The Way of the Drum—When Earth Becomes Heart

Part I

Healing the Tears of Yesterday by the Drum Today: The Oneida Language is a Healing Medicine

Grafton Antone

As I travelled the path of life, little did I realize the suppression I was experiencing as an *Ukwehuwe* in my Euro-western formal educational journey. The Western model of human development is linear and has four general domains: emotional, social, physical, and intellectual. This Western model emphasizes physical and intellectual development to meet career standards and personal expectations. The Aboriginal *Ukwehuwe* model of human development is circular and consists of four parts: emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual. The Elders tell us that, to be fully developed, one must maintain balance in all four of these areas. My story shows my development in the Western model. My perseverance afforded me a certain measure of success, but as I passed through the different stages of life, I could sense that there was something missing in my life that I could not explain or identify. It was not until I began teaching the Oneida Language (*Onyota'a:ka*) that I realized what the missing links were. This is my story of discovery, reorientation, and balance.

The information I will share with you is based on my work with various adult students learning Onyota'a:ka as a Second Language in the Toronto School Board. In 1995-96, the class had a high enrolment of 30, but that gradually fell off to about 15. In 1996-97, the class began at 22 then tapered off to 10. In 1997-98, the class went from 18 to 8, and in 1998-99, it went from 16 to 7. Usually, the original group comes to observe and to see if the class meets their expectations. Then those interested continue to come to classes. The faithful eight of the third year formed a friendship outside of the class and communicated with each other. So the group is pretty congenial and homogeneous in the Onyota'a:ka language class. They represent a cross-section of human behaviour and development. They have a strong desire to change their situations.

The Oneida Language is an oral language that is now in the process of being written. Although there are some written materials, it takes a while to find them. Generally, they are hidden, lost in some university library. At one point, I learned that the Language Department at the University of Western Ontario had done some work with the Oneida language in the early 1980s, and I was able to gather that material and use it in the class. The noun-based material I found was mostly geared to the primary-junior level of the elementary system, which, I felt, would be beneficial to the students in our Oneida class. There is a deep "way of life" couched in the Oneida language, and to learn it as a noun-based language makes it difficult when the language is mostly verb-oriented, guided by actions. I have discovered that some of the young people in my home community have managed to acquire the language through a culture and language immersion school called the *Tsi ni yu kwa li ho t^* (*t^* sounds like "on"). The

curriculum stresses the importance of knowing who they are as *Ukwehuwe* and their relationship to creation.

My experiences with teaching and learning the language began abruptly when I was hired to teach the people signed up for the first Toronto urban Oneida class in 1995. The teaching schedule was based on two-hour classes twice a week. My outline began at ground zero (no one speaks or knows the Oneida language) with the greeting "*shekoli*" (hello) and with a brief circle sharing of our names, origins, and expectations. A handout introducing the alphabet and outlining ten basic lessons was given to the class. I also informed them about the scarcity of Oneida teaching materials that I had at that time. Finding a set of Oneida language books was a high priority.

My goal was to teach the language from a cultural base. The first major work we studied was the "Thanksgiving Address" by Enos Williams, a Cayuga speaker. We began translating the "Address" in class. Everyone participated in reading and learning the English part. As the translation work proceeded, I began to learn of the deep mystery that dwells deep within the language. I had to think of the words, the meanings, and write them down. Whenever I got stuck on some wording, I would call my mother for some help in the language. She helped but said that she did not exactly know the particulars of the Thanksgiving Address. So I struggled away at it. I handed out each page I translated to the class to read and learn. The following is a part of the wording that comes before all else:

TAHETWANAHELATU S^KWAYATIS^
Thanksgiving Address (We give thanks to Creator)

S^kwayatis^ wahat^'nikuhlisane' tsi né tyotkut tahetwanuhelatu
It was decided by Our Creator that we should always give thanks

nu' k^ke ^twatyataloluk' ahti ohnikalihotu.
whenever we gather for any reason.

