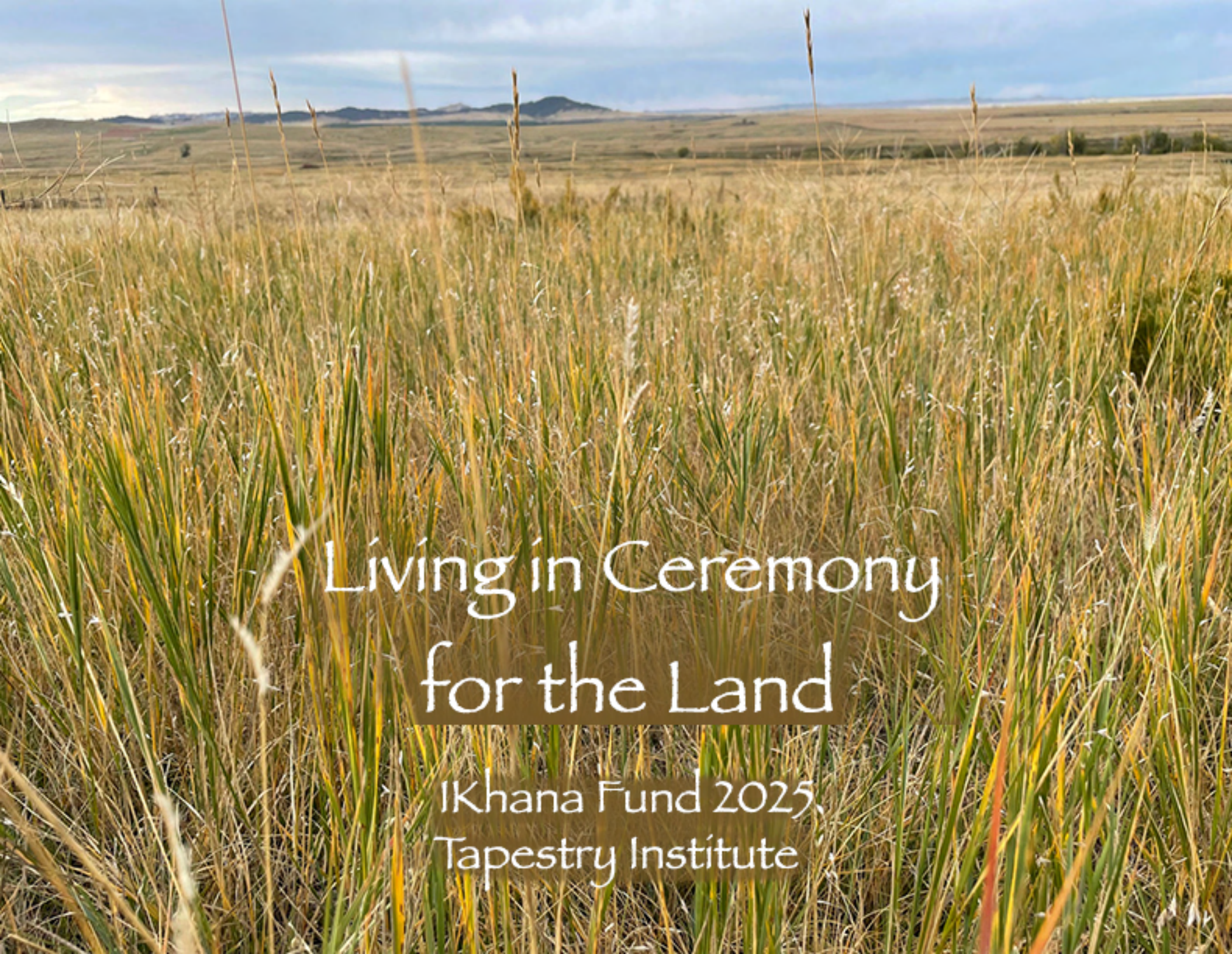
Living in Ceremony
for the Land
IKhana Fund 2025
Tapestry Institute

Living In Ceremony for the Land

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Welcome to the Second Volume of a Four-Part Series. Here is how you should read it.

Standing Our Ground for the Land was the first volume of this series. The three new volumes build on the fundamental principles of Indigenous Knowledge we explained in that work. *Standing Our Ground* is available for free download here.

The three volumes that follow *Standing Our Ground* are *sequential* 2025 publications that must be read in order:

Living in Ceremony for the Land
Living with Community for the Land
Living Out Story for the Land

Each of these new volumes includes an Opening Ceremony and a Closing Ceremony. We respectfully ask each participant in this relationship with us to read Ceremony as they begin and finish reading each of the volumes and come to those pages.

Each volume also includes a small introductory passage entitled "Three Baskets of Knowledge." Once it has been read, it can thereafter be used simply as a reference when needed.

NOTE: Isolated or grouped quotes attributed to IKhana Fund team members, presented in this font style, are from sessions of our May 2023 gathering.

Opening Ceremony

Ohoyo vt nana kanoihmi nan vnnoa anoli.

Listen now as Earth sheds her skin
Listen as the generations move
One against the other to make power

We are bringing in a new story
We will be accompanied by ancient songs
And will celebrate together

from "Prepare"
Joy Harjo. *Poet Warrior: A Memoir*. 2022.
W.W. Norton & Co.

We honor, with deepest gratitude, the Land of northwestern Nebraska's Pine Ridge and the shortgrass prairie northward from there to the Black Hills. This Land, whose agency directs and powers our work, is the traditional homeLand of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Lakota nations.

The photograph that completes our Opening Ceremoy is of the shortgrass prairie immediately north of Pine Ridge. This photograph constitutes a "site-ation," following a practice established by *Secwepemc* artist, curator, and professor Tania Willard. A site-ation photograph permits Indigenous scholars to cite the Place or other Land-based source of the Knowledge shared in print or a presentation. This photograph was taken at the moment one of the more significant pieces of Knowledge shared in this paper was gifted us. The Land of Pine Ridge in northwestern Nebraska, and the shortgrass prairies at its feet, is the source of much of the Knowledge that emerged in and since our meeting, that is shared in this publication. The photograph, taken at that moment, by Jo L. Belasco, Esq., is used with permission.

Sunset. January 24, 2024. Yakoke. We thank you for Knowledge.

Fichik Chito, Morning Star, is a gleaming crystal in the pale, prescient light of a winter dawn that hasn't yet arrived. The clear ink-wash sky begins to glow pale peach against the long black silhouette of low prairie hills at the eastern horizon. To the west around the rim of encircling land, the light shades to pink and then to gray-lavender. Night rises slowly from the dark rolling hills there, pale wisps of light drifting upward from the shadowed hollows like streamers of mist from the surface of a warm pond in morning air sharp with frost. In four days it will be Winter Solstice.

At the same time, at this very moment, there are blackberries. The low hum of drowsy bees weaves between vines heavy with fruit. A hot wind rustles the long leaves of corn plants taller than a man, and they flutter like pennants. When they catch a beam of sunlight, they flash with a gleam sharp as crystal. *Tanchi*, Corn, whispers on the rustles of the summer wind, singing softly to her children snugly cocooned in cradleboards made of her own leaves. They are soft and pale, these children, plump with their mother's sweet milk. Summer Solstice runs down the sky like warm honey.

This is where it begins, the things we must speak of now. It begins in this place where Winter and Summer intersect to create the axial loom on which the Land weaves the Circle that is ceremony and story, community and language, law and Knowledge itself. You might ask me which season is really present by demanding to know what my calendar shows at this moment. I would reply by saying that I write these words in the dim winter light of December and that fresh blackberries sit in my kitchen. Both seasons coexisted when these words came into my life, and they coexist now as they come into yours. The seasons dance Ceremony, circling and mirroring one another, weaving this particular Story of Indigenous Knowledge with stately steps and the rhythmic swing of shawls.

This Story is not the one we expected. We'd gathered to develop IKhana Fund grant protocols that would empower and support Indigenous people's environmental initiatives without colonizing them. But Knowledge has agency. When it emerged in our gathering, a wisdom and perspective far greater than our own re-framed and re-centered our perception of the task in which we are engaged.

The very first meeting that I went to for Tapestry, Dawn will remember, I sat down and said, "Well, where's the agenda?" Because I was used to Western meetings. And she said, "There isn't an agenda." Well, how are we going to get anything done? And over the years, seeing how the knowledge would emerge, about whatever we were discussing and trying to figure out. And I really look forward to see what, where are we going to go here? Because we sort of know where we're going, but who knows where we're going to go? And, you know, a long time ago, that would have been terrifying. My Western mind would have just exploded. But now I find that so exciting because who knows what the Land is going to have emerge from all of us? So, I'm very, very excited to see what happens next. -- Jo Belasco

My eyes just got very wet when you asked the question, because this has been a massive year for me. Having been a part of the first sessions, and then taking that knowledge, working alongside you, giving it my best attempt, and failing miserably at some points. So, when you were talking about being hit by a bus, when Dawn first started talking, the image that came to mind was somewhere between being the Roadrunner and racing down the track as fast as I could or being Wiley Coyote and getting smashed. And I think that's happened multiple times, being Wiley and Roadrunner in equal parts. One moment, absolute clarity of understanding and then smash, I know nothing. It's been an exceptional learning journey to be on this with all of you. -- Jessica Sweidan

So we were using a Syilx process called enowkinwixw, which translates to. . . it's like if water is dripping gently on your head and it slowly permeates in and makes its way into your thinking.
So, it's like that -- a slow dripping process of incorporating knowledge. -- Shawn Wilson

Three Baskets of Knowledge

Knowledge wove itself through our voices and words
on the third and then the fourth day of our gathering.
Knowledge emerged because we were in a space opened
by and for Ceremony,
and we were therefore well-connected with the Land.
Our on-line Community held that space open
so Knowledge could emerge.
The outcome gifted us was three big baskets of
Knowledge:
Ceremony. Community. Story.

The first thing we understood, when Knowledge emerged, was the essential nature of ceremony and community in IKhana Fund. This is that Knowledge as we recorded it then:

Community and Ceremony are deeply interwoven. The community that we are creating is important for several reasons. If our IKhana Fund community does our work as ceremony, it makes it possible for the Indigenous people whose work we fund to do it as ceremony too. The function transmits. If our IKhana Fund community does our work as ceremony, it makes it possible for the Western people who fund our work to do their work as ceremony too. Again, the function of community transmits. The functions of

Ceremony and Community transmit in both directions from us, to both grant-givers and grant-receivers. This generates a giving-and-receiving community that moves in ceremony.

Indigenous readers will notice at once that these statements have profound implications on IKhana Fund itself, on the Indigenous recipients of IKhana Fund grants, and on the individuals and foundations who give money to IKhana Fund for re-distribution as grants. But these highly significant consequences are ones it's difficult for most of our Western allies to perceive, much less understand well enough to participate. So transmitting Ceremony and Community "in both directions from us, to both grant-givers and grant-receivers" is an asymmetrical process.

We were also given Knowledge about the role of Story in IKhana Fund. The focus was at first on how deeply colonized our own language already is, and the ways this has wrenched our perceptions and actions out of appropriate Indigenous space. This is how we recorded that Knowledge during our meeting:

There is a pattern of talking we need to change. We need to be more mindful of the story we use to talk about what we do. We typically use a metaphor of leaving a ruined place when we want to talk about the work we want to do: "This place in the city (or in my neighborhood or in this park) is damaged, so I want to go to a different place that's nicer, that's more pure, that's more unspoiled." The other story we often use as metaphor is that of the pioneer, which is very similar: "It's too crowded here, everyone already has the land, I need to go somewhere new." We have used the language of this story in IKhana Fund work when we have said that our dissemination publications make a map that marks the route we take so others can follow. That is Pioneer Story language. Pioneer is the foundational story-engine that drove European colonialism. So it is inimical to the work we are trying to do in IKhana Fund.

Flipping a dominant-culture Pioneer Story into an Indigenous Land-based Story requires the same change in perspective that's required to flip Western ceremony into Indigenous ceremony. In Western culture, people tend to use ceremony to change their environment (whether people or circumstance) so it will better serve their own needs and wants. Indigenous people engage in ceremony to change themselves instead, to bring themselves into better alignment with the natural world so that everything can be maintained in healthy balance.

In the dominant culture, if you're not happy with the place you live, you go somewhere else or you change the place you live. If you change the place you live, you do it through physical actions that alter the environment -- building a dam so there's more water, for example, or trapping animals in one place and releasing them in another to make it "wild" again.

In a Ceremony way of life, however, if you're not happy with the place you live, you change yourself in a way that permits you to better align with that place. Once a person aligns with the place through Ceremony, they can help the place restore its own

health. Then, as the place begins to heal, the larger community in that place begins to heal even more. This on-going process of relationship and reciprocity permits the whole community to come home to who it is. It can become a community living in ceremony, all of it in balance. If a place is degraded, it's degraded because it's out of balance. If you leave, it has no chance to get back into balance. The only way to restore balance is to stay there and do ceremony, restoring inner balance in everything so that the entire community can, together, restore itself to health.

