

***In This Together***  
***Fifteen Stories of Truth and Reconciliation*** edited by **Danielle Metcalfe-Chenail**  
Essay breakdown

**The Importance of Rivers | Carleigh Baker** (Writer from Vancouver, BC)

In September 2014, Baker was part of a documentary in which six artists paddled through the Peel River Watershed in the Yukon and Northwest Territory in order to explore the concept of Canadian identity. Fifteen days into the trip they were still five days from Fort McPherson and were already rationing food. This was when they met the Vittrekwas, the first and only people on the river, and lifelong residents of the Peel. The family took them in without hesitation, fed and housed them, and sent them off the next day with enough provisions to get them through the trip. This was Baker's 'aha' moment. She understands that the First Nations have always welcomed foreigners on their land with open arms, and continue to do so today, even as the Peel Watershed was under threat by the Yukon Government.

**Dropped, Not Thrown | Joanna Streetly** (Author from Clayoquot Sound, BC)

Joanna Streetly moved to Tofino as a young woman, fell in love with a Tla-o-qui-at man, and lived among his family for seven years. As a member of the family, she witnessed the discrepancy between Native and non-Native life, and recognized that the lack of overlap created a No-man's-land of mistrust so harsh that once even she escaped danger only because she knew her aggressor's name. This was how she came to understand the power of a name. She believes that, if the Native and non-Native communities are to cross the gulf that separates them, in Tofino and elsewhere, we have to begin with individual relationships, the recognition of people as people.

**Drawing Lines | Erika Luckert** (Writer and photographer splitting her time between Edmonton / New York City)

When Luckert read Treaty 6 for the first time, she was surprised that the only thing defining the land was a single paragraph describing the boundary. Those words mapped the land, changing it irrevocably. She began thinking seriously about the power of those words, and of mapping itself, the way we divide and represent land. This essay details her experiences in realizing the colonial power of maps, and in exploring their potential to re-chart colonized land in a way that recognizes its indigenous past and present.

**Jawbreakers | Donna Kane** (A writer based in Dawson Creek, BC)

Kane lives in the northeast BC, a short distance from where she grew up—on land first homesteaded by her father. It was a point of pride for her for many years, bound up in the notion that a) her parents were hardworking, kind, generous, and tolerant b) the land had never been used by aboriginals in any permanent way c) her affection for the land could not be less profound than that of aboriginals. She was, after all, born here. Four words uttered by a sociology professor when she was 30 revealed a core colonial belief she hadn't recognized in herself. This essay describes this transformative moment and examines the harmful assumptions she'd made.

**This Many-Storyed Land | Kamala Todd** (Filmmaker and community planner based in Victoria, BC)

Growing up Metis in Coast Salish territory, Todd's parents taught her how to decipher the racism and mistruths that saturate everyday life—she has learned to look below the surface of the dominant culture that surrounds us. But her 'aha' moment came when she saw a non-descript little plaque on a downtown Vancouver street commemorating where first Land Commissioner Hamilton "drove a wooden stake in the earth and commenced to measure an empty land into the streets of Vancouver." And so began her ongoing work to transform this terra nullius narrative, to make sure that every person who lives and visits Vancouver clearly sees and understands that Vancouver, like all Canadian cities, is an Indigenous City.

**The Perfect Tool | Zacharias Kunuk** (Producer and director in Igloolik, NWT)

In this as-told-to piece, Kunuk opens up about the 'aha moments' he's encountered living in Canada's Far North about southerners' perceptions and ongoing ignorance. With humour and frankness he talks about everything from climate change to snowy owls to the Franklin Expedition. Kunuk also explores some of the projects he's undertaken and challenges he's encountered as an Inuit filmmaker working in an Indigenous language.

**To Kill an Indian | Steven Cooper with Twyla Campbell** (Twyla is a CBC food critic and freelance writer. Steven is a lawyer heavily involved in Indigenous rights and residential school settlements. Both live in Sherwood Park, AB)

Despite growing up and living amongst the Inuit and First Nations people for over 20, Cooper was oblivious to the existence and impact of residential schools. As a new lawyer in the Northwest Territories he practiced criminal defense work for eight representing hundreds of First Nations clients suffering from every social ill. His 'aha' moment came when he received a phone call in 1997 from a former Coral Harbour classmate that alerted him, for the first time, that there had been a system of residential schools in place in this country for over a century. That phone call forced him to recognize that the dysfunction he'd seen in his clients and friends had an origin, and for the first time I understood what was happening around me.