Né kwi onah y^:he' twatl^na:yah'ha.
We turn our voices toward him.

Né ohutsyáke tyotsyel^ht^ ^twatloli, ukwa:nulha tsi
We speak first of the Earth, Our Mother that

tey^kí'sniheh. Ne e:s^ tyonkiyahwihé
supports us. From her we obtain many things:

Ne onéklasuha teku'íh^s kale kaska:wáy^'tsi kayon
The different grasses and bushes that

ty^kiyawi'he honuhkwat
give us medicine

As I was translating these beautiful words, I found that the language was having a transforming effect upon my way of thinking. *S^kwayatis^*, "the one who made us," opened my mind to another way of saying "God," expressed in the word "Creator." Then came the first action of Creator: *wahat^'nikuhlisane*, "he made up his mind (decided)," "he decided." Decided what? *Tahetwanuhelatu,* "that we should give thanks to Creator for: people meeting," *ohutsyake ukwanulha, onuhkwa'hoku, onekanúshoku, kutily, olutásu, oneklasu, wahni'talu, latisakayutes, kaye niyukwetak, otsistokweha, khale Skanyutaliyo.* This is a beautiful new way of re-imagining the world; it is a whole new philosophy of the earth as mother, showing that all things are connected, related, and dependent upon each other. These words brought me to a realization that much of our culture is revealed inside the language. I was now seeing what the Elders had spoken of many years earlier. Only now can I see, smell, and feel the roses along the pathway of life.

Someone brought in the "Iroquois Creation Story" written in English, and this became our next working text for translation into Oneida. Again we faced the challenge of finding the words to make this story work for us. The story begins like this:

TSI TYO TASAWUH OHUTSIAKE
The Iroquois Creation Story

Wahunisek^ kaloh tsi lonanaklat^ ukwehuwe, né ok
Long before there were human beings, there were Sky People.

Latiluyakelo. Kaluyake tatinaklekwe. Yah ne tewanitale né t^.
They dwelled in the celestial world. In those days there was no . . .

Well, teaching the Oneida Language became a real gold mine of searching and writing. When I first began, I was not very good at writing the language. The sounds all seemed to be the same to me. I would ask the class to listen to what I was saying and to tell me which sounds went with the language; so it was a collaborative effort. They listened and helped me to write it down. So they learned too. They could feel the energy flowing through the classes.

The second part of my presentation deals primarily with healing our Native people who attended residential schools and/or were removed from their home reserves by the Children's Aid Society and subsequently adopted out to non-Native families. Many of these people lost their language and culture, so the traditions were lost. The foreign residential school model broke the family connections. When the children were returned to their families, they were unable to cope with the changes. In their teens by that time, they often left the reserves to look for work in the towns, lumber camps, or mills. When these young adults decided to raise children of their own, they discovered that they lacked the skills of loving and caring for their little ones because they had not experienced the tender care and love that their parents, grandparents, and extended families would

have afforded them as children. They could only identify with the matrons who had watched over them and made sure they stayed in their beds and slept alone. "Alone" became a way of life. Soon they lost their own children to the Children's Aid Society, and the cycle of alienation from the family and extended family began again. The second generation lost their children, but this time it was harder for the children to come back. The survivors migrated to large urban centres, towns, and cities.

One of the greatest mistakes Native people made was to drink alcohol; whether it was beer, wine, or whisky, it all did the same thing. Liquor got the Native people (Indians) drunk, and that was the beginning of their degradation. Soon they were alcoholics, losing their jobs, their dignity, and, most of all, their sense of identity. People gave "Indians" a bad name, putting them down with all kinds of negative and dirty names. Shamed and destroyed, the Native people struggled on.

