up the living earth to which we belong and in which we live and breathe and have our different modes of being.

Moreover, in response to the initial question of what is the internal relations between these life systems, the answer seems clear. **The gift-reciprocity relationships of the living earth are the ground and grounded-normativity for the human gift-reciprocity systems (as both Glen Coulthard and Aaron Mills have shown me).** The three systems are interdependent and co-sustaining life systems.

Coast Salish stories often point out this interdependency by stating that they have treaty relations with the plants and animals of their bio-region.

#### ***Motivation***

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What motivates a person or people to interact with each other and all their human and non-human relatives in these gift-gratitude-reciprocity ways and, thereby, sustaining a global federation of all forms of life?

There are a number of overlapping reasons for living in this way. These are recorded in indigenous stories and each draws on different features of gift-reciprocity relationships and individual and collective agency within them.

1 The most important is that experiencing being in the world with others in gift-reciprocity ways invokes the emotion of gratitude for these gifts of life and gratitude, informed by traditional ecological and ethical teachings, and moves us to reciprocate in kind. We ‘realize’ that every breath we take, the food we eat, the beauty all around us, and the sustenance that sustains us are given to us by the living earth into which we are born. The feeling of gratitude that washes over us moves us to participate within and sustain the cyclical relationships that sustain them.

2 Next, within this kincentric worldview, we recognize other living members are our family members and the whole earth system as our mother, and thus we interact as we would normally do with family members; namely, with care and compassion.

3 Next, reflection on the gift-reciprocity cycles makes us realize that if we, individually and collectively, take care of mother earth, she in reciprocity with continue to take care of us.

4 Our primary form of self-awareness and self-formation is not of an independent and separate individual or group, but, rather, our more extensive interdependent self – what Arne Naess called our ‘ecological self’. We identify with, and so care for, all our relations as the background way to care for ourselves in the individual sense.

5 Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the experience of participating in gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships is just to **be reconnected with and empowered by the animacy of the living earth** – the autopoietic power that has brought life into being, sustained and diversified it for over three billion years.

#### ***4. Three states of gift-reciprocity systems and transformative reconciliation***

Let me mention one final and crucial feature of this indigenous worldview that is often misunderstood yet is of fundamental importance.

Ecological and social gift-reciprocity systems are dynamic. They can exist in three different states.

1 In the first state they are what is called conciliatory systems. Here the living members interact virtuously in the sense of enacting their responsibilities within gift-reciprocity relationships and cycles. These ‘circles of participation’ (or negative feedback loops as they are called in systems theory) sustain the life of the members, the system as a whole, and co-sustain the social and ecosystems with which it in turn interacts.

Yet, even this so-called ‘steady state’ is not automatic but dynamic and conciliatory, and often far from equilibrium. The members participate reciprocally, yet make mistakes; others fail to reciprocate or become greedy and selfish, violent rather than peaceful, aggressive rather than cooperative and nonviolently contestatory; taking more of renewable resources than the system can renew, and so on. However, through trial and error, the members of the system learn how to correct this behaviour before it gets out of hand, and reconcile. That is, bring the members back to relationships of peace and friendship.

Indigenous peoples are evolving apprentices: they learn this knowledge and wisdom by means of trial and error. Even the best virtuous ecosystem, socio-ecosystem, and social system built on the gift-reciprocity model are often far from equilibrium, require continuous ‘conciliation’ by their members, and always open to abuse, the magnification of vicious interactions, tipping points, and the transformation of a virtuous system into vicious system.

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“Indigenous story traditions are full of cautionary tales about the failure of gratitude. When people forget to honor the gift, the consequences are always material as well as spiritual. The spring dries up, the corn doesn’t grow, the animals do not return, and the legions of offended plants and animals and rivers rise up against the ones who neglected gratitude.” (Kimmerer)

2 If the vicious behaviour is not corrected, it can be self-reinforcing by means of positive feedback loops among the interconnected members that amplify its destructive effects. The system as a whole reaches a tipping point and is transformed into a vicious and unsustainable system. If this dynamic is not stopped, it can lead not only to the destruction of the forms of life and gift-reciprocity relationships on which its members depend, but, as a result, to the self-destruction of the vicious system and its members.

This has happened many times in the history of non-human and human life on earth. Many scholars and the IPCC suggest that this is happening in our time, in the global sustainability crisis.

