

Musing on the Debert Paleo-Indigenous Site

No chilled records,
no cold archives—
no ink frozen between lines—
reveal who achieved fire,
who saw what two rubbed sticks could spark,
who captured lightning
(the living, bolting stardust—
glitter smearing the night as white as milk)—
and then who added flame to flesh—
to imagine stewing, roasting, frying, baking—
and who found heat to warm skin-sheathed tents
erected on maple-branch frames
(to bring out or bring on a sweat)—
and who fixed stone spear-tips to wood or bone shafts—
as they stalked caribou, their holiest, most sacred big-game—
and who scraped stone knives against those great creatures' hides
(to fashion skin-hugging skins, fit to *Weather*)—
and who traversed—centuries—forested, glacial ridges
unto what's now the rivered, Chiganois Valley—
13,000 years ago—
in archaeological, back-in-Eden time....

So, we don't know the names of the girls and boys who laughed,
dreaming of a great bear
swiping a salmon out a river.
The problem?
Prehistory is a fog—
as tenuous as a mood,
as sketchy as a haiku.

But scholars can make amends—
by determining the North American continental inheritance
imparted by the immemorial Asians who bridged the Bering Strait.
Let scientists attend to the ghost-laden breezes
rustling tent flaps
pitched above artifacts—
the stony, flinty bric-a-brac collaged,
ranked for Adamic cataloguing—
and salvaged by that fierce college
that is excavation (digging)—
shovelling into bog,
pickaxing into a cliff-face,
to turn up a narrative of *Survival*—
of generations in synch with *Nature*—
for latter descendants to study and heed.

At the Debert Paleo-Indigenous Site,
(touching on Liz Bishop's Economies),
anyone Mi'kmaq can say,
"Here's a land of people
who looked like us,
or who we look like";
where campfires welcomed raptures—
gourmet satisfactions—
whose drink attuned to rain murmuring from groaning clouds—
the cough of thunder—
and whose *Art* was a palette of stones,
rock faces, any boulder that could hold a petroglyph;
and who knew the open-mouthed seascape of Cobequid Bay,
the tongues of creeks or mudflats
or the incisors of grass tufts,
all implanted wanton off the blunted Fundy....
And who knew everything that we should know."

Here is the origin of
once-unnoticed *Knowledge*—
the tangible, primordial existence of Original Peoples
originating Maupeltuk's
(i.e., Nova Scotia's)
Civilization....

--George Elliott Clarke
7th Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)