Some, however, were able to steer themselves away from the drug-and-alcohol road and find wholeness and identity. It was these people who saw the terrible conditions that Native people were locked into in the urban centres and who began doing something about it by founding friendship centres, health centres, and resource centres for Native people. And it was at these new centres that the Native people started to talk about who they were, where they came from, and what they needed to do to become true Aboriginal people again. They found that they needed to learn their ways and learn their own languages from the Elders and to practice the ceremonies performed long ago by their grandparents. This was the new way to regain the lost identity of this new-found people. Today, Elders come in from reserves, bringing their healing medicines with them, to teach the old ways to the urban Natives.

The United Church of Canada, a union formed in 1925 of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational Churches, in which I am a minister, participated in running residential schools. It therefore has a responsibility to give back full health to Native people. For me, this healing began in 1970 when I chose to raise my family in a better way and needed the help of a spiritual discipline to teach me the family values I required to best fulfil my hopes and dreams of raising my family in a good way.

For the next 15 years, I worked diligently to promote the Christian values I had learned, teaching the children and all who came to listen at the Oneida United Church. Then I was asked by the Church Presbytery to consider going back for more education in order to become an ordained minister. Along the way, I discovered what the Church had done to Native people in Canada and the United States historically. In 1985, Alberta Billie, a Native person from Vancouver Island, challenged the United Church of Canada to apologize to the Native people for all the horrific things done to them. So at Sudbury in 1986, the Church apologized "for trying to make the Indian People in the image of the European People – Canadians" and asked for our "forgiveness" (United Church of Canada, 1986). Well, we thought about it for a while and said, an apology is only as good as the actions that follow; show us what you mean. Out of this showing, I learned

about the grievous residential school experiences of many of our Native people. Things had to be fixed.

As part of the fixing, a healing program was begun by the United Church to help Native people regain their wholeness from the fragmenting effects of residential school. At Council Fire in 1999, we did three healing workshops. We searched for a Native healing paradigm. We found and made up our own: Advertise the Need; Name the Reason; Teach our Native Ways of Healing by the Elders; Bring the Drum to call the people together; Sing our songs of memory; Sing our songs of pain; and Sing our new songs of healing; Eat our traditional foods; then Give a healing present to all—a Traditional Give-away. We did all these things in the healing workshops and that is the message I bring today.

Healing is found in our language. Healing is found in our stories. Healing is found in listening to our Elders. Healing is found in education. Healing is found in our traditional ceremonies. Healing is found through the drumming, singing, and dancing. Healing is found in the traditional foods of our Nations. Healing our emotional, our mental, our physical and our spiritual aspects—all these bring me back to you.

The third part of this journey deals with the work I did with my friend who invited me to this conference to share in this presentation. We began with the traditional Native introduction circle, where each person tells briefly who he or she is and where he or she comes from. I come from On^yota'a:ka Nation located on the Thames river. I am wolf clan. I have my Oneida Language. I sing; I dance; I teach; I am happy to be here.

I wanted to get deeper into the culture, which is why I began to attend Iroquois social drum singing practices at the Toronto Native Canadian Centre in 1998. The first song we learned was the "Standing Quiver" dance. This song was sung by the men leaving or returning from a hunt. When the lead hunter decided to go, he would announce it and place one arrow in the centre of the village. Soon other young men came and placed their quivers with his. Then they would leave, and as they went, they sang the song: *Ye yoh HEH, Ye yoh HEH, ye yo HEH . . .*

Another social song we learned, "Alligator Dance," probably came from our brothers in the south, the Seminole nation.[1] They lived down in Florida, where there were alligators. The story goes that, as the Ukwehuwe walked through the everglades hunting or travelling, the warriors guarded the women as they travelled along near the waterways. Whenever an alligator came out after them, they would pull the women out of danger:

HO YA NEH HO YA NEH, HO YA NEH HO, HO YA NEH HO YA NEH
HO YA NE HO. yo ho WI YE, yo ho, WI YE,
HI YA WAY HO YA NEH yo ho WI YE
WAY HOO YA WAY HOO YA yo ho WI YE
WAY HO YA NEH WAY HO YA NEH yo ho WI YE