At this point of the process, still on that fourth day of our gathering, we began to try to apply the Knowledge we were being given so we could understand it more thoroughly. But because we did not yet perceive the appropriate Story for the work we do, mostly what we tried to do was think through what would happen if we at least stopped using Pioneer story. This was difficult, but it did help us circle back around to the roles of community and ceremony in IKhana Fund and understand those things better. So we were able to more clearly see how very important it was to stop using Pioneer story language about "marking trail" or "going somewhere new." A lot of places that matter very much to Indigenous people have been seriously damaged or destroyed by the practices of Western culture. It is very difficult to do restorative things or to feel safe doing ceremony in such places. So of course we find ourselves falling into the Pioneer story that created these problems to begin with. In this way, the Pioneer story system perpetuates itself. It is not easy to tear ourselves out of that story when it has had so much impact on our lives.

Giving up the Pioneer story, that we want to "go somewhere nicer that hasn't been ruined," is a life course few of us can easily live. So we are not proposing that anyone has to forego trips to the country or to places that feel safe and restorative. But as we do this work we are doing together, we might experiment with a different Story we can share, one that speaks differently about what it is we're engaging in together -- as something other than "going to a new place and leaving behind the painful place of our wounds." This is a very challenging thing to do.

We understand that we can share community by trying to live it. We are not there yet but we can at least understand what this might mean we need to do.

We understand that we can share ceremony by trying to live it. We are still working to understand how this is so, but we are starting to get there together. The Knowledge that's emerging in this gathering speaks to that.

But . . . How do we heal our world by living a different Story? How do we share a different way of envisioning a Story that does not use the language of "Thank goodness I got out of the filthy, ruined city!" or "We have to go pioneer a new place"? How do we think about and talk about the idea that what we have to do is come home to ourselves, with Ceremony and with the help of our community? We can see that we have to come home to ourselves in a true and pure way that allows us to use Ceremony to begin to heal the problems that are right here where we are. So

then we can be part of that healing. What language can we use for that, to talk about it, that is not "making a map" or "breaking trail" to a "new place" but that somehow still helps us understand what it is we're doing together? We realize now that when we say we are breaking trail or making a map for others to follow, it sounds like the process in which we're engaged is an individual journey. But it's not. Ceremony and Community make it very much not an individual journey.

Even though at this point in the process, we still could not see the appropriate story we needed to use, and we were feeling deeply troubled by the implications of using Pioneer language in our lives as well as in our work, the Knowledge that was emerging among us began to put IKhana Fund in a powerfully important context we had not previously seen.

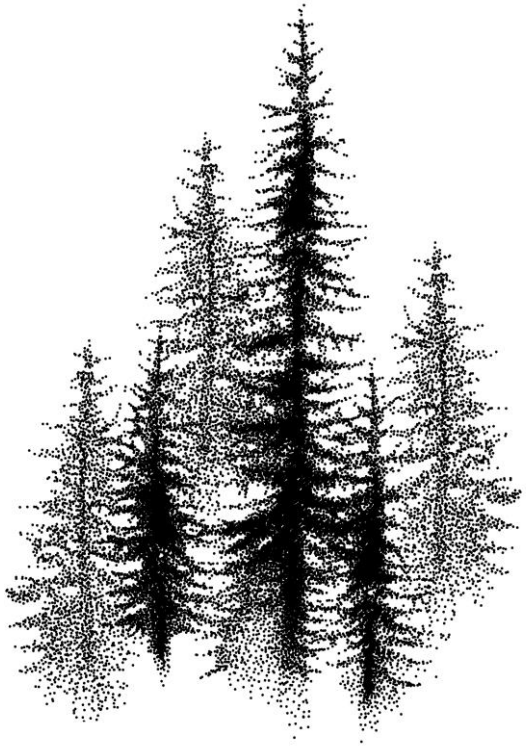
*All of this understanding changes the work we are doing together. We thought we were just finding a way to award money to people doing Indigenous Knowledge research, and that by doing this we'd allow them to carry out initiatives that would heal their Lands. In that model, we in IKhana Fund are removed from those initiatives, rather like the Wizard of Oz in the movie of that name, who stood in a booth behind a curtain, working the levers that moved things at a distance from himself. But in this model of IKhana Fund that's starting to manifest, we **are** the process we model, whatever that Story is that we can't see yet. We **are** the community. We **are** the ceremony. So every single thing we do is part of the Ceremony -- and because we walk in ceremony, our community is forming Community. And all of us walking together in Ceremony, as healed and healing Community, that is what heals the Land.*

This is what we live out as IKhana Fund, that moves into the world through the Indigenous peoples and Lands with which we engage, within the Ceremony of the IKhana-mediated reciprocal relationship the Land is bringing into existence. It makes the processes we develop and implement to solicit, review, award, and respond to grants not merely procedural, but Ceremony. It means that designing our "grant protocols" is a far bigger responsibility than we've realized.

Throughout the next week of our meeting, we explored what it might mean to say that IKhana Fund *is* Ceremony, that IKhana Fund *is* Community, that *all of us walking together in Ceremony, as healed and healing Community is what heals the Land*. We began to explore the fact that these criteria of Community and Ceremony create a much larger giving-and-receiving community operating in ceremony than we had at first imagined. Not only would those whose work we supported become part of a community that walks within ceremony, the Western individuals and organizations who contribute resources to IKhana Fund for redistribution through our grant awards would also become part of this community. They would also move with us through Ceremony. There is no way it can be otherwise. Yet bringing Western allies into an Indigenous Community that is walking in Ceremony presents some very important problems we have to resolve. To begin resolving these problems, please take off your shoes.

Surprised by that sudden change in direction? I've just told you that the Story the Land is dancing into all our lives is not the one any of us expected. Neither, as a result, is this report.

And then in the wider, in the spiritual space,
that's where we talk about a sense of belonging.
The connection to your place and the people,
and your reconnection with the land where you are from.
Where you have a place that you can stand on,
knowing who you are. -- Fiona Cram



LIVING in CEREMONY
for the LAND

So now take off your shoes. Yes, really. Take off your actual shoes, that are on your actual feet, wherever you happen to be sitting right now. And do it before you read any further. If you are on public transportation, hold your shoes in one of your hands so you don't lose them if there's a sudden stop or change in direction while you're reading.

Now. *Give me your hand. It can be the hand holding your shoes, that's fine.*
Exhale a long, slow breath to relax your body . . .
. . . and remember a particular moment from when you were 5 years old.

This is very important or I would not ask it of you. Choose a memory that's pleasant. Touch a specific moment, however small or mundane it might seem. Reach back into that memory. There. Do you have it? Climb inside that memory and feel the way the world felt to you then, when you were little. That is where this Circle opens. So close your eyes now and explore that memory for a few moments. Feel those remembered feelings again. And when you have done this, open your eyes and I will tell you a story.

The year I was 5 years old, it was 1957. We lived in Oklahoma because that's where my family had lived since my Choctaw ancestors were forced from our home and sent west on the Trail of Tears and Death. One morning

not long after I started kindergarten, my father sat down on the straight-backed chair he used whenever he was teaching me an important thing I must remember. When I came and stood at his knee as I did at such times, he carefully spread the newspaper across his legs and told me to look closely at a big drawing on the front page. I saw a metal ball that had four long spidery legs trailing out behind it. My father pointed to the big black letters of the headline and read its words to me. He explained the words said that the round thing was called Sputnik. It was in space, so high over our heads we could not see it, and it had been carried there by a rocket ship. My father said he wanted me to be able to say, when I grew up, that I could remember the day that humans entered the Space Age.

Then my father told me why. He reminded me that Grandma Hill, the one person in our family everyone was related to and looked up to, had grown up riding sidesaddle on her Choctaw pony. He said that even when he was a little boy, she would often say she wanted to live long enough to see people go into space, because then she would be able to say that she had lived from the days of only horses to the days of cars and then airplanes, and now of rockets. That is how much the world can change in one person's life, my father said. Grandma had taught him this as he stood at her knee so he would always remember it. And now her words had come true. She had lived from the days of only horses to the days of going into space. And yet, my father said, her own grandmother had died on the Trail of Tears and Death. "That is how close the past is to us," my father said, "even when things change very fast. It is easy to forget the past and lose our roots. When we lose our roots, then we lose our way. But our Ancestors are always right here. They are the roots that hold us no matter what happens. They never let us get lost."

That winter, my Ancestors' deep roots held me well. The severe asthma I'd always had took a dangerous turn and I somehow got pneumonia five separate times in as many months. Later I learned the doctor thought my lungs had suffered permanent damage. But spring finally came and our family was able to go on drives through the woods again. As I got stronger, we once again spread Grandma Hill's picnic quilt on the grass. And somewhere during that time, cottontail rabbits started showing up every time we went out. The more I saw them along the roadside or at the edge of our picnic area, the more eager interest I felt in them. Finally I decided I simply had to have a pet rabbit. My parents were not at all keen on the idea. But I was five years old, so I badgered them relentlessly. And then one day, as we drove through the woods, I suddenly had what I thought was a brilliant idea.

If I *caught* a wild rabbit, I asked my father, then could I *keep* it? My dad told me later that he thought about how weak I was after struggling with pneumonia all winter. Plus I was just 5 years old and had bad asthma at the best of times. So he figured I'd never be able to catch a wild rabbit with my bare hands -- and that being the case, why not humor me? It couldn't hurt anything and it would make me happy. So he said yes.

And so began The Great Rabbit Chase of 1958.

Our car was a 1954 Ford with two doors. The only way to get in or out of the back seat was to fold the back of the front seat down over itself, then slide through the wedge-

shaped gap this created near the front door. No one could sit in the front seat when it was folded over like this, though, so any passenger there had to either get out first or wait to get in. At least, that's how this system was supposed to work. The designer had not reckoned on an avid 5-year-old Rabbit Chaser being in the back seat behind her mother.

For months, every time we were driving in the country and I spotted a rabbit, my father had to slam on the brakes, hard, because I was leaving that car. Even while we were still sliding to a stop on the gravel, I was smashing my mother with the seat back and climbing over the top of her head to go right out her open window. *Nothing* could stop me. When we were walking in the woods, when we were eating our picnic dinner, when we kids had been sent out to gather kindling for the cooking fire . . . I was looking for rabbits. And I was finding them.

I would look through a hollow log and a rabbit would shoot out the other end. I would walk into tall grass and rabbits would scatter. You never saw as many rabbits as we saw that spring and summer. Suddenly, they were *everywhere*. And I was chasing them. But here's the thing. My dad said he would have sworn they were trying to lure me on. He said when I would tire out from having so little breath (which at first happened almost immediately), the rabbits would stop running, turn, and crouch down facing me -- as if to get me to come chase them some more. In fact, I can remember watching their noses twitch as they did this. Those twitching noses were very tempting, I will say! Once I chased one rabbit into a bush and three rabbits ran *out* of it -- two of them darting right between my legs. My father said he thought sure that time I'd nab one, but I was just too little and not coordinated. But he said that by mid-summer, he was certain he was going to have pay up on his agreement -- a promise he could not regret having made because chasing the rabbits had healed me from a whole winter of crippling pneumonia. I'd gotten strong again.

But, as it happened, we moved to Arizona before I caught one of those Oklahoma cottontails. My dad took a job there because the doctor advised my parents that I might not survive another Oklahoma winter. And that's where my rabbit-chasing days ended, because the desert jackrabbits were not in the same league for chasing at all.

But that isn't where the Story ends.

The year I was 11, in 1963, we moved to an iron-belt city on one of the Great Lakes. We somehow managed to rent a house in a neighborhood where serious criminal pursuits were as much a part of local family life as football or scouts. I was in the sixth grade that year. The boys in my class carried switchblades in their pockets that the teachers didn't dare confront them about or confiscate, and they never hesitated to flip those open when they backed me against a wall. In November of that year, JFK was assassinated. The following spring the Beatles came to America. But by the time those things happened, I was too numb to care about either political or cultural upheaval. In the winter of the year I was 11, I was on the ropes in a serious way that had nothing to do with asthma.

There was a patch of woods near my school, just beyond a line of trees that edged the teachers' parking lot. In the first of our two winters there, while everyone else was

eating lunch I would walk into those winter woods far enough for the noises of my classmates to fade. Then I'd stand in the stillness and the snow, turning in a slow circle to look at the dark tree trunks all around me. I'd crane my head way back to look up at the interwoven network of bare branches reaching into the white sky that was always just about to snow. I stayed until I heard the distant sound of the first bell ringing to call everyone back in from lunch. And I laughed a little over that bell, wondering if the teachers had made sure the bell was loud enough to be heard in the woods because other kids sometimes sought solace there too. Maybe, I thought, some had remained there when class resumed. Or maybe some had never gone back to school at all, but had instead headed deeper into the woods. The perpetual aroma of wet wool draped over the hall radiators certainly didn't make it any easier to go back in the building. Neither, for that matter, did the switchblades or the boys who carried them.

I went to the woods every day, and so began to find and identify animal tracks in the snow. They were different from the tracks made in dirt or in mud. Sometimes I saw a bird's quick movement shower its own recent tracks with a powdering of snow, and at other times I got to see the way tracks changed if temperatures warmed a little or if a wind blew over snow that had a crust. And then one day, I followed a rabbit's morse-code trail -- dit dit front feet and longer daaat daaat back feet -- to a small clearing among the trees. In the clearing, that rabbit's tracks merged into a big circle of tracks 6 or 8 feet in diameter, the shape of which had been pounded into the snow by the feet of more rabbits than I could imagine. Being very careful not to step on any part of it, or into any of the many lines of rabbit tracks that had come through the woods from all directions to join the circle, I began to try to identify specific individuals' tracks that were distinctive enough I'd be able to spot them among the many that had created the circle. But before I could get very far, the bell rang.

