

## On the Restoration of an Indigenous Fisheries

Genesis starts with water, fresh and salt—  
Tides impossible to halter—or halt;  
And with fins and gills, or flesh in shells—  
And with plankton, seaweed (that dried is dulce)—

And with fishers employing nets and spears—  
And then, paddling canoes, suave mariners,  
All coasting original, Native shores—  
Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific (of course),

And the several Great Lakes coasts, beaching  
Only when the catch was a batch reaching  
Flesh-and-spirit sustaining proportions,  
And never stock depletion nor distortions.

That's the history of original  
Canadian fisheries: Virginal  
Waters and coastlines kept impeccable—  
Treed, marshed, stony, sandy, with babble

And/or murmur, the fluid glide of liquid  
Inundating, penetrating solid  
Rock even (over time), saturating  
Ground, arable, feeding rivers, freighting

Fur trade, gems, currency-shells, voyageurs,  
And, later, flotillas—Europe's settlers....  
But none of those newcomers could displace  
Forever, primordial *Politesse*—

Cultivation of sea creatures, respect  
For tides, clear flow, the need to disinfect  
Waters of contaminants, pollution  
(Such as mercury). The fine solution?

Preserve percentages of Canada's  
Coasts for a fisheries Indigenous,  
Cleaned-up waterways, to improve *Health*  
For all Canadians, and increase *Wealth*—

*Sustainable*—so fish stocks are golden  
*Again*, because all fishers, beholden  
To the Coast Guard, no more overfish,  
But love *Mother Earth*, as First Nations wish.

Genesis ends with an Apocalypse:  
Fire melting shelters, tsunamis swamping ships.  
To avert imminent *Catastrophe*—  
Water and fish is our clear priority.

And to return to First Nations the first  
Say over management, to end the cursed  
Industrialization of fisheries,  
Plus leaden, mercurial miseries....

What is our plan? To renew Genesis,  
No longer act as *Nature's* nemesis,  
And refresh the blessings of waterways,  
And restore Indigenous policies....

**--George Elliott Clarke**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)**