

Greetings to all who may read these reflections,

Three weeks have now past since the 'Burning' for the coastal Ancestors, which took place at Conn Bay on Xwe'etay/Lasqueti Island. A profound experience for those attending, and a literally epic and historical ceremony that had not taken place on the island for well over 200 years!

For these past weeks I have been reflecting upon the many layers of visible and invisible realities that the human family lives within. I reflect on the fact that many of us experience being individually and collectively 'broken' in many ways. Feeling unheard. Disappeared. Forgotten. Like many of our Ancestors, generations of families and tribes, who have walked upon the "Earth's Blanket" before us.

I observe the fragmentation and division of many families, communities and nations, for a myriad of reasons, these last few years particularly. Difficulty has arisen in being able to really communicate honestly - to listen to and feel heard by others in a kind and respectful manner on considerations that question the 'official' 'state' 'dominant culture' narrative on any number of current and critical topics. The standard political tactics of 'divide and conquer' have been extremely successful and the human family now finds itself at a crossroads with a choice to be made. Either to come together through mutual recognition of the value and sacredness of every human heart and soul, regardless of ethnicity or diverse perspectives and opinions on what is real, true or 'fake', or the alternative of abrupt societal and climate collapse. More wars, or respectful reconciliation through truth and history unmasked.

Willie Pierre spoke powerfully on behalf of the Ancestors spiritually present at the Burning ceremony. Respectfully, I paraphrase the message. It is time to stop scrapping and share the land. Understand what this means to share and to respect the sentience and intelligence of every living creature, plant and blade of grass. Understand the history of the land. Open to, and understand the wisdom and acquired knowledge of those who have lived before us. On Xwe'etay, and the entire planet.

The generosity of the ceremonial hosts — Hereditary Chief Mark Recalma, (unable to attend in person), his sister, Kim Recalma-Clutesi, Willie Pierre and Bill White — was both humbling and inspiring to witness. I remember Kim telling me decades ago that within her cultural world, one's wealth was determined by what one could give away. A profound counterpoint to our current social values that seek to accumulate and hold on to more and more of this and that!

The Burning for and feeding/feasting the Ancestors demonstrated this wealth of spirit, memory, and respect. 60 cedar plates and platters crafted by some of the Islanders were laden with traditional foods and placed on the Burning table with ritual, prayers and invitation to the Ancestors. Many blankets were burned and gifted to bring warmth and comfort to those in the world the living rarely see. Many generous people contributed to the preparing of dry cedar fire wood for the Burning and preparing the site. Kind souls came with quiet, open hearts to observe, pray, and listen.

Two nights before the ceremony, a strange, low, deep rolling thunder crossed this area. The next day was the first steady rain ALL day that I have experienced in this area for a very long time. The day of the ceremony, no rain or wind. Quiet. Leaving no concern for the safety of the land surrounding the fire. It felt that a huge blessing was blanketing the island of Xwe'etay.

Many people contributed to a most beautiful feast at the Community Hall following the Burning ceremony. Huge effort was put into this extraordinary day and many deserve to be thanked. Dana and her lovely family. Those who prepared the site and those who drove and transported people from the ferry to the ceremonial site and back again!

My personal regret of that day is that I didn't speak when Dana made the invitation to all in attendance for the community meal. My own history on Xwe'etay began when I was 5 years old, arriving with my parents and new born sister from Lulu Island in the Fraser River where my Dad had been log salvaging for a few years and then decided to become a fisherman and move up the coast.

Xwe'etay has always felt like my spiritual home in this lifetime. I met Gerry, my life partner there. The souls of our two daughters arrived through us on the island. I walked often alone from Johnson's Lagoon to the school in Grade 1. That was kind of scary in the winter!!!! My family left the island to move to Hornby Island, but I returned when I was 19 and Laurence offered me the opportunity to live on the land he was the steward of. Gerry and I had the greatest hippy wedding in 1975 with most island residents in attendance!!! Marcy made a 3 layer cake the shape of the island, covered with flowers. Such rich, precious memories imprint my soul from those times. I am sorry I didn't take the opportunity to give my personal thanks to all gathered, and the Ancestors, who I often felt the presence of, throughout my decades of coming and going from the island. THANK YOU to ALL who contributed so much to the experiences we shared that day. It was also very special to see old friends and acquaintances, some not seen for years!

My life has been enriched for many decades through a deep friendship with Kim and I regret not taking the opportunity to acknowledge the generosity, skill and grace she has demonstrated at numerous gatherings, events, conferences, and ceremonies over the years. Together and with others in the late 90's we organized two large events in Parksville and Qualicum. "The Land is the Culture", and "Putting Our Hands Together - Toward Understanding". The intention of both was to build bridges of respect between Indigenous and relative new comers to these lands. Without the efforts, patience and commitment provided by Kim and her family, these past events and this present gift of 'The Burning' would not have happened.

A final thought for now. This ancient ceremony of 'Burning' carries deep healing potential, on many levels. I have personally experienced recently that if healing prayers and sessions are to be effective, the recipient of the healing needs to be willing to 'receive' the healing. This is not an intellectual exercise or concept, but an invitation to fully embrace the miraculous through the power of Love. It is through the willingness to receive, that the gift of healing can be realized.

The willingness to surrender identification with suffering and walk through the gate to a new paradigm of real change and healing through truth and reconciliation with self...and each other.

"The Burning" on Xwe'etay on May 6, was ironically the day of coronation for the King of colonization!!!! May the healing inherent in the remembering and feeding of the Ancestors through the Burning ceremony be embraced by all who attended, either in body or spirit. May the healing be received through receptive hearts, that in the future of "putting our hands together", we understand that the land IS the culture and IS the foundation of human relationships, on our shared, magnificent planet Earth.

My heart remains full to overflowing with gratitude to have been able to participate and witness that grace filled day of May 6, 2023 on the island of Xwe'etay.

Sincerely....and always.....Maureen campbell-curle