

Janet Rogers

Janet Rogers is a Mohawk/Tuscarora writer from Six Nations of the Grand River. She was born in Vancouver, British Columbia and raised in southern Ontario. Janet lives on Six Nations of the Grand River territory, where she owns and operates Ojistoh Publishing and Productions. She works in page poetry, spoken word, performance poetry, video poetry and recorded poetry with music. She is a radio broadcaster, media producer and sound artist. Her literary titles include: *Splitting the Heart* (Ekstasis Editions 2007); *Red Erotic* (Ojistoh Publishing 2010); *Unearthed* (Leaf Press 2011); *Peace in Duress* (Talonbooks 2014); *Totem Poles and Railroads* (ARP Books 2016); and *As Long As the Sun Shines* English edition (Bookland Press 2018 with a Mohawk language edition released in 2019 and French translation released in 2021). *Ego of a Nation* is Janet's seventh poetry title, which she independently produced on the Ojistoh Publishing label in 2020.

I Do Not Speak for My Chiefs and My Chiefs Do Not Speak for Me

I am thinking of long term well being
protecting and healing as spiritual responsibility
inspiring and informing
remaining self-determined for the children
exemplary evidence of a love so enormous
it defies ordinary definition

We speak on original instruction
and don't care to provide you with explanations
left vulnerable to misinterpretations
our language of envisioning
looks like covenants of history

Reciting and repeating shared dates of significance
1763 Royal Proclamations
1924 state sanctioned invasions
the 15 years since we met
under similar circumstances
deficits of humanity keep us meeting

Spiritual treaties not land deeds
eco-logical sensitivities
birthrights and governing authorities
is any of this getting through?
we can't be held accountable
for negotiations overdue
perhaps the inadequacies

lie with you

Nation to Nation
means reducing our truth
to reach levels equal to your cognitions
insufficient law languages
can't carry conceptions natural and yet so complex
personal empire building
is not what we do

we sit alone at this table
forever polishing the chain
repeatedly presented as Treaty
reaching through clouds of denial
enabling you to walk away
the land dictates etiquette and informs the people
how to live with original instruction
voiced in your courts all for naught

Even with our evidence
winning will never be the ultimate
decided in a house created to un-house others
we have everything we need to carry on in independence
we govern with love for one another
in gratitude and with inalienable honour

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