**Two-Step | Katherin Edwards** (A writer, floral designer and gardener in Kamloops, BC.)

Edwards' essay discusses two 'aha' moments. The first was when she hiked up to the Savona caves, a parkland, created by the (still colonial) BC government in 1996, and home to native pictographs. Seeing the cave art struck her as a permanent authentic testament to who was here first, and left her strangely unsettled, and somewhat concerned if she even had a 'right' to be in what could be seen as sacred territory. The second was in November of 2014, when the transmission of native culture moved to the downtown core of Kamloops with the opening of a new restaurant, The Painted Pony, which is run by two native women and serves up Aboriginal fare. The owner's philosophy of sharing food struck Edwards as a genuine and forgiving gesture. This essay braids these moments, where sharing allows territories to cross and offers a key to the potential of creative healing

**Echo | Carol Shaben** (Journalist and author based in Vancouver, BC.)

In this piece, Shaben explores a fundamental shift in thinking through her relationships with two Indigenous women. The first takes place during her childhood when she assumed she could relate more to 'Echo' because she was outside the Anglo mainstream—a view that was profoundly challenged by 'Rose' when, as an adult journalist, Shaben was trying to help 'Rose' write her life story.

**Mother Tongues | Katherine Palmer Gordon** (Journalist, negotiator and former corporate lawyer. Splits her time between Gabriola Island, BC and New Zealand)

The loss of languages has been perhaps one of the most devastating consequences of settlement in Canada. Palmer Gordon's essay focuses on the importance of mother tongues, and discusses the significant harms of Indigenous children not knowing or having access to their first language, and how language revitalization is an essential step towards growing First Nations' capacity to fulfil their personal and cultural potential on their own terms. The restoration of the active use of indigenous languages is now key to the future of reconciliation in Canada.

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### **White Aboriginal Woman | Rhonda Kronyk** (A historian, writer and editor in Edmonton, AB)

When Kronyk's grandmother applied for Aboriginal status when she was a senior. Many of her family's records had been lost when BC Hydro flooded a large portion of northern British Columbia under Williston Lake, and as a result, her grandmother was informed by an official that her mother "didn't exist." Years later, Kronyk is part of the cadre of Canadians who qualify for status because of Bill C-31, which seeks to eliminate some of the gender discrimination embedded in the Indian Act. The Canadian government fought Bill C-31, even though it conforms to Canadian law on gender discrimination. While these two events were separated by many years, they gave Kronyk insight into inequities that she had not previously recognized.

### **Colonialism Lived | Emma LaRocque** (Scholar, author, poet and professor at University of Manitoba in Winnipeg)

In this searing account of her experiences with racism, LaRocque takes no prisoners in her condemnation of her treatment at Métis day schools and out in broader Manitoba society. She shares how even well-meaning individuals can perpetuate ignorance and white privilege by not engaging with Canada's colonial past and present.

### **Marking the Page | Lorri Neilsen Glenn** (Ethnographer, poet, and writer based in Halifax, NS)

In Canada two centuries of colonialist regulation of identity have parsed distinctions among First Nations peoples, European/British, and the country born, native English, French Métis, Bois Brulé, mixed blood, half-breeds, among other categories. Such distinctions were—and are still—advantageous for settlers claiming a country, its lands and resources, for their own. First Nations sources tell us that up to 50% of Western Canadians have aboriginal blood. Yet, we are all a tapestry of ancestral threads; many of us are both the colonizers and the colonized. Policy distorts—and limits—personal and complex stories of identity. This piece explores pivotal moments in Neilsen Glenn's life that brought to the forefront the meaning of her diluted aboriginal identity, from my school days in The Pas to my work with aboriginal women.

### **Lost Fires Still Burn | Carissa Halton** (A writer based in Edmonton, AB)

In this essay Halton is sparked to look at the child welfare system in Alberta by her husband's work with a young man named Darren, who manages to keep his cool when a white stranger yells at him and spits on his high tops.

### **From Aha! To AHO | Antoine Mountain** (Visual artist based in Toronto, ON.)

Using the form of the medicine wheel, Mountain traces four key aha moments in his path from residential school and racism toward art, faith, and healing.