Another dance we learned early on was the "Round Dance." This dance was common to most of the First Nations, and even now when we sing this song, people like to join in because of the friendly nature of the movements and steps. As part of my recovery of our Ukwehuweh ways, I wish to sing this Drum song to you all as an honour song—one verse of "Round Dance":

Hi yo hi yo ha hee o hi ya…
Hi yo yo hey ya ho hi yo hi ya…
Yo ha no hey yo ha no hey yo ho hi ya…
Yo ha way hay yo ha way hey yo ho hi ya…

The songs began a new healing for those of us who were learning the depth and strength of the social dances and discovering their power to lift up the spirits of the people who listened to the music and danced at the socials. The good spirit is very present when this dance is performed.

Our group eventually began to sing at various events in Toronto, and the people seemed to have so much fun because of the prayers and the spiritual impact the songs were having on them. The spirit of fun in dancing the Iroquois social dances is contagious. Other dances we sing at the socials are: "Women's Dance," "Duck Dance," "Rabbit Dance," "Robin Dance," "Old Moccasin," "Smoke Dance," and "Unity Stomp." When we sing and dance, we go in the Iroquois direction, counter clock-wise. This is because when Sky Woman first came to Turtle Island, she followed the Sun; therefore, Iroquois people now go in that direction too.

The fourth part of my story is to thank all of you who came and shared your journey with us here in this circle. It is not often that we are able to gather from so wide an area, all over this Turtle Island and beyond. I give thanks to the Creator for you all and wish you a happy stay here and a safe journey home.

We give thanks for our mother earth, for all the plants, for all the medicines, all the trees, all the waters, all the living animals, and all the birds, and for the thunderers, the Sun our elder brother, our grandmother moon, our ancestors the stars, for the four beings who watch over us, for the prophets, and for Creator. Yah W^Ko.

Part II

When Earth Becomes Heart—"Oral Tradition" is the Best Medicine

Lois Provost Turchetti

At first contact, some of the original people of the Caribbean described themselves as Taino, which means "good person" or "true human being."[2] At that time, there were at least 34 indigenous language groups in the Caribbean. These people also called themselves *Caribs, Arauaks,* and *Hohodene*. As *Hohodene*, they are distantly related to the *Hodenesonee* and *Dene* nations. Today, *Taino* is used broadly to refer to the Indigenous Caribbean peoples. *Taino* languages are related to the Athapaskan family and are being revitalized by at

least two distinct *Taino* nations. In *Xaymaka* or *Yamaye* (Jamaica), the Maroons are a distinct, independent, and sovereign nation, the offspring of *Arauak* (*Taino*) and several African nations (Coromantee, Berber, Fullah, and others). Their spoken language reflects Taino, Coromantee, Berber, Fullah, and other influences and is distinct from the Jamaican language of the rest of the island, which is derived from a combination of Taino, Ashanti, Spanish, English, French, and the language influence of inter-island migrations. Sacred aspects of Taino culture honoured by the Maroons are also honoured as Jamaican "national" cultural symbols. I am speaking, then, as an indigenous person born in Xaymaca-Yamaye of Chinese, Asian Indian, French, African, Italian, German, South American, Jewish, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, and Maroon-Taino blood and culture, and I am speaking about oral tradition "writing" and ways of seeing and knowing as documents.

It is said that Indigenous and Aboriginal First Nations peoples have no written language, and this is true depending on what one means by "written." Apart from the carved "written" picture-words of the Incas, Mayas, Aztecs, Mi'kmaq, and others, a sacred "written" oral-aural tradition language system also exists in petroglyphs, pictograms, and other forms. Here is the story of how I came to study this "written" art.