Now, however, I had something to look forward to every day. So I went back again and again, praying it wouldn't snow until I'd figured out what I was seeing. It got to where I was able to trace several individual rabbits' trails from farther out in the woods to the place they had joined the others, and then found where they had left the circle and gone away again. I found tracks that showed me at least some of the individual rabbits had gone around and around and around the circle between their entry and exit points. Then I discovered places where an individual rabbit had leaped into the air and thrown snow with its back feet, a thing I would not have understood had the birds not shown it to me by spraying snow with their wings. By the time a week had gone by, I could almost see the rabbits making the tracks, as if I had watched them do it. I understood they had come together from all over the little woods and the snow-covered park nearby, and that once they had gathered they'd raced around and around in a great counterclockwise Circle, all going in a single direction, sometimes leaping high in the air and kicking out their back feet. There was only one reasonable way to even think about such a thing, and that was as a Rabbit Dance.

Given how I still felt about rabbits, I loved that place where they had come together and danced. It felt like sacred ground. Even when new snow finally arrived and buried their dance ground and its tracks, I would walk to that place and stand in the icy silence, knowing it for a

sacred place where I could feel the peace of the Real world for at least a little while. The rabbits had marked out, with their own feet, the Circle where that Reality still lived, had created a space that still held it. Standing in that space, in the Circle the Rabbits had created, that Reality held me, too. And when it did, nothing that anyone in that place could do to me mattered.

But again, and still, this is not where the Story ends.

Fifteen years later, as an adult living in northern California, I had a pet rabbit for eight years. And, to my surprise but also my joy, I saw what the rabbit dance looks like. There were times when my rabbit would be out walking around in the house and suddenly twitch as if with a happy thought. Then she would dart a few steps, stop, twitch again, and suddenly begin to race around the room in a big counterclockwise circle. Periodically, she would leap into the air, twisting her body and kicking out her back feet in what everyone who saw her do it tagged as pure joy. The first time I saw her do this, I knew for sure how the rabbits had created the tracks I'd seen in the snow that cold and desperate winter of 1963.

A number of years after that particular rabbit friend had passed on, I learned the last key piece of information that puts everything I've shared with you in the context that provides its meaning. The information should have been available to me all along, but my family had lost it as part of the dislocation that took place during Removal, the Trail of Tears and Death, and its long, difficult aftermath. This type of information is being recovered and restored to us by our tribal Elders and historians, however. And in this case, the critical information I'd not had was historical and linguistic. When the Choctaw Nation signed the treaty we'd been told would guarantee that all our generations could live in peace forever in the place now known as Oklahoma, if we ceded our lands then (in 1830) in what had already become the states of Alabama and Mississippi, we gathered to sign the treaty with heavy hearts. The place we gathered was chosen for its central sacredness. And its name was *Bok Chukfi Ahila*. Translated to English, this place where the treaty was signed is *Dancing Rabbit Creek*.

I know nothing of the Land that is now Mississippi or Alabama, from which my family was Removed nearly 200 years ago. Yet that Land, and the Rabbit Nation whose territory includes but is not limited to that Land, held me within the circle of ancestral Ceremony even when I was too young to know it for what it was. Aboriginal scholar Tyson Yunkaporta would say it happened specifically because I was so young, that at 5 years old I was still young enough to remember and recognize an important ceremony with my rabbit relations because the minds of young children "are exactly the same as the minds of our Ancestors, uncolonized and vibrantly connected to the worlds around us" (Yunkaporta 2020, 135). What I find equally important, though, is that it's clear *the rabbits themselves* also recognized *me*. They *also* remembered our peoples' relationship. Not only that, but they danced me back to life and health in places that were many hundreds of miles from our old Choctaw homeLand.

When, in Oklahoma, the rabbits ran so slowly and then turned to wait for me while I caught my breath, they engaged me in a dance to which I responded. When I walked around and around a little snowy clearing in a

winter woods, following their steps around the circle with my own feet, they engaged me in dance yet again. I danced with the rabbits and they danced with me in a Ceremony whose power throbbed as deep and as true us as the drumbeat of a heart. The beating heart of the Land's own Ceremony moves children and rabbits alike.

You may put your shoes back on now.

Shawn Wilson, a Cree scholar and one of the three IKhana Fund co-leaders, points out (Wilson 2024) that when we connect with the Ancestors *through Ceremony*, whether those Ancestors are humans or rabbits or any of our other relations, we tap directly into the larger cosmic mind that is living Land, manifesting living Knowledge. Because of this, as the third IKhana Fund co-leader, Mãori evaluator Fiona Cram points out (Cram 2024), the Land holds Knowledge even when that Knowledge has begun to fade from people's memories and is in danger of being lost. But when that Knowledge is shared with us by the Land, when it manifests through nearly-forgotten relationships of Ceremony, it is possible for us to recognize it and respond. Indigenous people are drawn to the clearing where winter-bare trees shake down snow from their branches onto the leaping forms of rabbits dancing with joy beneath the moon because *relationships are reciprocal*. Ceremony weaves the relationships that form Community. And that Community is of *All* Our Relations, not just human beings.

Yes, I am in fact saying that rabbits practice Ceremony. Dance is, in the Reality Indigenous people know, a type of Ceremony. Indeed, as I saw inside my own home, the rabbits express joy when they dance. We don't need elaborate academic or artistic explanations of dance that turn on human culture and society, for it does not happen only among humans. I am not speaking metaphorically,

but actually. The Land's own Ceremony exists outside of any human intention or design, like a full moon. And, like a full moon, it sometimes appears among us, luminous and golden, bathing everything in a healing light that penetrates every pore. This is the place we must begin, because it is the place we must return, circling back to it again and again as we dance through the Ceremony creating itself in the words it is weaving between and around us.

When the Three Baskets of Knowledge emerged in our gathering, the very first statement was that *Community and Ceremony are deeply interwoven*. Now you can see the self-evident nature of this statement from an Indigenous perspective. To us this statement says nothing new, but instead establishes the foundational context for the Knowledge *about* Ceremony and Community that follows this statement. Furthermore, you learned about the deep relationship between Ceremony and Community by my telling you a Story. That helps you understand the foundational context for Story, the third key thing about which we were given Knowledge, in the third of the Three Baskets.

The most critical pieces of <u>new</u> Knowledge that emerged in our gathering are, first, that *"If our IKhana Fund community does our work as ceremony . . . The functions of Ceremony and Community transmit in both directions from us, to both grant-givers and grant-receivers. This generates a giving-and-receiving community that moves in ceremony."* And the second piece of really <u>new</u> Knowledge was that we've been using the wrong Story to *"think about and talk about the idea that what we have to do is come home to ourselves, with Ceremony and with the help of Community."* The Pioneer story we've been using is inappropriate. We need a different one.

So why did the Land give us Knowledge about Ceremony, Community, and Story when what we asked was how to develop IKhana Fund grant protocols? In Indigenous experience, Knowledge you didn't expect to get is not a non-sequitur, especially if you've approached the Land respectfully and in ceremony to ask for it. Figuring out <u>why</u> that's the response you've been given, <u>why</u> it's so important that it's been prioritized over whatever it is you were thinking you wanted to know, is the epistemic practice that unlocks the power of Indigenous Knowledge. It does this because it shows you the *context* of whatever it is you're dealing with. *Context is the key to understanding Knowledge from the Land.*

We outlined the importance of contextual knowing in IKhana Fund's 2022 *Standing Our Ground* report (Adams et al. 2022, 34 and 37):

> "The context in which Knowledge emerges contributes to the *meaning* of that Knowledge . . . Context is the set of relationships between the physical and conceptual things in a certain place, at a certain moment in time, that create the interactions from which Knowledge emerges."

Now, to better understand the importance of context, read the same passage *in context* (being rather meta here) -- and notice how it deepens and enriches your understanding of the contextual nature of knowledge (Adams et al. 2022, 34 and 37):

." . . the natural world itself sets the agenda for Indigenous-led environmental projects because *our epistemic system is Land-based*. As the Native Hawai'ian scholar of epistemology Manulani Meyer says, the land is our 'epistemological cornerstone.' Because of the deep connection between Land and Knowledge . . . the land is '. . . more than a physical place. It is an idea that engages knowledge and contextualizes knowing'. . . The context in which Knowledge emerges contributes to the *meaning* of that Knowledge. We touched lightly on this issue when we explored the relational aspect of Indigenous Knowledge. Context is the set of relationships between the physical and conceptual things in a certain place, at a certain moment in time, that create the interactions from which Knowledge emerges."

"Ceremony, Community, Story" answered a question we had not asked. It didn't tell us what that question was, though, that we *should* have asked and didn't. All we knew was that we'd been given Knowledge that was a lot bigger than what we'd expected, and that it would take significant time and effort to process it. Until we could see the context in which this Knowledge had been given to us -- that is, the question the Land answered because it was far more important than the one we asked -- we could not really understand *why* we'd been given this particular Knowledge at all. It was this "why" that would tell us how to use the Knowledge properly, so it could serve its appropriate purpose. This three volume book-length report tells the story of our journey of exploration to find and understand the question the Land actually answered. We invite you to take that journey with us because we think no matter who you are -- a traditional Indigenous Elder, a Western philanthropist, an Indigenous academic, a Western environmentalist, or a researcher in Western or Indigenous science -- you will be as interested as we were to explore and understand the answer to this mystery.

What question did the Land answer, that it thought we should have asked but didn't? And why was that question so much more important than the one about grant protocols we'd thought mattered?

What came to me was, how do we mend the Circle? And the way we need to mend the Circle is by people in Western culture, the funders and all, they need to put in what they've taken out so the Circle can be healed again. -- Jo Belasco

When you started the ceremony, I saw you take out this stone. That reminds me of something. In the old days, in our tradition when you were moving to a new place, you had to take this soil and water from your birthplace. And when you went and settled in a new place you mixed that soil with the water you carried in your gourd or clay pot. Then, you poured a bit of that water and mixed it with the soil and got everybody to drink it. And you said something like, "We are now in a new place, ancestral spirits This is your new home now. You protect us. The ancestral stone is carried by leaders from your ancestral place. It is passed on through generations. So that reminded me of the stone and that water, the mixing of the soil and water. I understand it now because we have problems. I don't know if you realize it, that people don't touch the soil anymore in these urban areas. Everything is covered with concrete. You don't touch the soil. Now because of that break in that linkage of giving the soil to people, we now have in our family a lot of lung-related illnesses and other challenges, e.g. asthma. So, it was like touching the land was giving us natural protection. Now, we get people encouraging young people to go back to the land and get their babies to touch the soil. "Go and touch your soil, go and touch your soil."

-- John Njovu

Of course, when all this started, we had no idea what a big puzzle we'd been given to solve. So we dove right into it. We spent the entire second week of our gathering working together to unpack these three baskets of Knowledge that had come to us. As we did so, Knowledge continued to emerge from the weave between our voices and lands in that Circle of sacred space we continued to hold open with Ceremony. As we saw more and more clearly how very powerful this Knowledge was, that's when we began to realize we wouldn't be able to finish processing it during our meeting. It was going to take more time and concentrated effort than that.

Once the Circle of our gathering closed, it was my responsibility to continue the work. My job was to come to a good enough base understanding of the Knowledge we'd been given that I could put it into words for sharing back to our communities for further engagement. I corresponded with Shawn and Fiona and the other project leaders, and periodically met with them online. That helped. The Land with which we are partnered in this work, meanwhile, continued to drive a process of Knowledge emergence that clarified and expanded on what we'd been given in the meeting. But because Knowledge kept right on emerging all the rest of the summer and into fall, things did not iron themselves out as we worked. They got more and more complicated instead. And although I was fairly sure I understood

Ceremony, Community, and Story reasonably well in general, they increasingly seemed to be entangled in our IKhana Fund work in a way I couldn't make sense of.

More disconcertingly, when I asked the Land, in Ceremony, how I might untangle the knot that was growing bigger day by day, it increasingly felt like I was being pushed to focus on the *one particular* thread of the Knowledge we'd been given that I had the least interest in pursuing -- Ceremony. It was simply too hard a thing to deal with. So when the push became more insistent, I dug in my heels. I told myself I must be projecting the push towards that one thread of Knowledge. *Yes, that was it,* I told myself. *I was projecting*. After all, there had to be a more reasonable way to untangle the snarl and solve the problem that had engulfed our work, and it would *not* be one as impossibly hard as Ceremony. *Which couldn't be all that important anyway*, I told myself, *because we already understood Ceremony*.

At the moment I had that concluding thought, I slammed shut my laptop in frustration and my angry internal dialog fell silent. In that sudden stillness, the retreating echoes of the last thought I'd had reflected my own logic back to me: "*. . . there had to be a more reasonable way to untangle the snarl and solve the problem that had engulfed our work, and it would not be one as impossibly hard as Ceremony."* And then: *"which couldn't be all that important anyway because we already understood Ceremony."* Suddenly I saw the surprising twist in logic there, a paradox I had not seen until then. How could it be that "we had a problem with Ceremony that was so hard to solve as to be literally not doable," and, simultaneously, that "the problem wasn't worth solving because we already fully understood Ceremony"? If we fully understood Ceremony, we should be able to solve . . . And suddenly, I remembered an autumn evening at my family's kitchen table more than 50 years ago.