I will suggest in a moment that this global crisis is brought about by the rise to global dominance over the last 400 years of the unsustainable system that the settlers brought with them: a system in which we act as if the earth belongs to us (as our property).

3 When this occurs, the vicious system cannot be re-conciliated by normal means within the system. It requires ***means of reconciliation that transform*** the vicious system into a virtuous system: that is, reconnects and regenerates the members with the animate gift-reciprocity relationships of the living earth and with each other.

The key feature of this third cycle of ***transformative reconciliation*** is that it transforms the vicious way of life of the members of the unsustainable system into a virtuous and sustainable way of life ***by reconnecting*** them with the larger-than-human gift-reciprocity **animacy** that sustains all life on earth.

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Transformative reconciliation transforms and reconnects by regenerating and enacting here-and-now gift-reciprocity relationships with the living earth and with each other in their everyday practices within the vicious system.

These everyday activities of reconnecting gradually bring about a tipping point that transforms the dominant vicious way of life into a virtuous and sustainable one.

That is, transformative reconciliation and reconnection are brought about by regenerating gift-reciprocity relationships from the ground up; -- just as a damaged ecosystem is recovered by the regeneration of permaculture.

That is, the means of transformative reconciliation have to be prefigurative of the end they are designed to bring about if they are to be effective. They have to manifest the gift-reciprocity logic of the animacy of the great commonwealth of all forms of life.

Indigenous story-telling on Great Turtle Island is replete with stories of these three great cycles of life earth: virtuous and sustainable dynamic gift-reciprocity systems; the emergence of vicious non-reciprocal behaviour, which is either corrected or continued, tipping the system into a vicious and unsustainable state; and, third, great attempts to transform and reconcile the vicious system into a virtuous and sustainable system by reconnecting its members with the larger gift-reciprocity relationships that sustain life on earth.

Indeed, the foundational “sky woman” and “muskrat” stories of how North America itself (Great Turtle Island) was regenerated after the last interglacial flood is a classic story of transformative reconciliation.

The Raven cycle of stories on the Northwest coast are also replete with stories of these three states of life systems: sustainable, unsustainable, and transformative reconciliation with the living earth and each other. (See Part 4)

*Part 2: The convergence of Western earth, life and social sciences*

Until recently this animistic worldview of indigenous peoples was considered to be primitive and superseded by the scientific worldview of the West that was claimed to be at a much higher stage of development. On this modern view, humans were claimed to be independent, separate from the living earth and each other, knowing and controlling the mechanistic natural systems, and moving up through stages of modernization by means of the unintended consequences of institutionalised competition among self-interested individuals, corporations and states.

However, since the dawning awareness of the global ecological and social crisis of the Anthropocene age in the 1960s, many earth, life and human scientists have presented hypotheses that are complementary to the traditional ecological worldview I have just summarised.

I will mention briefly 9 western earth sciences, life sciences and human sciences that have converged on the gift-reciprocity view of the ways life sustains life on this planet in recent decades:

- i. Earth systems science: Gaia is a self-generating and self-regulating system that sustains the conditions of life on earth by means of negative and positive feedback loops (Sir James Lovelock, and endorsed by many members of the IGPPC in one form or another). The Gaia hypothesis became the Gaia theory by the 1990s.
- ii. Life sciences: this earth system is composed of a multiplicity of ecosystems of circles of participation and autopoiesis that sustain life. Lynn Margulis in biology: symbiosis and symbiogenesis are the major factors in evolution, not competition. She also suggests that the Gaia hypothesis is just symbiosis on a planetary scale: an emergent property of ecosystems interaction.
- iii. Ethnobotany: symbiosis and symbiogenesis are the same phenomenon as gift-reciprocity and gift-gratitude-reciprocity cycles in TEKW: Turner and Kimmerer, permaculture

## Transformative reconciliation

iv. The ecological sciences and especially deep ecology. Arne Naess, Stephen Harding, Animate Earth, a student of Lovelock's at Schumacher College, and he draws the parallel with indigenous knowledge.