As a child at a Methodist school, I learned about the great dream of freedom, a place where we would meet all our ancestors. But I only began to see myself in these stories after hearing the story, told by a Rabbi, of the "Good Samaritan" who was a Rastafari. I am not going to tell you that the Rabbi came to be at the Methodist school as an interfaith collaboration. I am not going to talk about how Taino teachings led to Maroon and Rastafari ones. I am not going to tell you about Maroon-Taino cultural symbols or share how Maroon peoples came to Nova Scotia and how some of them became related to the Mi'kmak or how Canadian cod became Jamaica's national dish. Instead, I will share what I have learned about our ancient writing, using a mixture of oral-aural and written-visual tradition styles.

Somehow, in growing up, I entered the world of books and lost the rich Indigenous history into which I was born. I was ashamed to be born Jamaican, for Jamaicans have been stereotyped with a lot of negative labels...another instance of "downpression." To explain, in Rastafari tradition, "word, sound, and power" are the breath of Creator as well as other things. In mainstream Western culture, turning things around is often called "balance" or "inversions." The term "oppression" is orally spoken and aurally heard as "up-pression;" it makes no sense to an oral-aural people because it is really a way of keeping people down, so "oppression" becomes "downpression" to restore a sense of meaning and right order. The same language play in word warfare and fair-war is used for resistance or immunity (protection), and healing is part of oral-aural tradition where words are magical throughout the Americas.

I married, worked for a while, then resigned and went back to school so I could learn how to share my people's stories in our Jamaican language. For those university assignments, I used to dream stories, write them down, and

share them in my assignments and in storytelling in schools. Things were going great until one evening in 1994 when a car crashed into the back of the one I was driving. Worse than the physical injuries were the neurological ones; the doctors called it a mild concussion, but I lost my dreams and could not find words to express my thoughts. I was often dizzy, my ears would begin ringing, and sometimes I had trouble finding my way home. I became anaemic, sleep deprived, and disoriented. The doctors were not able to help, and my health got worse. Since the days of the Tainos, most people of Xaymaca have honoured Creator. So I asked Creator, "I am a good person, why is this happening to me?"

In the end, I refused to have any more tests or go to any more doctors. If I was to live, I was ready to accept life. If I was to die, I was ready to accept death. That was my decision. But the worst threat to my life, the sickness of my body, was suddenly healed when an Elder of our congregation at the Nazarene Church put oil on my forehead and, with my husband and others who gathered round, prayed for me. It was like finding out that life means love. I give thanks for this, but that is another story. My neurological problems did not go away, but that same night in 1996, I started dreaming again. Night after night, I would scramble out of bed to draw the dream picture-words on paper—my husband did not get much sleep. There was an intricate country of mountains and lakes, a "game" of freedom and choice, and stories upon stories to be told. One of them, a story of "civilization," tells how people get caught up relying on their own power that "civilization" changes to "vilification." It begins:

> *Once, long ago, the ancients knew, the power of One begins with you.*
> *Words of life come from your lips,*
> *you have the world at your fingertips.*
> *Back-to-back you laugh, face-to-face you fight....*

In these picture-words, I saw the myths—the truth-telling—of my many ancestors and others, and I saw ways of thinking in patterns and families. I learned that people overcome their differences by dreaming together. At the same time, rock art "writing" kept turning up everywhere, and I was drawn to it because in those drawings I recognized the dream-pictures I had scribbled. By working with the glyphs (as I came to call them), I slowly learned to express myself in words again. People suggested selling these ideas for video games...but the dream of freedom cannot be bought, and it is not for sale.

With no budget, over the next four years I studied the glyphs, systematically analyzing and categorizing the encyclopaedic knowledge I found that they reflected so I could answer, in their own terms, those who asked questions about my work. I talked with people from Rapa Nui (Easter Island) to Hopiland to British Colombia and the Territories. I wrote to the government, to organizations and institutions in Canada.[3] Most listened, but no one agreed or offered to help. Still, what I found seemed good. So I began again to share my stories with anyone who would listen and to write these things up so that children and families could learn the origins of the ancient holographic civilization of our Indig-

enous and Aboriginal Peoples and find a bridge between past and future. As I tried to explain the language patterns of the "written" characters to others, I discovered that most Native peoples had lost their language and could not see the glyphs in this way, but I still wanted to share the exciting things I had learned.