In 1969, a casual friend and I were the first two girls to ever take physics in my high school. We sat together in class but had such different interests and activities that we never studied together. I did all the problems the teacher assigned, got them right with a few stumbles here and there, felt pretty confident about the material, but did very poorly on the first test. I was really dejected about it. I couldn't understand how I could have done so well on the homework and done so poorly on the test. My Choctaw father, a civil engineer, came and sat down next to me the evening after I had gotten my test grade. I had just opened my physics book to the next chapter and its new set of problems, and I must have looked as miserable as I felt, because he asked me if I wanted some help. I told him I did, though I didn't see how I could do anything different. He asked me to explain how I had studied, then asked to see my book, my homework papers, and my sad little test marked with the scarlet letter "D And almost at once, what my father asked me was, "Why didn't you do the problems at the *very end* of each set of practice problems in your book?"

He had noticed that if there were 40 practice problems at the end of a chapter, I had done only 20 or 25 of them. I told him I had done the problems the teacher assigned. He never assigned the last problems because they were a lot harder. My dad was quiet a minute, and then he asked me to work one of those harder problems for a chapter we had finished, that I thought I understood. I did that, talking

through it out loud so he could hear how I was thinking about it, and then I checked the answer in the back of the book. I had gotten it wrong. He asked me to do another and the same thing happened. Frustrated, I pointed out that I had gotten "all these other problems in the chapter" right. So, I said, I clearly understood the material well enough to have gotten at least a "B." It shouldn't matter that I couldn't work those last 15 problems.

My father quietly shut my book and turned so he was facing me. "If you really understood the concepts you've studied," he said, "you would be able to work *ALL* the problems. It is not the problems you can easily solve that teach you anything. The problems you learn from are the ones you can't get right, that you don't understand, that make no sense and frustrate you. These problems are the real teachers. They show you what it is you *don't know* so you can *learn*." And then he proceeded to work through all the hardest problems in that chapter with me, one at a time, patiently showing me where I had not fully understood one thing after another that I thought I knew. "It's the things that make no sense that are usually the key to understanding the most important things in life," said my father as we finished "Don't run from them. Go straight into them. They are the doorways to genuine knowledge."

Now, as I sat in the slanting amber sunlight of another autumn evening, remembering the key my father had given me, I knew what the "hard problem" was -- the one I'd been hoping I wouldn't have to deal with, the one the Land had kept pointing me to all along. I had brushed it aside the same way I had brushed aside the hardest problems at the end of each chapter in my physics book as a teenager. It had been present even on the fourth day of our meeting, when it broke the surface of our awareness in these words:

> *In Western culture, people tend to use ceremony to change their environment (whether people or circumstance) so it will better serve their own needs and wants. Indigenous people engage in ceremony to change themselves instead, to bring themselves into better alignment with the natural world so that everything is maintained in healthy balance.*

Those two sentences are like the little chop of white water that marks the one place where a massive submerged shoal of rock crests above the surface of the sea, the rest of it hidden by shallow water for miles in every direction. If that little bit of chop is ignored, the unseen and much greater parts of the rock will rip the guts right out of, and sink, the ship whose crew told themselves, "Well, there's just that one little problem area to skirt. The rest is clear sailing."

The gateway to understanding the Knowledge we'd been given was figuring out how on earth Ceremony could transmit in both directions *from us, from IKhana Fund, to grant-givers* as well as to grant-receivers, when *Western people think Ceremony is something so different from the way Indigenous people experience it*.

I had found the hard problem that could unlock the Knowledge we'd been given. And it was such a painfully hard problem that I'd been doing my best for months to avoid it.

Chapter 4

There's no pretty way to say this, but we have to go where the Story goes. The epistemic pushing I became aware of after our meeting first really got my attention, in August, by way of a wretched event that ended with the forceful expulsion of everything inside my digestive system. As sick as I felt that night, I was pretty sure the cause wasn't physical. I had realized by July that something inside me, some resistance I didn't understand, was keeping me from being able to align with the Land and with the Knowledge it had given us, the way I needed to. So I had prayed and done ceremony, asking for help getting rid of that inner obstruction. It felt like this was the process I had asked for, starting to play out. Ceremony is alignment of the self with the Land and with Knowledge. If old toxic stuff inside a person *resists* that alignment, it's simply got to go.

You might think the part of this that I warned you wouldn't be pretty was the vomiting part. And I'll grant you, that wasn't fun. But the thing that's seriously not pretty here, that I'm actually trying to warn you about, is that when people in Western culture learn something like "toxins can sometimes be expelled as part of a certain kind of ceremony," there's a tendency to draw conclusions that are so counterproductive as to completely derail future communication between us. For example, I have actually met people who would take my words as proof that I know absolutely nothing about Indigenous Ceremony, because they "know for a fact" that *real* Indigenous Ceremony is

ethereal and magical, animals weaving ribbons through the hair of women dancing in diaphanous gowns. I have also met people who would take my words as some sort of proof that their secret habits of frequent purging are really a ceremony of healing, not a lethal act of self-harm. In both cases, *they take my words* -- "take" as in taking a thing that doesn't belong to them. The words were there but they don't support either conclusion, and I have the right to say this because I chose them very carefully and know exactly what I meant by them. When I write about sacred things, I use no word casually.

When people take Indigenous words about something like ceremony, and use them to serve their own personal agenda -- "ceremony is spiritual and beautiful and *it makes me feel like I'm not a bad person*" or "ceremony is *dark and dangerous so I get to keep harming myself however I want to*" -- it's because "In Western culture, people tend to use ceremony to change their environment (whether people or circumstance) so it will better serve their own needs and wants." Remember that passage? In this case, the "environment" people are changing to suit themselves is the Indigenous Ceremony itself, which they are conceptually changing to suit their own ends. When someone takes and misuses Indigenous words about our own Ceremony, they treat it as if it's *Western* ceremony. They are running the alignment the opposite direction they should, making *our* Ceremony align *with them* to serve *their* needs. In contrast, "Indigenous people engage in ceremony to change themselves instead, to bring themselves into better alignment with the natural world so that everything is maintained in healthy balance."

This is the Hard Problem, rippling as a froth of white water that reveals the submerged ridge of rock below that it's so hard to see. And the Problem is so pernicious that right now, in the middle of trying to tell you a story that explains some very powerful things about ceremony that are exceedingly important, I had to stop and devote several paragraphs to being responsible enough to prevent the misuse of one little piece of information about ceremony. At the time of the purging event in August, I knew this problem existed, and I knew it was serious. But I was actively avoiding the problem because I didn't see how it was even possible for Indigenous people and Western allies to work through it together -- at least, not enough to form "a giving-and-receiving community that moves in ceremony."

But hey: I did the throwing-up part. So clearly I'm game. If you are too, let's go on. If it helps to know, I don't think you'll have to throw up. But I did warn you that our journey together would be an adventure. So be on your toes!

Immediately after the purging event, some interesting things began to happen. They were unusual enough to make me think to myself, "Wait a minute. What just happened here? Was that . . . corn?" Yes it was. It was Indian corn. And Choctaw corn. Showing up in all kinds of places I hadn't expected to see it. My people have a deep relationship with Corn, as you will see. But at the time, I couldn't understand what corn could possibly have to do with this paper and with IKhana Fund. I thought it must be my own ego, my own relationship with Corn as a Choctaw woman, that was somehow causing corn to suddenly show up everywhere I turned. So I would shake

my head to myself and just go right back to pecking out a draft of this report on my laptop -- pages I invariably threw away because they turned into passages of a science textbook (my default setting, after thirty years in science).

Time continued to tick by and it got to be nearly autumn equinox. I did Ceremony again, asking especially for Knowledge about what I thought I saw moving in all the corn that was coming to my attention so unexpectedly. It seemed to be part of a larger and very unexpected Ceremony I recognized but could not make any sense of in this situation. Was this larger Ceremony really there? Could it mean what I was starting to think it might mean? How could such a thing even be possible? When I asked for guidance about all this in a small and desperate ceremony on sacred Land, the mystery deepened. Knowledge floated with gentle strength into my awareness in reply: *It is there, yes. Write what you see moving. Trust the process.*

So I started trying to do that, to write about the Unexpected Ceremony I have not yet named to you, that I could see and feel was moving -- as impossible as that was. As I did, I began to see how it related to the three baskets of Knowledge we had been given, and that was encouraging. But something inside me still resisted the alignment necessary for the Knowledge to flow properly, so I could not get it to track with the problem of how differently Indigenous and Western people experience and understand Ceremony. Whatever it was the Land wanted to communicate through our work and this paper, part of it was still blocked. Some part of me, somewhere, was still resisting it.

About this time, I encountered a very strange man online. He was actively trying to provoke me to anger, and one reason it was strange is that I'm not on social media precisely *because* that's where this sort of thing usually happens. But I'd bought an old redware desk clock online, and he was the seller. It turned out to be a scam -- the clock's supposed redware housing was cheap plastic and the clock itself did not work. So I left a review stating that the clock wasn't as advertised and I was disappointed. He responded with a torrent of furious and vitriolic emails. The thing about his response that caught my attention, though, was that he wasn't defending himself. He wanted to fight, to provoke my anger. It was as if he had used the clock sale to troll whoever might buy it. And what was even more interesting, every time I felt my emotions start to rise in response to some new emailed nastygram, I felt something inside me lay a hand of calm restraint on that response. I recognized this feeling. I even knew what it meant. It goes right straight to the heart of what Indigenous Ceremony ***is***. But to follow this part, you need some information you might not have.

Ceremony as a process is the cornerstone of Shawn Wilson's work. Shawn, you might remember at this point, is a Cree scholar and a friend, and one of the three co-leaders of IKhana Fund (the other being Fiona Cram). As you read this passage from his book *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, pay particular

attention to the statements about what people do as they go into ceremony, and why they do it (Wilson 2009, 69).

> "In our cultures, an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly. When ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised level of consciousness. You could say that the specific rituals that make up the ceremony are designed to get the participants into a state of mind that will allow for the extraordinary to take place. As one Elder explained it to me: if it is possible to get every single person in a room thinking about the exact same thing for only two seconds, then a miracle will happen."

This miracle the Elder mentions is *epistemic*, meaning it's the emergence of Indigenous Knowledge. In a dialog with the beloved professor emeritus of evaluation research Edmund Gordon and several of his colleagues (Adams et al. 2015, 20), Shawn explains by broadening the term into "the miracle of the ceremony of enlightenment":

> "If you conduct research to gain enlightenment or to build a better community, to improve and maintain relationships, then that is a ritualized process. You must access liminal space, or create that space by setting a time or place for ritual, in order to be open. This creates a process whereby the sacred miraculous can become physical. The miracle of the ceremony of enlightenment takes us to a place where things shift and tie together, and then there is a translation process whereby the knowledge becomes cognitive." One of the dialogue participants asked Shawn if "'this sensitivity to process' is 'a characteristic of Native epistemology,' to which Shawn replied, 'I think so, yes, because it's relational. Relationship is a living process.'"

In Shawn's explanation, you can see that the spontaneous emergence of Indigenous Knowledge is *inextricably rooted in* **community** -- the web of relationships between all the elements and entities, including humans, in a given Place. That's why he says, at the end, "Relationship is a living process." If you think about the web of relationships that is a healthy pond or a healthy forest, or even a very healthy and ecologically sustainable human village, I think you'll be able to see at least a glimmer of what he means by relationship being a living process.

You can also see, in Shawn's explanation of enlightenment, that the spontaneous emergence of Indigenous Knowledge is *inextricably rooted in* **ceremony**, which is alignment of the larger community's web of relationships. In some types of Ceremony, one individual aligns with many others, from Ancestors to animal and plant relations and the Land itself (Adams et al. 2021). In some types of Ceremony, *many* individuals align *with each other* within the Land's Circle, with singular intent. It's this second type we want to pay attention to right now. The alignment of this type of Ceremony is so powerful that it can heal both Land and people (Adams et al. 2021), and can -- if you can get "every single person in a room thinking about the exact same thing for only two seconds" -- produce the emergence of Knowledge. That's precisely what happened in our 2023 meeting.

Ceremony is a complex process[1] *of weaving lived and living relationship* (Adams 2021h). Because of this, Ceremony is not a "method." Methods are linear, almost by default, because of the way they're communicated as a series of sequential steps. People in Western culture are used to thinking in terms of method when they encounter a new thing someone is doing, so we need to derail that very common but very wrong idea. You cannot "learn to do ceremony" by watching it, reading about it, or signing up for a class from someone who charges you a great deal of money to supposedly make you an "authorized" expert who can now "perform" the ceremony for a fee. For that matter, Ceremony is not a performance either. Ceremony is, instead, *a weaving of lived and living relationship from which Knowledge and healing can emerge*. You are engaging in Ceremony *right now*, with me and with the IKhana Fund team, through these words I have written, and with the Knowledge that manifests through these words. In this way, the Land is telling a particularly powerful story *through* you, no matter who you are or what cultural tradition you're in. That Story is telling as you live it out, as the Knowledge engages with you.