v. Psychology, cognitive science, social ecology: the gift-*gratitude*-reciprocity relationship explains virtuous relationships and cycles of *mutual aid* between humans and non-humans and humans and humans (not obligation, command and coercion: power-over). It is gratitude (and compassion) that move humans to reciprocate with their gifts of caring for the systems that sustain and care for them and all forms of life in turn and thus sustain the virtuous cycles of life: Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life*, Joanna Macy, *Active Hope*,

vi. The Kropotkin-Gandhi-Schumacher tradition of participatory cooperation and mutual aid: Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest*, LaConte, *Life Rules*, Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy*, Elinor Ostrom.

vii. The new field of eco-phenomenology, rediscovering Merleau-Ponty: David Abram and the lived experience of reconnecting with the animacy of the world through learning from indigenous peoples.

viii. The remarkable turn to ecological or steady-state economics (Herman Daly); ecological law or green legal theory (Michael M'Gonigle); ecological technology and urban planning (the Cradle to Cradle movement and Zero Emissions Research); "reconnection with nature" education movements (Rouv, the nature principle).

ix. The remarkable convergence of many of the world's religious leaders on this: especially but not only Catholicism and Buddhism: Pope Francis' encyclical, TNH and engaged Buddhism.

Summary: Fritz Capra, in The System View of Life, converges with earth teachings in Part 1:

## Transformative reconciliation

“The key to an operational definition of ecological sustainability is the realization that we do not need to invent sustainable human communities from scratch but can model them after nature’s ecosystems, which are sustainable communities of plants, animals and micro-organisms. Since the outstanding characteristic of the Earth household is its inherent ability to sustain life, a sustainable human community is one designed in such a manner that its ways of life, businesses, economies, federations, physical structures, and technologies do not interfere with nature’s inherent ability to sustain life. Sustainable communities and networks evolve their patterns of living over time in continual interaction with other living systems, both human and non-human.”

There is not only a *convergence* between Traditional indigenous ecological knowledges and these Western sciences. There is also collaboration and cooperation between them in academic work and in engaged activism of countless kinds around the world (IPWGCC for example). This Workshop is an example.

And, as we will see in the last part of the lecture, these networks of collaboration and cooperation are the groundwork of transformative reconciliation of the dominant, vicious and unsustainable relationships to the living earth and to each other.

However, before we turn to that, I want try to explain what is wrong with our current relationship to the living earth and to each other.

### ***Part 3 The vicious and unsustainable relationship: the earth belongs to us***

#### ***Introduction***

The unsustainable relationship to the living earth developed first in Europe and was spread around the globe by European imperial expansion and modernization. And it was imposed over the co-evolving lifeways of indigenous peoples (as Boas argued in 1911).

The ecological crisis of the very conditions of life on earth is also beyond reasonable doubt. Since the early reports on climate change, global warming, pollution, and the limits to growth in the 1960s to endless studies and reports of the leading earth scientists in the world and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we have known that our dominant way of life is overshooting the carrying capacity of the earth and destroying the conditions that sustain life.

Climate change, non-renewable and renewable resource depletion, species and ecosystems extinction, the melting of glaciers and the polar ice cap, the acidification of the oceans and desertification of former agricultural and forest lands are not only past the tipping point to unsustainable warming and a possible sixth mass extinction. They are already bringing about horrendous social effects: mass starvation and migration, social divisions and a planet of slums and gated communities, wars over resources and water, and failed states. The ruthless race among states and corporations for the resources that are left is accelerating climate change and other factors in a vicious, cascading and runaway spiral.

The *conditions that sustain life* on earth, as Lester Brown puts it in his latest report, are “on the edge” (World on the Edge). And, the intensified race to control the world’s remaining resources has increased intervention and exploitation of the territories and resources of indigenous peoples, drawing them into the spiraling social and economic consequences (Michael Klare, The Race for What’s Left.)

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I do not think we can respond effectively to this problem unless we understand the roots of it. I think the attempts to address it since are failing we have not addressed the modern way of production and consumption that causes and reproduces it.

This unsustainable way of relating to the living earth and each other is captured in the indigenous mantra for it: **“The earth belongs to us”**. I think we are in position to see what is wrong with it by examining it from the contrastive perspective of the alternative indigenous worldview that I have just summarised.

### ***The great disembedding and re-embedding***

I think one of the best analyses is the analysis of the great disembedding and transformation brought about by modernization by Karl Polanyi in The Great Transformation (1944). He was a student of both the dominant system of production and of the indigenous systems it displaced.