It is said that the ancient rock writing was the scribbling of the little people, or the writing of visitors from other countries—even from other planets—and that the drawings were the recorded dreams of ancient healers-in-training. But not all the rock "writing" preserved today consists of the vision quest originals. Some are secularized, copied, or vandalized versions, overwritten so that the rock becomes a kind of palimpcest. The originals were done by ancient Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples on this continent and in the off-shore territories such as the Caribbean "continent of islands." Some of it is over 8,000 years old. It occurs across the land in styles unique to each culture and artist, and it is not syllabics.

I do not use copies of the original glyphs because I respect the ancient artists and because the originals are sacred to Indigenous and Aboriginal First Peoples. I use the "roughs" by which, in my recovery, my family helped me come to a new way of seeing. I drew them free-hand in a circle around points and lines that formed what looked to me like a leaf and a star. The drawings, different yet similar, show how word families are related. This is as important now as it was when the first glyphs were done. "Perfect" images limit our potential for creative seeing, and so wherever poems, sculptures, songs, paintings, dances, or stories are "told," the "speaker" cannot separate "words" from the Aboriginality of spirit that touches and moves the "listener" from the heart. Because of this, myths and poetry created with the ancient words serve as an interdisciplinary, intercultural way of teaching, and so the spoken and "written" depend on each other. This is evident in the central role of the creative arts in Native education.

Because Western educators were raised under the influence of written traditions, it is often hard for them to think in mythical ways. Therefore, they ask, "What is the grammatical structure of the language? Is it noun-based or verb-based?" They completely miss the point. To me, glyph writing seems gerund-based, as in the sentence: "Singing entrances children." Apart from this, as far as I can tell, Indigenous language has a mythical rather than a logical structure. It is a mythographical and esoteric way of communicating that involves free play, spontaneity, and improvisation. I call it "mythical" or mythographical thinking, from "mythos," a term I learned from Dr. Hugh Parry, one of my teachers in the magic of storymaking. Its simple sophistication and relational shifts, called "shifting perspectives" by philosophers and psychologists, make it seem complex to those outside the tradition.

In this language, there are nine basic "characters" or "words." Each of these has two forms: "individual" and "community," so that there are 18 in all. Each word is a condensed short form with its own meaning, but it can also mean many other words, a whole thought, or a whole story with different potential meanings within each culture. This linguistic feature of ancient languages is

called "multivalence." No matter how she might try, a storyteller knows that the awesome mystery of how language connects thought and action cannot be fully explained, so she uses examples to demonstrate her meaning and breathes a mythstory in the process.

The characters occur in "families" of four, and the relations between them reflect the magic of mythtelling. The first one can be used in place of any of the others to create the beginning and end of each string of words, or it can be used as a punctuation sign (Figure 1). The other three are mother, father, and child. The last one is "person" or "human being" (Figure 2). It is "you," "man" and "woman," "boy" and "girl," "mothers and daughters," "fathers and sons," "grandparents," and "friends and family together." For example, "star" and "leaf," the chief cultural "relations" of this continent, describe two ways of thinking. In the south, the men are face-to-face, and the women are back-to-back. They are so close together they reflect "united states." In the north, the women are face-to-face, and the men are back-to-back; they are separated and reflect a state of "dominion." Put together, these are the "grandparents" (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 1. Punctuation Mark

Figure 2. Person or Human Being

Note: Remembering that the petroglyphs and pictograms are sacred writings of the First Peoples, the representations here are stylizations only. The actual characters have as many different forms as there were artists. All in all, "reading" Indigenous/Aboriginal "character sets" is a lesson in contemplation, in being general and specific in centering, decentering, and recentering ourself around our origins, and in knowing that the only thing that is certain is that there is much we do not know.