So what *is* Ceremony then? Indigenous people usually craft the simplest explanation by saying Ceremony is a way that humans honor the Land and all our relations, through an act of reciprocity that is generous, genuine, and loving. It can be an everyday act of renewal that's carried out by an individual or something bigger enacted by a group or even an entire community. Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (Corntassel 2014, 69) points out the common thread in all these descriptions is that Ceremony is, at its heart, "a process of giving back more than you take, which embodies an ethic of generosity and humility." At a deeper level of understanding and explanation, Ceremony realigns the people in a community with one another, realigns individual people with Place, and realigns communities with other communities and with the Land itself. It realigns us with our ancestors, our value systems, and our deep awareness of what constitutes right living even in a cultural world dominated by an ethic of profit and privilege. In doing these things, ceremony opens our hearts and minds to the Land, the Ancestors, and Knowledge. This is indeed humbling, which is good. It reminds us that we are just one small part of the great woven web that is life, no greater than any other part but accountable to all our relations anyway. Ceremony also realigns and restores community relationships within the larger world, so that (depending on the circumstances) a community can do ceremony with and for the Land that restores the health of a river, successfully invites the thunders to bring rain, or restores paths of connection and relationship between parts of the environment that have been damaged or broken apart. But one or more people in Western culture can *not* simply decide to "dance around" in a park or on their porch and "make it rain," because Ceremony is not a method but is a weaving of lived and living relationships that manifests Indigenous values.

It's also important to point out that "the miracle of enlightenment," which is the emergence of Knowledge that happens when Ceremony aligns people and weaves them into Community, is not a supernatural phenomenon. It is instead an absolutely natural one. This is an essential point, because the word "miracle" is usually used in Western culture to signify a phenomenon in which spiritual entities outside the material or physical world

intervene in material reality to alter, nullify, or suspend the natural laws that normally operate in a mechanical way to keep the physical world ticking along like clockwork. But Shawn's "miracle of enlightenment" refers to a complex phenomenon in which Indigenous Knowledge emerges naturally and spontaneously from the web of relationships between ontologically real entities. Furthermore, complexity is, by definition, a natural and mathematically-describable property of physical systems (Adams 2021h). So there's nothing at all supernatural about emergence and therefore nothing supernatural about Indigenous Knowledge or the way it emerges from a web of relationships. It's simply so hard for a group of people to consciously align this way, long enough for emergence to occur, and it's so powerful when it happens, that when it *does* happen it feels like a miracle. But it's not a supernatural event.

So what has all this got to do with the guy selling a junky troll clock and wanting to provoke my anger about it? Here's the thing about Ceremony: it's very, very hard to get perfectly aligned with the Land and with others in a group, long enough for Knowledge to emerge. If you are asking for a really big gift of emergent Knowledge, the type that permits the seasonal rains to come, for example, that alignment has to be very solid and secure.[2] Not even one person's attention can deviate, not for an instant, no matter what. And do you know what distracts any person's attention at a time like that, even if they are doing their best to stay focused? *Ego*.

Imagine eight strangers trying to lift a wrecked car off a pinned pedestrian. They have to focus, together; move, together; and act as a single unified entity. Anything less, and they don't stand a chance of budging that car. But if they all lift together "on the count of three," with common intent "to move it far enough towards the curb that the paramedic can slide him out real fast," and they really FOCUS . . . there's a chance a miracle will happen. In fact, there is a chance the Knowledge will come to these people, simultaneously, that the direction in which they had planned to move the car won't work for some reason, and that they need to do it a little differently -- which all of them understand and do without even speaking about it, moving as one person rather than eight. You've seen

reports about things like this, in the news. It happens from time to time.
But what if someone's ego makes him think, for even a fleeting moment, about the shirt he's going to ruin doing this, right before his big job interview in an hour? As this thought distracts some of that person's energy and attention, the group's unified focus falters. The miracle evaporates. They start to move the car, realize they can't go the way they'd planned to, hesitate, pull several different directions at once, then lose their grips and drop the car. The trapped pedestrian dies. Ego shifts a person's attention to themself and their own needs. One person's focus on their own personal needs destroys unified intent. The Ceremony, as a functional entity, collapses. The miracle of emergence becomes impossible.

> *I feel like that first meeting was very much all of us getting onto, like, a similar wavelength. And it's kind of like that. I'm thinking of it as like, you know, a kind of a physical principle. We all have these different wavelengths we're working on. But as these meetings go on, we all kind of get closer and closer. And then those wavelengths start to resonate and that's when we really are able to bounce these ideas off each other and get some really good work done. And so, I guess in my mind, that's what that first meeting was, kind of almost recalibrating. -- Jules Wassenas*

Some Indigenous Ceremonies take days and involve an entire village and all their visiting relatives. Those are usually the ceremonies that matter the most to the whole larger community, including the local ecosystem. If you are doing a big community ceremony, trying to weave a rich enough network of relationships in intentional and concerted alignment for Knowledge to emerge, and to hold it steady during hours-long pulses of focus over several days, it's not an easy thing to do. So even in a community where everyone knows exactly what's going on and is doing their best to participate responsibly, sooner or later something is going to happen that hooks someone's ego in a way that breaks their focus. That's just life.

So in a really important ceremony where it's essential that every person remains focused, it's important to periodically remind people they're in Ceremony and need NOT to let their egos react to things. In many cultural traditions, there are people whose essential job is to do this. They dress in a distinctive way so people will recognize their role and realize what's happening when they do their job. That job is to notice when someone's ego is just starting to break their focus and create the dissonance that threatens Ceremony. When they see this, they provoke the distracted person with an action that would normally elicit an angry response. When the provoked person feels their anger start to flare, however, and then sees who it is that provoked them, *they remember what's going on*. They realize how close they've come to destroying the Ceremony for everyone in the entire community. So they know they must immediately refocus, and they are able to do it at once. This practice protects the entire community that depends on the Ceremony, because it protects the integrity of the Ceremony itself. It also protects the person who nearly slipped up, because they certainly wouldn't want to feel the shame of single-handedly destroying whatever it is the Ceremony was to have done to benefit the entire community (including themselves).

The man with the clock provoked me, and I felt a calming and restraining force every time I started to respond with anger. This told me I had at some point entered, *and was still in*, an important space of very powerful Ceremony -- one I must not break by letting him engage my ego. So I studiously ignored the bait in his emails. I willed myself to open my hands and let go of the money I had lost, reminding myself of its relative lack of worth compared to that of whatever the Land is doing in this work that had woven the space of Ceremony in which I somehow found myself. When I found angry thoughts about injustice rising in me -- "What he did is not *fair!*" -- I remembered the context in which all this was happening. I asked myself then, *What matters the very most right now?* And I knew the answer: the most important thing was the Knowledge that had flowed so miraculously in our gathering in May, that had continued to emerge in astonishing ways for months afterward. The only hope I had of getting aligned enough now to be able to understand it was to *stay focused*, to stay in Ceremony, to not let my ego and my own negative emotions pull me out of that space.

And as I kept doing that, even as the occasional nasty email appeared in my inbox, I slowly began to remember all the other times I'd had to maintain self-control in the face of injustice during a Ceremony. Of course, I didn't want to remember these events or even think about them. They made me feel like it's utterly impossible to ever form a giving-and-receiving community moving in ceremony that has both Indigenous and Western people in it. *Well*, I thought, when I realized this was the thought arising, *there's the core of the Hard Problem, right there. Those experiences are the reason I've been feeling like there's literally no viable way to form a giving-and-receiving community of both Indigenous and Western people that moves in Ceremony*. I had not wanted to remember these events, look at them, or deal with them. So I certainly couldn't imagine how I could ever talk about them with Western allies. But we cannot solve a problem without looking at it, and the harder the problem, the closer the attention we must give it. After all, ego -- meaning the prioritizing of our own self-interest -- is particularly likely to divert our attention from the hard or painful things we most need to face in order to learn.

I went for a walk down at the water yesterday and was just keeping that in mind -- maybe considering how we may want to include ceremony in what we're doing. It's maybe worth discussing as a group, because we all have different ideas of ceremony. And how that might shape what we're doing, and how we can a bit more intentionally bring the Land into what we're doing -- that would be, I think, a cool discussion to have.
-- Shawn Wilson

It's exceedingly difficult to overcome Western peoples' assumptions that Indigenous people are somehow only as culturally different from themselves as, say, the French are from the British. That is not even close to the level of difference that exists, and it's the place we have to start unpacking the Hard Problem.

People in France and Britain speak different languages and eat different kinds of foods because they have different cultures. The same can be said of the differences between the Choctaw and the Cree. The larger dominant culture is beginning to understand and acknowledge Indigenous cultural diversity, and also starting to really hear us when we say that each specific Indigenous culture is grounded in a specific geographic Place. And because we point it out with increasing insistence, people of the dominant culture are also realizing that no matter where they live, the Indigenous people who historically lived with and in relationship to that place have been pushed into the margins there by Western colonization. So a lot of Western meetings these days have added a land acknowledgement and a small ceremony by an Elder to their usual suite of opening welcomes from meeting organizers, the host institution's leaders, and local civic dignitaries. The land acknowledgement and Indigenous ceremony are seen as inclusive acts of fairness that recognize the people whose land the meeting physically occupies. That's a good thing. We are glad to be included.

And we understand the way the meeting in which we are participating functions because Indigenous people live in a day-to-day world dominated by Western culture. That's just how it is.

But a problem arises when *Western* people participate in an *Indigenous* meeting that seems, to them, to be structured the very same way. We also have an Opening Ceremony with an Elder. And we also have something that sounds like a land acknowledgement. Depending on where the meeting is hosted, local civic dignitaries and institutional leaders may offer words of welcome to meeting attendants too. But if the meeting is run primarily by and for Indigenous people, what's really going on here is very different from what happens in a Western meeting that seems to begin the very same way. Western people simply don't realize it.

When Indigenous people open a meeting with Opening Ceremony, we also close that meeting at the end with a Closing Ceremony. In my experience, the only "closing ceremony" in most Western meetings is an announcement of future events or publications, or of housekeeping issues such as reminders to fill out evaluation forms or return room keys. This difference matters. Indigenous people have an actual Closing Ceremony as well as Opening Ceremony because *everything in between those two events takes place within a Circle of the Ceremony we create together throughout the meeting*. Stop and think about that a moment. Consider this statement in the context of what I have already told you about Indigenous Ceremony and its significance to a process of community alignment.

Now look at those words again: *Everything between Opening and Closing Ceremony in an Indigenous meeting takes place within a Circle of the Ceremony we create together throughout the meeting*. So Opening Ceremony for an Indigenous meeting is not perfunctory. It is not a ritual that starts with the first word of introduction said and ends with the last word of introduction said. Opening Ceremony in an Indigenous meeting opens a Circle of Ceremony space of the type I've been describing, and that special space must be respectfully closed at the end of the meeting with an appropriate Closing Ceremony. Furthermore, the "land acknowledgement" we do in our meetings actually invites the Land itself into the Ceremony. You are on that Land. You are doing Ceremony. The Land should be invited if you want to accomplish something wonderful in your meeting. And that's what holding a meeting within Ceremony is about -- inviting something wonderful to happen in the meeting, that makes the meeting productive and worthwhile.

The fact that Indigenous meetings are held in Ceremony has repercussions on the expected level of everyone's participation. As Shawn explained: "When ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised level of consciousness. . . into a state of mind that will allow for the extraordinary to take place."

This information points to another difference between Indigenous and Western ceremonies and meetings, both. Indigenous people hold meetings within Ceremony because our ceremonies help us find solutions for practical problems such as improving health care delivery

or public housing. It's right there in the passage about Ceremony from Shawn's dialog with Ed Gordon's colleagues, when he said: "If you conduct research to gain enlightenment or to build a better community, to improve and maintain relationships, then that is a ritualized process," meaning Ceremony. If you are delivering better health care or public housing, you are building a better community. These are practical goals. The Ceremony in which we are engaged together, right now, is attempting to build a better community too -- a giving-and-receiving community that moves in ceremony. Ceremonies also help us acquire knowledge and wisdom in academic or policy information gatherings. In research, Ceremony helps us understand the natural world.

In Western culture, there is such a big divide between the secular and the sacred that no one imagines ceremony could have anything to do with practical matters like improving public housing or health care delivery. That's why some Western people imagine our ceremonies are actually about animals weaving ribbons in our hair, is that they are thinking ceremony is strictly something spiritual and even magical, not "real world" practical and pragmatic. But there's no divide between material and spiritual in Indigenous culture, and even Ceremony itself is neither secular nor sacred. It is not prayer and it is not magic, but it is also not perfunctory or going through motions that are without power. Ceremony is an alignment of self and others with the Land (Adams et al. 2021). This takes very hard work and good concentration. It takes setting the ego aside. Then, as Shawn said, if we are very lucky, the miracle of enlightenment can happen.

Remember that immediately after the August purging event, I started to notice Indian corn showing up in unexpected places. I told you that even though my people have a deep relationship with Corn, I couldn't understand what it could possibly have to do with the Hard Problem in IKhana Fund. So I did Ceremony again, asking specifically for Knowledge about the larger pattern I thought I was starting to see. I told you that when I did this, the Knowledge floated with gentle strength into my awareness: *It is there, yes. Write what you see moving. Trust the process.* So I started writing about the Ceremony I thought I could see and feel moving. And as I described and explained it, I began to see how it related to the three baskets of Knowledge we had been given. That was very encouraging. But I still worried about how it could possibly address the Hard Problem of the different ways Indigenous and Western people experience and understand Ceremony. I needed to be sure that the ceremony I perceived was coming from the Land, not from my own desperate need to find a way forward. The more important the work, the greater our responsibility to carefully discern the source of any information that comes to us about it.