In brief, Polanyi argued that during this great transformation humans have been disembedded from participation in the interdependent ecological and social relationships that sustain life and re-embedded in abstracted and competitive economic, political and legal relationships that are dependent on, yet destructive of, the underlying interdependent ecological and social relationships.

I have also learned an enormous amount about the “great disembedding” through years of conversation with Robert Nichols and Glen Coulthard on primitive accumulation and settler colonialism.

This “great disembedding” and re-embedding takes place in the following three steps.

First, the peoples who are embedded in symbiotic ecological and social relationships are dispossessed of this way of life and the territories in which it is carried on; in Europe and then around the world by various forms of colonization. This continues, as we have seen in Part 1.

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The **second step** is to impose an ownership relation to the land by the spread of western legal systems of private property and so to transform “earth into property” and even the patenting and commodification of life processes, as Vandana Shiva has shown.

Polanyi describes the privatization of land as a “fictitious commodity” because land is not a commodity produced for sale on the market. What we now call commodifiable and exchangeable “natural resources” are, as we have seen, *interdependent co-participants* in the symbiotic webs and cycles of life that sustain life on earth.

Relating to the living earth as a storehouse of commodifiable resources *disembeds* them from these interdependent ecological relationships and then *re-embeds* them in the abstract and competitive relations of the global market system. The ecosystems in which resources are embedded are then treated as ‘external’ to the global system of commodification.

The natural world is radically transformed by continuous processes of competitive commodification, sale and use, disposal, and re-commodification. The result of ‘development’ under this linear system is the destruction of the webs of interdependent ecological relationships and cycles that sustain the natural and human world, giving rise to the environmental crisis and climate change.

Once the means of the reproduction of human life are placed under the ownership of corporations in this way, the **third step** is to treat the productive capabilities of human beings as commodities for sale on the labour market by the spread of western contract, labour and corporate law. This kind of commodification *dis-embeds* human producing and consuming capabilities and activities from the surrounding gift-reciprocity, social and ecological relationships in which they take place and *re-embeds* them in abstract, competitive and non-democratic global market relationships.

Polanyi describes the commodification of the productive capabilities of individual humans as the second “fictitious commodity” of modernization.

## Transformative reconciliation

It is fictitious because abilities to work together and sustain ourselves are not commodities made for the market. These capabilities are, as we have seen in the previous section, the co-operative response-abilities and sustain-abilities through which we humans participate in the social and ecological systems that conciliate and sustain life on earth. They are the capabilities through which we “belong to the land” and are grounded in it.

Yet, they are now treated as abstract capabilities that we as separate individuals “own” (self-ownership); and, by selling the use of these abilities to a corporation, they become the means by which we insert ourselves in the global competitive market system.

The result of ‘development’ under this system is the destruction of the webs of interdependent social relations of mutual aid that sustain human communities, giving rise to the well-known forms of social suffering of modern life: alienation and anomie, the horrendous inequalities in life-chances, and the planet of slums and gated ‘communities’ in which we find ourselves.

In 1944 Polanyi predicted that the result of this “great transformation” would be disastrous:

To allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment...would result in the demolition of society. Robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure; they would die as the victims of acute social dislocation through vice, perversion, crime and starvation. Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighbourhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted, military safety jeopardized, the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed.

### *The Vicious cycle*

Despite Polanyi’s warning and hundreds of others, this global system of double commodification in which the human species is re-embedded continues to unfold as he predicted. It is now a deeply entrenched *vicious cycle*; what global systems theorists call a self-destructive “automaton”.

If the real costs of this global system were taken into account it would collapse under its own economic irrationality. As Lester Brown points out:

As the world economy expanded some 20-fold over the last century it has revealed a flaw – flaw so serious that if it is not corrected it will spell the end of civilization as we know it. The market, which sets prices, is not telling the truth. It is omitting indirect costs that in some cases now dwarf direct costs. Modern economic thinking and policymaking have created an economy that is so out of sync with the ecosystem on which it depends that it is approaching collapse.