Figure 3. Grandparents, Twins

Figure 4. Grandparents, Twins

It is a fact that students do better at their studies and have a stronger sense of who they are when they have access to the spoken and written forms of their

Native language. In this light, they can see themselves and others and many cultures, and they can begin to dream their creative potential in their own words.

In the rock "writing," the word "stone" is also "earth" and "land." There is a Toronto valley filled with the deep quiet of the high mountains and the stories of the Hodenesone and the Mississauga, the two original peoples there. Looking south, "readers" can see the Hodenesone story of Keel Nose/Broken Nose who challenged Creator and had the mountain fall on him, or the story where he broke his nose against the mountain, depending on the version you know. Within the man, they can also see a young woman, Peacemaker's mother, giving birth. From the west, they can see the three eagles of the Mississaugas…if we do not tell the old-old stories, as our proverbs say, the very land will "speak" of them.

In another story, Peacemaker crossed the water in a stone boat. Now, the Taino word for the sacred silk cotton tree—the tree of life—is "ceiba," which means "stone." In other global Indigenous cultures the ceiba, which lives hundreds of years, is also the sacred tree of life. Other plants live in its branches, and all animals and birds rest in its shade. The Hopi carved kachina and the Taino carved zemis from it. Tainos and Mayas planted it at the centre of their towns and in the four directions as a living Medicine Wheel. Today, there are still ceiba canoes in Xaymaca-Yamaye. As the ceiba leaf is the "star," so "tree," which is "stone" when it becomes petrified over thousands of years (like the talking stone in our opening circle), is also "head," "hand," and "heart," for we are "stone" and "tree," and these are our relations. Now, in places like Manitoulin Island there are singing stones. In Trinidad in the 1930s, youth searching for themselves made the first "steelpan drum." It seems they "accidentally" picked up the patterns of the singing stones, which sound like the voice of many waters. But in the pattern of the steelpan bowl, one can see the "eye," the "globe," and the "turtle shell" drum. Today, if the audio is turned on during an echogram of the heart, the patient can hear the heart's music, like the steelpan drum beat memories in the blood, a sound resonating through our bodies.

If some people think this way of teaching seems "pan-Indian," let them remember that mythical thinking, or mythographical thinking, shows things held in common where there are many ways of seeing and knowing. It prevents stories from becoming fixed and isolated and lets a child honour all her relations. In Toronto, I have shared these stories in interdisciplinary, intercultural relations/recreation with students in Public, Catholic, and Hebrew schools and at the college level. Something special happens as our questions and answers become related in just the way we need to hear. For that moment, we are "family." But sometimes family is divided—I wrote a healing "Shore Love Song," the beginning and ending of which are:

Waves weave songs of shore love humbly, humbling, calling out your name,
Mountains rising from inertia, answering, witnessing our pain.
Beaten, silenced, lonely, weeping, in the earth's song with the dawn
Tender hoping, fiercely hoping, with the light waves that are born...

And the secret, sacred silence, of this sure song from the start,
Speaks the Spirit's great desire for the mountains of my heart.
Wind and water wishing, kissing, children loving from the soul
Make us certain, surely certain, we are part and we are whole.

In our presentation at the conference, Grafton and I alternately shared stories and our songs and learning, as in a dialogue. We chose this format because oral-aural tradition thinking and speaking is a traditional medicine that can create wholeness when individuals dialogue in community. Oral-aural tradition is the only traditional medicine that is protected by law in the United States as "freedom of speech" and in Canada as "freedom of religion and freedom of culture." It is a beautiful way to wholeness because a word is a mediator between what a child thinks and what she speaks, across the borders of communities and between the boundaries of individuals. Face-to-face, oral-aural traditions can change how we see each other and ourselves. This is something to teach our children; it is our birthright.