What I thought I saw, that I wrote about all through the end of September, was a variant form of a very specific ceremony that's been carried out by my own people and many others for generations. It is often called Green Corn

Ceremony, and it takes place when some of the early ears of the corn are harvested, long before the main crop ripens. But I'd had no garden in which to plant corn that year, so of course had not harvested any corn either. No one I knew was carrying out this particular Ceremony right then. And it certainly wasn't a ceremony I had initiated. So if this Ceremony was in fact present, it was weaving its own self into existence. This raised a number of concerns, the first and simplest of which was the Ceremony's timing. Corn is not fully ripe until late fall -- roughly the time of year it really was now, on my calendar. But the corn that is harvested during the ceremony I thought I was seeing is green, meaning not yet ripe. It's harvested significantly before the main crop ripens. The real Green Corn Ceremony that many of my people and those of other nations still carry out had happened months ago. It was not happening now. This was not the right time of year for it.

Since the Removal (Choctaw Nation 2017), the Choctaw Nation has been based in southeastern Oklahoma. That's about a thousand miles south of the place in northwestern Nebraska where I live now, so the timing of seasons is different there than here. The corn is planted earlier but it also has a longer growing season, so I wasn't sure how that worked out on the calendar. Also, I haven't lived in Oklahoma since I was six years old. What I'm telling you is that I don't have any idea when the corn is green down there. Worse, our original Choctaw homeLand is about five hundred miles farther south than that, in the area of present-day Mississippi and Alabama. Green Corn harvest might well have been even earlier there than in Oklahoma. Either way, it seemed to me that Green Corn Ceremony couldn't possibly be playing out all around me in some way now, even though it felt as though it was, and even though this was the notion affirmed in Ceremony when I was told to go ahead and write up what I felt moving. The timing was off by two or three months, so I just didn't see how it could make sense. How could I be feeling Green Corn Ceremony enfolding me and teaching me Knowledge that could resolve the Hard Problem, if it had already taken place months ago?

So I got the bright idea that I'd use calendar facts to put this crazy notion to a test and maybe get myself off the hook. I wanted to do this because, at this particular moment last fall, I had not yet worked through all the obstacles I had to work through to get to where I am now, writing these words you are reading. Which, if you think about it, means I am not telling you this story in a linear chronological fashion. Which, if you think about it, is Indigenous. Which, if you think about it, also means it might seem kind of strange for me to use the calendar as an evaluation tool. Which it was. But . . . calendars are referents that permit us to look at the real seasonal events that are, in fact, geared into the Land and therefore the larger and more important community-wide Ceremonies. The timing of Green Corn Ceremony is set by when the corn reaches a particular stage of development. That's what tells people it's time to do this particular ceremony. But if I ask someone "when does that happen where you live," they are going to answer me by using the calendar that serves as a common reference point these days. In the real Indigenous world, the reference point is other seasonal markers of the Land itself. Those are the reference markers we use to talk to each other about the timing of things. You'll see what I mean, and what the difference is, in just a moment.

All right. So I got out my big Choctaw culture book that was written by our tribal archeologist, Ian Thompson. I was pretty sure I'd find some sort of information there that could tell me if what I was experiencing in the way of "green corn ceremony" was metaphor in the way that Western people use that word, meaning symbolic and poetic, or if it was instead metaphor the way Indigenous people use that word. Indigenous metaphor, *nature's* metaphor, is the vocabulary of the universe. Life, corn included, provides the syntax that makes the Land's metaphor a language we can understand (Adams et al. 2022). Western and Indigenous views of metaphor are very different, ontologically, and they had very different consequences on the nature and level of my responsibility in this situation.

What I found out about the timing in our old homeLands in the deep south, in what's now Alabama and Mississippi, is that the corn hits milk stage for Green Corn Ceremony in the month blackberries ripen. So that's when they did the Ceremony there historically, before the Removal. Down there, Blackberry Month is roughly mid-June to mid-July, spanning Summer Solstice. Well it was late September when I looked this up. So I figured I had answered my big question. *I couldn't be seeing <u>actual</u> Ceremony,* I thought to myself, *because it's out of phase. It's almost three months too late to be actual Choctaw Green Corn Ceremony time! Whatever pattern it is that I'm seeing, it has to be merely symbolic, not real and actual.* I was using the calendar referent to evaluate the reality of my experience, you see, and it did not measure up. This should have distressed me, as it meant I had no solution to the Hard Problem after all. But because I still wasn't even sure I wanted to deal with the Hard Problem, what I felt instead was relief.

But. Just exactly as I was celebrating this thought, sitting in my chair with the book still lying open across my lap, the kitchen door flew open. Tapestry's co-president and one of the IKhana Fund planners from the beginning, Jo Belasco, who staffs our prairie facility with me, had come back from buying groceries in town. She was so excited that she galloped, wind-swept, into the room like a herd of wild horses -- and her arms were FILLED with a dozen cartons of fresh blackberries! As I gaped at them in astonishment, she cried out, "Look!! Look what they had at our little grocery store! I don't know how, but somehow they got inundated with boxes and boxes and boxes of fresh blackberries! And no one can eat them that fast in this little town so they marked them down to half price and I bought us all these boxes!!! There are so many that if we eat them all, we can go get even more!!"

This is how the Land communicates, right here. I asked about the timing of Green Corn Ceremony: "Is it possible this Ceremony is somehow happening, in some way I don't understand, right here and right now, where I am?" It's a very important question about whether or not a lived and living Ceremony was somehow actively weaving its own self right then. The answer I found in a highly reliable book was that Green Corn Ceremony happens when the blackberries are ripe. And then, quite literally as I finished reading those words, a huge harvest of fresh and very ripe blackberries landed in my lap. I had been standing in a framework of Western linear calendar time when I asked my question, and the Land yanked me back into Real

Time -- the Land's time -- to answer it: *The Western calendar has nothing to do with this, and the answer is YES.*

So I went out onto the Land and made an offering of gratitude. The most powerful and profound Ceremony is seldom an easy or gentle process, but now I had to admit that somehow a form of Green Corn Ceremony had spun itself into existence as the Land's reply to my call for help in understanding how we could possibly form a giving-and receiving community of Indigenous and Western people that moves together in ceremony. It took me through the end of the year to clear out all the internal hurdles I still had to identify and deal with in order to start writing the manuscript you're reading, but once that happened I started to feel encouraged by the possibilities. I saw that the first step to creating the Community described to us in our gathering was to share information about the Hard Problem that would help us resolve it, and that it was possible to do this seemingly impossible thing within the Circle of Green Corn Ceremony the Land was dancing out for us. In fact, I *had* to share the Hard Problem. Because "a giving and receiving community" is one in which there is *sharing*.

Among almost all Indigenous nations that grow corn, the first harvest -- which is of ***unripe*** and therefore "*green*" corn -- is exceedingly important (Pesantubbee 1993; Bigler 2018; Thompson 2019). All the powerful things that are part of this first harvest comprise Green Corn Ceremony, arguably the single most important ceremony of the entire year among many Corn Nations. (A corn nation is a tribe or other group in a close reciprocal relationship with corn. Many Indigenous peoples have a particularly close reciprocal relationship with a primary food nation such as buffalo, salmon, wild rice, or tarot.) Green Corn Ceremony tells a meaningful Story for Western allies in the IKhana Fund community. We are harvesting the bountiful gift of Indigenous Knowledge in IKhana Fund, rather than the gift of corn from the one many nations call Corn Mother. But the parallels between the two crops and their ceremony of first harvest co-exist in powerful Indigenous metaphor.

Though most people in the dominant culture don't realize it, corn can be harvested and eaten at two different stages of growth. Indigenous peoples of the Americas grow, and have grown, an incredibly diverse array of traditional corn varieties, and the fully ripened kernels of all these varieties are starchy rather than sugary on the inside, and hard rather than soft on the outside. Fully ripened corn is harvested in the fall when the leaves, stalks, and the husks over the ears have all dried out and are no longer green.

The husks are pulled back from the ear after picking so the corn can be dried for long-term storage. When ready for use, the corn can be ground or pounded, nixtamalized, parched, roasted, or boiled, and made into many different kinds of foods.

While corn ripens, there's a stage in development when the ears have filled inside husks that are still very green, but the newly-plump kernels inside the husk are still soft. A white liquid "milk" comes out of the kernels at this time if they're pressed with a fingernail. The sugars inside the kernels of green corn have not yet turned into starch at this stage of development, so the corn tastes sweet. This is the corn that's picked in the early first harvest of the year and shared in a big annual feast as part of a highly significant cultural event of "reflection, reassessment, and renewal" (Thompson 2019, 90-91) that constitutes Green Corn Ceremony. Only a small part of the green corn crop is picked of course. Most of the corn is left in the fields to fully ripen.

People of European descent who immigrated to the Americas have generally preferred wheat, rye, and other Old World grains over corn. The sweet taste of green corn got their attention though. Early on, they started selectively breeding varieties of corn that are particularly sweet and soft when still green, and hybrids of these varieties constitute the modern sweet corn sold in grocery stores and at farmstands today. The husks still wrapped around the "corn on the cob" sold to consumers are even still quite visibly green.

An entire field of commercially-grown or garden sweet corn is harvested at the green stage as if the entire crop is ripe then. But in fact, no sweet corn variety is permitted to fully ripen (unless it's raised as a seed crop for future planting). Western culture's preference for, and emphasis on, growing and eating a type of corn that is only harvested and eaten while it's still unripe, precisely because that's when it's sweetest, tells an interesting story about food priorities. But there is even more important food for thought in the fact that when the dominant culture appropriated unripe or green corn as, simply, "corn" -- redefining an entire crop by the immature stage of just a few cultivars -- they shucked off and discarded Indigenous peoples' traditional Green Corn Ceremony at the same time. This stripping of corn from ceremony replicates and re-enacts Western culture's own stripping of the material from the spiritual. The same theme is echoed in the way many non-Indigenous authors have stripped the spiritual aspects of Indigenous ways off the material aspects, to focus only on a supposed "Indigenous spirituality" that is, at best, merely candy corn -- a sickeningly sweet substance that superficially looks like corn but isn't even real food.

Whether you're Indigenous or Western, *the emotions you felt* when you read about Western culture's appropriation of Indigenous corn may help you see how Green Corn Ceremony dances out a space for *"reflection, reassessment, and renewal"* in those who engage with the ceremony that's weaving itself through the words of this paper. The active presence of this ceremony means I, as the writer, must engage in reflection, reassessment, and renewal too -- and, in fact, you have been reading about my struggles to engage in those actions with honesty and courage as I tried to understand the Knowledge we were given in the second IKhana Fund meeting. Green Corn

Ceremony demands the same of you, the reader. Remember that earlier I told you Ceremony is neither method nor magic, but *a weaving of lived and living relationships*. I told you then that you're engaging in Ceremony *right now*, through reading these words I have written and engaging with the Knowledge that manifests in these words. You may choose, of course, to opt out of this process at any time. No one in IKhana Fund has demanded you read this paper or engage with us. But if you wish to explore the possibility of joining Indigenous people in creating a giving-and-receiving community that moves in ceremony, for the better well-being of the Earth and all its peoples, this is a doorway the Land has provided.

We Indigenous people are standing our ground for the Land now though (Adams et al. 2022), so the one choice you cannot make is to pick out just the parts of the Ceremony you like and then discard all the rest. Corn itself, just Corn, tells a story about the kind of cultural misappropriation that takes something of central life-sustaining importance to other people, strips it of meaning, and redefines it *for everyone* as a mere side-dish. The commercial varieties of corn that Western culture does permit to fully ripen are primarily used these days to feed livestock or make gasoline. Western culture sees the "Indian corn" that still exists as an exotic variety suitable mainly for decorative purposes. In fact, this is how I myself have too often been seen by my Western professional peers. It's one of the reasons I've had to struggle through the demands of this Green Corn Ceremony myself as I tried to align well enough with the Knowledge that came to us to write this paper. In order to honestly reflect on, reassess, and renew my relationship with people in Western culture enough to help a new community come into existence, I had to face and reflect on incidents of the Hard Problem I really wanted to forget. That is not at all an easy thing to do.

I'm thinking about -- like in ceremonies, I'm very conscious of this -- of what becomes gatekeeping functions. Mostly because those gatekeeping functions usually keep us out. But if I sort of switch my thinking around a different way, kind of like what Jess is talking about just made me do, it's like also we have -- it's not we would call it a gatekeeper. But in certain ceremonies, there is someone that's like a doorkeeper. Their job is not to keep people out. It's to invite people in. But it's also to make sure that the space stays safe. So, they do keep out, I guess maybe they could keep out, people -- but it's more about keeping out the negative energy and bad spirits, and containing the space so it's a safe space. So, they, you know, they open and close the door to let people in and out, but maintain the physical, the spiritual boundary, I guess, around the space. So, I don't know how you incorporate that. I don't know how I'll start it. It's just an important function that I still don't know how to incorporate here. -- Shawn Wilson

Chapter 10

The deeply intertwined nature of Indigenous meeting and Ceremony is very different from the way both meetings and ceremony are understood and experienced by people in the dominant culture. As a result, when Western people attend an *Indigenous* meeting -- one that Indigenous people are holding in Indigenous space, by and for ourselves, knowing exactly what's going on and doing everything we can to facilitate and empower the emergence of Knowledge -- our Western allies' expectations can lead to actions that create enormous problems. And the more personal power those Western attendees feel they have, the bigger the problems they tend to cause.