**In summary, this global vicious system is a super-predatory system. It preys on the underlying gift-reciprocity ecosystems and informal social systems that sustain life; destroying them, but, at the same time, is dependent on them for the sustaining of life on earth. It is self-destructive, as Westerners from Polanyi, Schumacher and Barry Commoner to E.O. Wilson and Charles Dilworth have argued, and as indigenous knowledge keepers have been saying for much longer.**

***Part 4: the multiple ways of transformative reconnection and reconciliation today: Gaia citizenship***

If this analysis is correct, then the way to transform this unsustainable system is to engage in what I called ‘transformative reconciliation in Part 1. This is the Indigenous view that the way of transformation is to engage in a multiplicity of prefigurative gift-gratitude-reciprocity practices in relation to the living earth and in relations of mutual aid with other humans, within and against the dominant system.

We have to begin to “be the change” by exercising and enacting our shared responsibilities if we wish to disclose and bring to self-awareness the underlying sustainable world we wish to re-inhabit.

This is how Robert Davidson describes the work of transformative reconciliation

We are now coming full circle, we are the fourth generation in which the white people have instilled their ideas and values, and denied our way of life, without any knowledge or concern of who we were and where we were coming from. It is our generation that is making the attempt to bridge the gap, to reclaim our identity, our cultural values, the philosophies developed by our ancestors for generations and generations. We are also making a great effort to reconnect with the land. The land is the very foundation of our culture. It is our homeland. We were born into it. We are the stewards: it is our right and responsibility to maintain, nurture and preserve it for the future.

The exercise of shared responsibilities in practices of decolonization, resurgence and reconciliation can take place almost anywhere we find ourselves, as Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland have shown in their on-the-ground training sessions in self-determination (Tully Wheel).

## Transformative reconciliation

By self-organising and then beginning to join together, act together, and learn together in conciliatory and sustainable ways with indigenous and non-indigenous people and with the living earth, we begin to *reconnect* – and, in so doing, we sow the seeds of conciliatory and sustainable ways of life in the interstices of the unsustainable hegemonic way of life. As these seeds grow and spread their virtuous relationships and cycles of interdependency and symbiosis, they begin counter-acting the vicious relationships and cycles.

As these practices and networks of alternative modernities grow, they offer an alternative to the unsustainable relationships around them, others join in, and the momentum towards reconciliation and transformation on a larger scale increases.

The logic of this mode of transformation is, if you live your life in such a way that it sustains yourself, and, also, at the same time and place, also co-sustains all your interdependent living neighbours, they will be moved to do the same in gratitude and reciprocity. This is the virtuous gift-gratitude-reciprocity cycle of life sustaining life.

One of the great features of *Kaswentha two row wampum treaty relationships* among diverse partners is that it allows for both independence and interdependence (self-rule and shared rule, or federalism).

In many cases and at different times, as Audra Simpson and Johnny Mack argue, it is crucial for indigenous peoples to engage in grass-roots resurgence practices and networks among themselves, without entering into relationships with settlers.

In other cases and times, it is just as important to be able to enter into relationship of peace and friendship with settlers, link arms and coordinate their activities. As Paul Hawken argues, there are millions of people engaged in such activities and networks around the world; and indigenous peoples are the living heart of this uncoordinated movement of movements.

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On the West coast, for example, there are indigenous-settler, gift-reciprocity networks around the shared problems of violence against women, poverty, the environment, pipelines, fracking, local cooperative food production, land claims, fish farms, education, and so on.

This careful extension of resurgent, gift-reciprocity relationships within groups to nearby groups follows from the basic premise that we are all connected (**Tsawalk**). And the non-subordination and non-domination of each member is reciprocally guaranteed by the “relative independence” dimension of two row relationships.

We are not only interdependent. We also share the same global problems. As we saw in Part 2, there is a remarkable convergence on both the problems we face and the general ways to address them in both indigenous and western traditions of knowledge.

### *Conclusion: the great challenge*

Thus, the great challenge of the twenty-first century is, thus, not so much indifference, as some have argued; but, more importantly, the challenge of the democratic and federal co-ordination of a multiplicity of networks of horizontal and vertical organisations, indigenous, settler and immigrant peoples, and civil and civic citizens – and all this without subordination or assimilation. It is not an easy problem but it is not insoluble.

In my opinion, the logic of coordination of this currently disconnected constituent power from local nodes to global networks is the same general logic as the gift-reciprocity logic that coordinates all forms of life on earth in mutually sustainable ways.