Despite its power, oral-aural tradition mythical thinking and speaking is endangered. As children come to rely more and more on texts and computational logical thinking, future oral tradition ways of life are threatened. When I was growing up, Granny said we should live so that "the circle be unbroken." Rastafari teachings were part of Jamaica's music, but I would not sing Bob Marley's "Buffalo Soldier,"[4] his dream of our people's Jamaican Maroon-Taino history. Today, I sing it with a new heart. Grafton and I trust that you will contact us about our work by email at grafton.antone@primus.ca or magei@netrover.com.

I give thanks for everyone who joined in our presentation, for oral-aural tradition ways of seeing, and for Grafton's songs, stories, and drumming. I thank Hugh Parry, Jan Rehner, Arthur Haberman, Randy Scott, Susan Swan, and Vivian Darroch-Lozowski, who helped me return to mythical thinking, and Elijah Harper, Joe Hester, Grafton Antone and his partner Eileen Antone, Frances Sanderson, Lilian McGregor, Dawn Martin Hill, Laara Fitznor, Andrew Reuben, Linda Godfrey, and Anthony Aarons, who helped me dispel the false myth that my learning was the product of a storyteller's wild imagination. I would like to leave you with a Taino prayer that I am learning, but I know only the translation of one word, Hadonai, that is, "Let it be so." For all my relations, thank you. Pilama. Miigwec.

Notes

[1]Seminoles and Maroons share similar African and Aboriginal heritage, and, in Jamaica, the crocodile is part of the Arauak mythological legacy.

[2]I learned this in conversation with Anthony Aarons, a retired indigenous archaeologist from Jamaica who has worked throughout the Caribbean and who now lives in Toronto.

[3]To name a few, I wrote to Prime Minister Jean Chretien's office; to Sheila Copps, the Minister of Culture; to my Provincial M.P.P.; to the Mayor of Toronto; and to the Canadian Heraldic Society at the Governor General's Office. I showed my

drawings to individuals from the Ontario Heritage Foundation. I had telephone conversations with representatives of the Royal Canadian Mint and Canada Post, with the Coast Guard and the Agricultural Research Station at Vineland, and I spoke with and wrote to the Manitoba Native Languages Association and Saskatchewan Federated Indian College.

[4]Beneath the overt lyrics of "Buffalo Soldier," a song described on the CD jewel case as the "cruelly ironic story of black men conscripted to the Union army to kill Indians," was Marley's vision as Rastafari prophet and spirit warrior. Marley sang also of Rastafari's traditional silence about part of their identity as an Arauak-Afrikan-Spanish people: "When I analyze the stench, to me it makes a lot of sense, how the Dreadlock Rasta, was a Buffalo Soldier. "driven from de mainland to the heart of the Caribbean.… If you know your history, you will know where you're coming from.…" After the Maroon Wars of the 1600's, the British exiled about 600 Maroons from Jamaica to Nova Scotia where they worked alongside the British, following Maroon strategies for survival. They became part of Canada's history. When some Maroons later moved to Sierra Leone, those who had intermarried with the Miq'Mac stayed with their families. The dreadlocks hairstyle was a mark of the warrior in some Afrikan and American societies. Later to the south, when some Afrikan-Americans with dreadlocks allied themselves with the U.S. army (the same Maroon strategy), Plains Peoples called them "Buffalo Soldiers." This was echoed later in Martin Luther King's human rights teachings. Marley saw himself in this unspoken legacy of Indigenous resistance as immunity and healing. For his and other mixed-blood-and-culture people, Bob Marley encoded this lyrically: 'Then you wouldn't have to ask me who the heck do I think I am. I'm just a Buffalo Soldier, in the heart of America…" His song continues the unspoken legacy of Indigenous music as resistance or immunity and healing for his mixed-blood-and-culture people. "Buffalo Soldier," "Legend—the best of Bob Marley and the Wailers," Tuff Gong, Island Records, 1984.

Reference

United Church of Canada. (1986). Apology statement to Native Congregations by General Council August 15, 1986. In *Children of the dancing sun, Volume X.* Toronto: United Church of Canada.