

we are all treaty people

*after Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015*

150 years of responsible
government

meant to
govern responsibly
instead

100 years of residential
'schools'

armed authorities
came for your children
coerced onto
trains of tears
terrain of fears
to reign over
assimilation

now
truth & reconciliation
yours & ours
to rue the reckless nation
of our own history
truer than a reconstruction
of myth making
'here be dragons' to fill our
voids of ignorance
but today's demon's
disguised in plain sight
protected by privilege
insidious intolerance with
a smile

too rude to wreak silly notions
of superiority now we
are schooled in the
residential devastation
we forged & wrought
bars of iron
filigreed with
best intentions

emigration does not absolve
me as citizenship impartial
cannot be partial
fixes us to our past &
present holds us to our
words entreats we embrace
the binds & bounds of treaties
obligations not
odd litigations resisting the
fair & equal in truth
first

to reconcile
without sacrament or penance
let us not fall to knees
to beg or pray but
stand tall together as
we listen to the
truth of a killer nation
this land
the dust of your ancestors
infuses each breath
yours & mine

Elder Barney Williams
explains

*from sea to sea
when i listen
the voices of ancestors
yours mine
in a different dialect*

*my understanding
from a place & time
of no english spoken
my grandmother
born in the 1800s
chose me to be keeper
of our knowledge*

we must embrace

ceremony
the laws
of our people

Shirley Flowers marks

the schools' intent
to change people
make them like others
not fit

today we learn
to decolonize

despite us
you persist & lead
speak
truth to reclaim a nation

listening
my story grows
hearing
we with the land are rewritten

damian lopes
poet laureate, City of Barrie

present to Barrie City Council
for Poetry City on 10 april 2017