I realize that all this is very sketchy work in progress with all sorts of problems. However, I wanted to present it to you in hopes that it may be of some interest to you and that you might help me with it in further conversations for the next 20 years, as many of you have so generously done during the last 20 years.

## *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*

### *1 Gift, gratitude and reciprocity as exercising shared responsibilities*

I would like to conclude with a brief discussion of a representation of the conciliatory and sustainable social and ecological lifeworld we have to begin to re-connect with in order to transform the unsustainable way of life we have imposed over it. The picture is behind me: *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*. The Haida artist, Bill Reid, and his Haida and non-Haida fellow craftspeople, gave this monumental Haida work of art to Canadians. They gave this gift to Canadians in the hopes that they would take up the responsibility of trying to understand its meaning. Then, as its meaning gradually came alive for them, that they would be moved in gratitude and reciprocity to let it influence their lives. For, it is a picture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous passengers exercising together their shared responsibilities of living in mutually conciliatory and sustainable ways.

### *2 The Spirit of Haida Gwaii here and now*

Haida Gwaii is the “home” or “dwelling place” of the Haida. The “Haida” refers to the people who inhabit these beautiful islands. But, “Haida” also means “human being”. Bill Reid put it this way (Solitary Raven):

As for what constitutes a Haida – well, Haida only means human being, and as far as I’m concerned, a human being is anyone who respects the needs of his fellow man, and the earth which nurtures and shelters us all. I think we could find room in South Moresby [the largest island of Haida Gwaii] for quite a few Haida no matter what their ethnic background.

[He hoped that] these shining islands may be the signposts that point the way to a renewed harmonious relationship with this, the only world we’re ever going to have. Without South Moresby and other places like it, we may forget what we once were and what we can be again,

and lose our humanity in a world devoid of the amazing non-humans with whom we have shared it.

The *spirit* of the *Haida Gwaii*, the title of the sculpture, is the spirit or breath or power that animates Haida Gwaii, the dwelling place and the people who dwell there. The Haida are in dynamic yet “harmonious relationships” with each other and the living earth. This spirit is not unique to them. It is, as he says, the spirit of human beings and the more-than-human beings with whom they share Haida Gwaii. So, what is this spirit?

The *spirit* of Haida Gwaii is fairly easy to see and experience by walking around the work of art, hugging the animals, sitting on the edge of the canoe, talking to them, and so on, just as walking in the woods brings the spirit of the forest to our senses and perception and we feel ourselves coming into attunement with it. Perhaps it is not so easy on the screen. But, if you focus on it, its spirit begins to come to light. The spirit is the gift-gratitude-reciprocity network and cycle we have been talking about all evening.

### *3 Peaceful and friendly conciliation in action*

The passengers embody this *conciliatory spirit* in two main ways. First, they are touching and responding to each other as they conciliate their dynamic, ongoing interactions as they paddle. Second, they are also telling each other their stories from the different perspectives of their different ways of life. These stories remind the speakers and listeners of the interdependency of their different ways of life; the shared ground of their reciprocal well-being. Reid and his co-workers spent months moving the passengers around until their interdependency stood out clearly. Next, the lifeways of the passengers are intertwined and entangled in such complex overlapping ways that they require continuous conciliation. Note that the passengers are animals, but also represent individual human character types, families, clans and myth-creatures.

As Bill Reid stresses throughout his writings on Haida Gwaii, the passengers are indigenous and non-indigenous, humans and animals, and they are surrounded by the ecological diversity of Haida Gwaii. They bring forth and set out the unbelievably rich cultural and biological multiplicity of ways of being on Haida Gwaii and Great Turtle Island and let them be.

We know the members are telling stories because the chief at the center is holding the talking stick. We also know that one of the points of telling and listening to these stories is to

*transform* themselves into the way of life of the story-teller so each can see how the relationships of mutual dependency sustain their unique lifeways from the perspectives of each other; so they are not one-eyed. The transformative power of story-telling is reinforced by placing Raven at the helm. Raven is the transformer. So, humans can only paddle together in sustainable ways that do not tip their canoe if they are constantly listening to and responding to the perspectives of all participants and adjusting themselves accordingly.

The passengers are also in a conciliatory relationship with the living earth. The canoe, made of red cedar, holds them all afloat. It represents mother earth, the ground of being Haida (human) that nurtures and shelters all life (Solitary Raven):

Modern methods of logging mean not just cutting trees but murdering forests – those wonderfully complex organisms which once gone will never return in their ancient form. And in killing the forests, you also kill forever the only authentic link the Haidas still have with their past. You murder once more their symbolic ancestors. That is what I think the land claims are about.