Indigenous meeting participants understand what the meeting's Opening and Closing Ceremonies are about, of course. So, no matter how many hours or days a meeting is to last, Indigenous participants start by very carefully feeling out the movements of Knowledge, of the Land, and of each other -- gently beginning to step beyond the everyday into that raised level of consciousness Shawn mentions. But as we are doing this, the allies we have invited to participate tend to look around at all the thoughtful, quiet faces and think, "Gosh, they're really kind of dead in the water here. Someone needs to jump-start this thing and get the ball rolling." So they very energetically assume the position of meeting leadership: "Well, since no one seems to know what to do here, let me

help you out. What you need to do is . . .!!" The rushing power of Western culture's very active doing-ness barrels right through the middle of our Ceremony and punctures what we were building together. Even when everyone tries to hang onto it, tries not to let their ego make them feel angry, the Circle of Ceremony collapses.

This has happened in every meeting I have ever gone to where the Western people in attendance felt they were there to "help" us and were permitted to speak in the session. Just one person can puncture a Ceremony that 30 or 40 people are weaving, by behaving in a way that disrupts the group's focus -- usually by doing their best to align the focus of everyone present *with <u>them</u>*. They don't do this with malicious intent, of course. But they still do it. I think it happens because they have literally no idea what is going on or how destructive they're being -- which makes their idea they are there "helping" us rather ironic.

Once a Western person does this in a meeting, everybody gives up on having anything productively Indigenous take place. If they haven't yet gotten the group process going, there's clearly no point in trying to do it with this person present. It's pointless to say anything to them because they don't understand. Everyone's focus shifts to trying to at least make some use of the fact that everyone has traveled to come together in this place, and that there's still a little bit of pleasant sharing that can happen, and some genial fun. Of course, we feel anger and grief that Western culture's presence in our lives has once again kept us from doing the powerful work together we know how to do, that benefits everyone. But as a Lakota Elder told a group of us once, when we got very upset about a particularly painful situation of this type, "Our anger doesn't hurt anyone but ourselves. It harms our health in multiple ways. You have to let it go." That's a very hard thing, though, to feel like you can't even sit down together and live the way you know how to live because someone else doesn't understand it and is certain you need them to straighten things out. And then having to simply let go of the resulting anger and frustration so it doesn't harm your own health isn't easy either. As a result, many of us have increasingly tried to simply avoid being in situations that create such dangerously destructive emotional responses.

I've mentioned how hard it is to overcome Western peoples' assumptions that Indigenous people are somehow only as culturally different from themselves as, say, the French are from the British, and that this is the place we have to start unpacking the Hard Problem. I've also described several aspects of Indigenous ceremony, including the fact that we consciously engage Ceremony in the meetings we hold to solve practical problems. Now the *reflection*, *reassessment* and *renewal* processes of Green Corn Ceremony can walk us farther into an exploration of the things our allies must understand if they are to someday walk in ceremony with us, as part of an Indigenous community.

You know, what we're talking about is making this process of securing funds from an Ikhana Fund donor a ceremony. It feels like I should have seen it all along but I didn't. -- Dawn Adams

In the reality Indigenous people experience, the ceremonial, spiritual, and relational aspects of animals and plants cannot be stripped from their material natures. I do not mean that doing this is merely wrong. I mean it is *not possible*. Seminole scholar Susan Miller (Miller 2009, 28) has pointed out that:

> "People must relate to animals respectfully, repaying game species with gifts and ceremonies and limiting hunting so as to preserve sustainable animal populations. Plant species are conceived similarly as relatives or nations with rights and needs that people must respect. A human nation or community dramatizes its relation to other members of the cosmic family in ceremonies such as Green Corn Dance. . . Because everything in the cosmos is sacred, all human activities are sacred: government, education, agriculture, hunting, manufacture, architecture, recreation. Nothing is secular. Everything must be done with that in mind. The well-being and even the survival of Indigenous peoples and the living cosmos depend on the integrity of this entire set of relationships. Notwithstanding the great diversity of Indigenous cultures and their worldviews, this system of thought is seen as generally true of all."

Perhaps this can help you see why our Indigenous IKhana Fund group felt it was so essential to generate grant

protocols -- something that seems secular to Western people -- *in Ceremony*. It's also why I engaged with the Land *in Ceremony* when I found myself struggling to write this report, even though writing a report of a meeting to develop grant protocols would, again, strike most Western people as a secular activity. Perhaps you can begin to see, even just in this paper, what it really means when we say that Indigenous people do not separate the secular and sacred. Another way of saying it is that we do not separate the material and spiritual. It's actually *not possible* for these things to be pulled apart.

Notice, too, in that passage of Susan Miller's, the mention of Green Corn Dance, which is part of and a variant of the thing we've been talking about as Green Corn Ceremony. Also notice how much more deeply this passage takes you into the significance of Green Corn Ceremony -- as a recognition and celebration of, an aligning with (because of the nature of ceremony) the "cosmic" familial relationship or kinship between human and non-human communities in a world in which every relationship that exists -- between teacher and learner, governing and governed, hunter and hunted -- is literally sacred. In a reality where literally *nothing* is merely secular, reaching into Green Corn Ceremony to pluck out just the unripe kernels of sweet corn in order to grow them in a secular way is quite literally profane. And if "the well-being and even the survival of Indigenous peoples and the living cosmos depend on the integrity of this entire set of relationships" and the ceremonies that mediate those relationships, then the commercial agricultural system as it's operating right now is creating serious problems for everyone. Which of course contemporary people are beginning to realize may be the case. "The living cosmos," after all, includes Western people too, not just Indigenous ones.

Choctaw scholar Michelene E. Pesantubbee (1993:305-307) pointed out the same basic connections between community, ceremony, and everyone's continued well-being in the Cherokee Green Corn Dance, a four-day ceremony. During this time, new fires were lit from a sacred central fire that "had to be purified and regenerated each year to maintain the health of the people." The Choctaw have a similar tradition, so the ceremony associated with a first harvest of green corn among my nation is called *Luak Mosholi*, which translates as "Fires Extinguished" (Thompson 2019, 89). These traditions shine a crucial light on the sacred, interwoven, ceremony-based connection between the corn and *every other part of life*. The central significance of purifying and regenerating the hearth fire *and the community and all those in it,* as the heart of a ceremony that is timed to the early harvest of green corn, begins to reveal the deeply interwoven and complex nature of Indigenous ceremony.

Once you realize that the name of this ceremony, in at least one nation's language, refers to the event of putting out all the existing fires in the community, then relighting every one of them from a new communal fire that has been freshly kindled and newly sanctified by qualified Elders, your comprehension of "Green Corn Ceremony" expands and begins to encompass the much bigger context for the role corn plays in this ceremony. The date on which the green corn goes into milk stage sets the time for doing the ceremony, yes, but that ceremony is not specifically or exclusively *about* the green corn at all. It is also not specifically *about* the later and much bigger

harvest-to-come of ripe corn. Green Corn Ceremony is, like Indigenous ceremony in general, richer and deeper, more complex and ontologically meaningful, than the visible and apparent surface activities would suggest.

So now we can circle back around to the crucial role of Ceremony in the giving-and-receiving community IKhana Fund is to be, and why inviting the Western allies who are part of this community into Indigenous Ceremony presents us with a Hard Problem to solve. Because of Western culture's separation of the material and spiritual realms, modern European languages don't really have a word for community gatherings that repair and maintain the closely-woven relationships between the material and spiritual elements of living systems. Instead, community gatherings in Western culture can be secular events such as town council meetings *or* they can be sacred religious events such as worship services. The word "ceremony" usually applies only to those actions or events that are deemed sacred but not to those that are considered secular. As one simple example, many Americans would be willing to use the word "ceremony" for a Christmas Eve worship service, but not for the Christmas Eve tradition of children opening gifts from their parents.

By comparison, Indigenous Ceremony supports and restores the intertwined integrity of the spiritual and material components of living systems, which must be fully integrated to function properly. That's why these ceremonies are so often said to maintain the health and ensure the survival of the entire ecosystem of which the people doing the Ceremony are constituent members. So even the simple act of using the English word "ceremony" for an event like *Luak Mosholi* creates, right off the bat, Western assumptions and expectations about Indigenous culture that are incorrect. Yet if we use a term like *Luak Mosholi*, we have to explain what it is. And sooner or later, the person we're explaining this to is going to say, "Oh I understand now; it's a ceremony" -- and we'll be right back in the place of misunderstanding we were trying to avoid. This is not merely a semantics problem. It's *a difference in perceived reality* problem that's perniciously hard to communicate our way through.

The material and the spiritual are, ontologically speaking, so deeply integrated in the reality Indigenous people experience that the Western term "secular" -- which refers specifically to things with no spiritual aspect -- is literally without meaning in Indigenous Reality. That's why Miller wrote that absolutely nothing in Indigenous reality is merely secular. Nothing *can* be secular, because tearing the spiritual off the material is lethally destructive. Western people actually know this. Most feel that the moment in which a human being's spiritual self separates from their material self is the moment of that person's *death*.[3] In a similar way, and for much the same reason, the separation of the material and spiritual aspects of fire, corn, salmon, sage, soil, and water (to list just six basic things humans engage with) is also lethally destructive. That's why Miller writes that "the well-being and even the survival of Indigenous peoples and the living cosmos depend on the integrity of this entire set of relationships" maintained by Green Corn Ceremony. That's what Indigenous Ceremony *does*. It maintains the integrity of sacred relationships of all kinds, especially between the material and spiritual aspects of everything that makes up the living cosmos.

Green Corn Ceremony maintains these critical relationships by engaging human beings in processes of reflection, reassessment, and renewal. These are not easy processes for anyone, and I'm including myself in that statement. But they are essential to the well-being and survival of the living cosmos. Green Corn Ceremony challenges our commitment to the values we really want to uphold, in the face of our natural tendency to avoid dealing with the unpleasant things we'd rather not even acknowledge. That's the struggle I've been describing to you throughout this paper, that was necessary for me to engage with before I could even write the words you are reading now. It's something everyone coming into an Indigenous giving-and-receiving community of both Indigenous and Western people moving in ceremony has to do. It's hard for every last one of us to face. And it's what makes the Hard Problem so hard.

Quite a few years ago now, I participated in a meeting of Indigenous peoples from several different continents. There was a sprinkling of Western scientists among the group, mostly from a nearby university's ecology research program that collected TEK, Traditional Ecological Knowledge. TEK is the term Western scientists use for the part of Indigenous Knowledge that is a body of information about the material parts of the ecosystem in which those ecologists are interested (Tapestry Institute 2019). Things like song and story are parts of Indigenous ecosystems too, but Western ecologists consider these elements to be cultural, not ecological. At any rate, there were some of these scientists present, and they were ones who had been working with several of the Indigenous communities at the meeting, collecting TEK data from them so they could study the impact of changing environmental patterns on the animals and plants in the various ecosystems.

At this meeting, I went to a break-out session that was mostly of Elders -- men and women with a great deal of experience, wisdom, and status in their communities. One of the scientists who supervised the collecting of data from various tribal groups attended this break-out session too. We met in an upstairs area in a large and very open university building where students ate meals and got together for coffee during the regular academic term. At the moment, though, it was between terms so the space

was largely empty. All of us sat down in folding chairs around a very long table made by pushing together several of the long cafeteria tables. So it was a typical Western setting. I think there must have been 25 or 30 Elders there, and 4 or 5 people like me who had been invited to listen so we could share later with our own communities.

Please be aware that this event, that I'm about to describe now, happened exactly as it's depicted, but that I have altered the details of the story so it's ethical for me to share it. This is not my story, and the Knowledge that actually began to emerge in this meeting is not my Knowledge. It is therefore not appropriate for me to share it with other people. I am changing the details so I can protect that Knowledge but share the part of what happened that speaks to Indigenous and Western collaboration in general.

A truly venerable member of this august group of Elders did a very modest and not-flashy Opening Ceremony, though he did not announce it as such. But we all knew it for what it was, though I am not sure if the attending scientist recognized it or not. At any rate, it meant we were gathered within a Circle of Ceremony. Now the Elders could get down to business.

The animals and plants in these peoples' homelands were not as common as they used to be, and not in as good a condition. This threatened traditional foodways and cultural practices of many kinds. What was worse, it threatened the whole web of life in these places. The Elders were working together in that space of Ceremony to see if Knowledge would emerge about what was going on. If it did, insight about what was happening, maybe even ideas how they might help things get better, could come into being.

After the Elder's quiet Ceremony opened the space for this, everyone was still for a while, thinking and feeling and aligning with the Land and one another. Then, one by one, the Elders began to speak. We could all feel Knowledge already starting to stir. Each Elder shared a thing they had observed. One man talked about the fish he caught, and the protocols for recording things about these fish for the TEK data. He wondered if maybe collecting data right at that moment took both him and the fish out of the proper ceremony space for fishing they should be in. So he didn't know, but he wondered if maybe this was why the fish were not coming to him so often now as they used to. [4] An old woman said she had actually been wondering a little about this too. She always said her prayers and made the right offerings before she took the plants she cut in the forest for food, but she felt like maybe handling the little device that recorded her location and sent it to the big computer, and making notes about the time of day and all these other things when she had just taken up the plants and put them in her basket . . . well, it seemed to her it had changed the feeling inside her as she harvested. She thought maybe she was breaking the relationship the forest and her people had established so long ago.