The canoe is located in the ocean as a further reminder of the depth of vision required to see the ecosystems that nurture and shelter. This is part of the stories as well. The talking stick represents all three types of dialogue: the verbal dialogues with each other, the ongoing perceptual and sensory, non-verbal dialogue of humans with the living earth, and the nonverbal communion with the myth-world and ancestors.

The canoe is everywhere humans and non-humans dwell together. Wherever we are, we are symbiotically interdependent in the way the passengers are in the canoe. This is why we have responsibilities to respect each other and our diverse ways of living, because, as a matter of fact, they all support each other, like an old growth forest. But, in order to see this, we need to listen patiently to each other and see how the diversity looks from different perspectives, as they are doing.

Note that the chief has no authority to impose order. Authority to be heard and listened to goes with the talking stick. Whoever holds the stick has the authority to give the gift of their story to others, who listen, and then, on receiving the talking stick, reciprocate by telling their stories in turn. There is no other type of authority on the canoe than the shared authority that emerges out of talking together in peaceful and friendly ways and carrying on in exercising power-together in

paddling. This is the authority-with and power-with that animates and sustains all forms of life, as we have seen. They learn this way of being-with-others from the world around them and replicate it in the canoe. It is same spirit manifest in peace and friendship treaty talks and in relationships between indigenous and settler partners that replicate treaty talks.

We see all sorts of diversity in the canoe and passengers competing and contending for recognition and human forms of power. Yet, for all the foreground agonistics, the canoe does not tip. The paddles are in dynamic equilibrium and the canoe is upright. *This is the miracle of life itself.*

#### *4 Tipping and reconciling the canoe*

As we have seen, this astonishing way of life is not always harmonious. It is as sharp as a knife. The struggles over power and recognition, domination and subordination, greed and destruction, can always get out of hand and overturn the canoe. The passengers know this from their stories. So, they need to know the arts of re-conciliation so things do not get out of hand.

This possibility of tipping points is signaled by the one, non-native crew member, the ancient reluctant conscript. He is the crew member who teaches humans how to survive. When conflict, aggressiveness and voraciousness get out of hand, he refuses to paddle any more, and says “Enough”.

Here is our professional survivor, the ancient reluctant conscript: present, if seldom noticed, in all the turbulent histories of men on earth. When our latter-day kings and captains have joined their forebears, he will still be carrying on, stoically obeying orders and performing the tasks allotted to him. But only up to a point. It is also he who finally says ‘enough’! After the rulers have disappeared into the morass of their own excesses, it is he who builds on the rubble and once more gets the whole thing going.

But, how does she get things going again? What are her skills of re-conciliation? There are no other skills available aboard the Spirit of Haida Gwaii other than the multiple skills of dialogical conciliation represented in the talking stick. There are no instruments of violence, command and obedience, or ruler and ruled. The only way to re-conciliate a tipping canoe and get a conciliatory, sustainable way of life going again is by means of conciliation - as with life itself. Wherever the

breakdown occurs, out comes the talking stick and proto-symbiotic dialogue begins again. And so, as Reid concludes, “the canoe goes on, forever anchored in the same place.”

The *spirit* of Haida Gwaii is thus the spirit or animism of the living earth itself.

### *5 A breathing meditation*

Let's pause for one moment and get in touch with this *spirit* in a brief mediation. Look at the Spirit of Haida Gwaii. Now, focus on and bring yourself back to your breath and your heart. Feel your breath breathing and your heart beating, your whole body adjusting to the changes in the environment of the room. Now cast your mind's eye to everyone breathing in the room together. Now, cast your mind's eye to the trees and plants outside the room breathing in what you exhale and breathing out fresh air for you to re-breathe in turn. Now think of a native drummer beating a drum. The drum beat, as you know, is meant to be in tune with your heartbeat. It brings the drum and your heartbeat into mutual attunement. This is also the heartbeat of all living things, the heartbeat of mother earth. We *sense* ourselves as participants in this shared spirit. This is to *experience* the spirit of Haida Gwaii – of Gaia.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGzGvxvHz2o>