Quite a few people began to nod their heads, and several more shared stories of their own experiences. They had noticed something similar, a change in the feeling they had when they took the food animals or food plants. Sometimes it had to do with collecting the TEK data, but sometimes it didn't. It was hard to see the pattern, so

people really started to focus on what tripped that sensation. Was it writing things in the notebook? Was it using an electronic device? What if you didn't collect any data, but you had done so in the past? Did the changed feeling persist? Did people who weren't participating in the data collection at all have this experience too? You could really feel the Knowledge stirring and rising now, as everyone's thoughts began to align.

Suddenly, with a sound as loud and sharp as a gun going off, the scientist who was present slammed his arm and fist onto the table and yelled very angrily, "What do you people **want** from us!?!?" Then he began to rail about how he and all the other TEK researchers were "just trying to protect your food resources and also abide by all your proscriptions" -- he said the word with vehemence -- "and your cultural rules!!" He went on at length, outraged and furious. It was clear he had taken personal offense at something that wasn't about him at all. It was about the relationship between these people and the animals and plants they had been in reciprocal relationship with for generations.

The scientist actually could have learned something very important here, if he had only dropped his own ego to listen and learn. Instead, he blew apart the Ceremony space and shattered the amazing and beautiful thing that had been forming there. Peoples' expressions even looked shattered, in fact. Many of us were devastated by the way this one man had destroyed something that hadn't been easy to bring into existence, a miracle that might never return. Others' lips were pressed tightly together and their bodies were stiff with restrained anger. What had been happening had seemed so important that we were all grieved and angry to lose it. It seemed wrong that one man could do such a destructive thing to so many people and Lands, in one small act of ignorance.

The scientist had no idea what he'd done, of course. He thought we were in the kind of meeting he knew, that people were speaking out of their own self-interest or their own political agendas, the way people do in Western culture's committee meetings, school board meetings, or civic government meetings. That is, he did not recognize this meeting as being Ceremony at all. He thought Ceremony was a spiritual gathering and that this meeting was purely secular. The research he did that used the TEK data was, in his mind, also wholly secular even though it involved animals and plants that had important spiritual relationships with one another and with the Indigenous people they nourished, protected, healed, and taught. The very sad result is that he inadvertently destroyed the emergence of important ecological knowledge that could have benefited his own work as well as all the people and beings of all those places, simply because he didn't know any better.

The individual ceremonies in which Indigenous people engage -- for example, a simple tobacco ceremony such as the one I described to my friend in an assessment and evaluation publication (Adams et al. 2021) -- help people realign on a regular basis with the larger reality of which they are a part. This maintains healthy integrated relationships between the material and spiritual realms within that individual's own life. Communities engage in larger and more elaborate ceremonies that do much the same thing at a larger scale, reweaving sacred relationships throughout the entire community. With that in mind, look at this description of the Choctaw Green Corn Ceremony -- *Luak Mosholi*, the ceremony of Fires Extinguished (Thompson 2019, 90-91l; bold fonts are Thompson's):

> "The Green Corn Ceremony was a time of purification, of giving thanks, and of renewal. Somewhat different versions of the Choctaw Green Corn Ceremony were conducted at different times and places (York 2013, Cherry 1937, Wright 1937). In the early 1700s, the Choctaw Green Corn Ceremony involved extinguishing all of the fires in the community. The community participated in a fast, called **hullochi** (see Byington 1915:170). Women cleaned out their cooking hearths, cooking vessels, and culinary dishes (cf Adair 1775: 100, 105), and the community cleaned the dance ground located at the center of the village. They took

> medicine given by a Choctaw doctor. Community members forgave each other for all wrongs committed, with the exception of murder. A new, pure fire was built by religious specialists. Coals from this fire were taken to all of the hearths in the village. Thereafter a portion of the new corn crop was burned in the new fire; the community broke their fast and conducted sacred dances. Reportedly, some Choctaw communities made their laws during the Green Corn Ceremony, and leaders preached to their people about appropriate moral conduct (Swanton 2001:225-226). Only after the Green Corn Ceremony did the community begin to eat fresh produce out of their agricultural fields. Fresh ears of **Tanchusi** were eaten green or cut off the cob and put into stews. . ."

What you are seeing here, that shows through all the specific elements of this one larger ceremony, is a *community-level* effort to realign and reconnect with the sacred reality that manifests itself through the material world. This is done, as it is in individual tobacco ceremony, through mindful and intentional actions of several different kinds. In this case, the physical and mental actions include ceremonial actions such as dancing, putting out a fire, lighting a new fire, eating a specific food, and forgiving people who have harmed you during the year. And although a single individual person can dance, the Green Corn Dance is done *in community*. Similarly, although one individual person can put out or light a fire, in this ceremony everyone in the community kindles a new fire from a single, central, sacred fire that's been sanctified by one of the community's spiritual leaders. An even higher order of community realignment can be seen in Thompson's statement that "some Choctaw communities made their laws during the Green Corn Ceremony" and Pesantubbee's observation that the Cherokee's national council sat for decision-making during the four days of Green Corn Ceremony (Pesantubbee 1993, 305). Do you see, after all our work so far, that this happened because the laws and decisions emerged through and from the on-going Ceremony and the larger community inter-woven with that Ceremony?

All these elements of the community ceremony help to reweave the deep connections between material and spiritual realms so that people are not only more consciously aware of those relationships, but so those relationships themselves are *actually*, ontologically, rewoven and strengthened in all the places where they've frayed during the preceding year. It's normal for people to get annoyed, angry, or resentful with one another over time. And it's easy for bad feelings to harden into a grudge, animosity, or even hatred. It's even easy for people to develop these kinds of negative feelings about community members that are not human beings: winds that are too hot and dry, a horse that bites, a river that flips a canoe. But normal though these emotions may be, they are precisely the things that degrade and eventually destroy relationships. Even in contemporary Western culture where people prioritize individual rights, they are beginning to realize how destructive grudges and animosity are to community well-being and a healthy society.

Indigenous cultures respect and value the fundamental creative power of relationship, and of the community our relationships weave. Indigenous Knowledge emerges from relationships, and the highest expressions of Indigenous

values is commonly expressed by the phrase "relationship and reciprocity" (Adams et al. 2022). Negative emotions erode relationships in a cumulative way, and the attritional loss of meaningful connections eventually collapses communities, ecosystems, and even the systems of knowledge and justice that are the higher-order manifestations of communities.

What is not yet quite visible here is the means by which Green Corn Ceremony restores and reweaves relationships in the community. In a passage about the Choctaw ethical concept of Yohbi, or *Purity*, Ian Thompson (2019, 242) describes the importance of purity, especially with respect to foods, particularly the corn that grows at the center of Green Corn Ceremony.

> "Agricultural crops matured under the care of women, the givers of life. These women were supported in their efforts by the community conducting the dances in the proper seasons along with the appropriate prayers and fasts. Purity of the crops was maintained because, every year for generations, growers hand-selected the seeds of the very best plants to sow the following year. Purity was maintained by abstaining from eating the new harvest until after the Green Corn Ceremony, an event which emphasized self-denial, reflection, moral behavior, forgiveness, renewal, and thanksgiving. Purity was maintained by eating food dishes made from pure ingredients, which could transfer beneficial characteristics to a person. . . The end result of these efforts to maintain purity was a cuisine that avoided overindulgence, was generally quite healthy and that minimized long-term degenerative impacts on the landscape."

These passages focus on aspects of ceremony that people in Western culture often have a hard time understanding or even wanting to understand. While contemporary people enjoy ceremonies of thanksgiving, they often have a hard time with ceremonies that demand "abstaining . . . self-denial, reflection, moral behavior, forgiveness, [and] renewal." In that context, it's important to notice the emphasis placed on the fact that the very best seeds are not eaten but are saved to sow the next year. These ceremonies expect people to do certain things -- things that are not always easy or enjoyable. And the well-being of each individual and of the community as a whole *depends* on them doing these things. It's not too hard to see that people who eat the best corn instead of saving it to plant end up causing harm to everyone in the short term, slowly worsening the quality of the community's crops as poorer and poorer quality seeds are saved and then planted each year because the best have always been eaten. The thing that's harder for people to see here is that damage done to the community impacts far more than just the quality of the corn that's grown each year.

Putting stuff in writing is painful. Partly because it kinda locks it in place and has potential to then be totally taken out of context and used against us. So it feels weird writing about returning to a relational way of working with the Land, when the writing itself has that potential negative consequence of being dislocated. -- Shawn Wilson

The person who places their own desire for "the best corn I can get in my own bowl" above the community's need for "the best possible corn for all, for the coming generations of the whole community," *has changed out of a Land-based value system that privileges relationship* and gone into *a human-based value system that privileges the individual*. A Land-based value system prioritizes relationships because relationships are the source of Knowledge and Life. This value system recognizes that it is not any one individual or even species that creates a healthy ecosystem -- that a healthy ecosystem is, instead, a living entity that emerges from the rich web of relationships between soil, skies, rocks, waters, and many different species. It is within and from this rich web of *reciprocal* relationships that life emerges -- not from or because of any one individual or species (Adams 2019b).

Privileging one's own needs over those of the larger community unbalances reciprocity. This disrupts the complex process of emergence in living systems and threatens the health, well-being, and survival of everything in that system. Land-based cultures recognize this fact as a *natural law* -- the one that's often referred to as *reciprocity and relationship*. The consequences of breaking any natural law -- whether of motion, gravity, or reciprocity and relationship -- are unavoidable and severe for the simple reason that *a natural law describes the way Reality functions*.

You can dislike the physical law of gravity all you want, but it's not going away. If it somehow did, one of the many cataclysmic consequences would be that the sun's on-going nuclear fusion reactions would blow it completely apart.[5] Then there would be no more sun, and of course no more life. You can dislike or deny a physical law all you want, but that's still how the world works. Without reciprocity and relationship, there would be no emergence. Without emergence, there would be no life. Reciprocity and relationship are, *together*, an actual natural law of living systems. Aboriginal scholar Tyson Yunkaporta puts it this way (Yunkaporta 2020, 28): "There is Law and knowledge of Law in stones. All Law-breaking comes from that first evil thought, that original sin of placing yourself above the land or above other people." "Law and knowledge of Law in stones" is *Land-based law* (Adams 2021c).

This is why ego is so damaging to Ceremony. Ego is human-based, not Land-based. It privileges a human or a human group or culture. But people in Western culture think their cultural values and ways of knowing are literally universal -- they usually speak of them as "human values" or "the way our species knows things" rather than as *Western culture's* values and ways of knowing. I'm not sure they realize it's even possible to privilege cultural ways of knowing and values at all, much less that they're doing this. If there is only one *human* way of doing things, after all, what could it possibly be privileged over or against by other also-humans? The scientist who angrily yelled, "What do you people *want from us*!?" had no idea that he was putting himself above the land or the Indigenous people he worked with. He simply assumed Western ways of knowing and values are ontologically and universally *True,* so "of course" they were the standard everyone there should also be adhering to.

To this fellow, the sacred relationship agreements that exist between Indigenous people and the plants we gather or the fish we eat cannot be scientifically measured. They cannot be invoked to "prove" the need for new legislation by Western governing bodies, and they are not even generally admissible as evidence in a Western court of law. So to people like this scientist, it's inexplicable for Indigenous people to still insist, "*We must do this certain ceremony to maintain our sacred relationship with Salmon or they will die*." Western scientists and legislators reveal the bedrock level of privilege they stand on at that point, by the way they respond: *No you don't,* they say. *That's just superstition. We're talking about real, actual fish here. Ceremony's got nothing to do with it.* That's why the scientist was so frustrated in the meeting. To him, the Elders were talking nonsense to bring ceremony into the equation, and worse, doing it in a way that threatened his "real knowledge acquisition" work.

The strange thing about Western culture's privileging of its own view of reality on this matter, though, is that its own statistical analyses show that 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is in the care of Indigenous people who now make up only 5% of the world's population (Benally et al. 2021). And these Indigenous people are using traditional ceremony as part of their successful preservation efforts. Why doesn't this register? Why, when their own culture's analyses point so clearly to the efficacy of Indigenous methods in protecting healthy ecosystems, do people of Western culture continue to

insist that *their* methods are the ones that set the gold standard for understanding ecosystems?

Does this mean Indigenous people want to flip the script and privilege *our* ways of knowing and values over those of Western people? Well, knowing the words that immediately leapt into our mouths when the scientist screamed, "What do you people *want* from us?!" might help answer that. What we all immediately wanted to say was: "Nothing. This whole thing was your idea, not ours. You came to us. We did not go to you. You physically came here, on our land, among our forests and our rivers to ask us for the Knowledge we still have. You came here from a university campus in a city built all over land that was also ours before you took it. Now you are offended because we refuse to give you our minds, too, and will not think your way. And to you this means we want something *from* you?"

Standing our ground is not the same thing as trying to take yours.

The IKhana Fund is being developed *by* Indigenous people *for* Indigenous people caring for the Land. In the process of doing that work, we were given Knowledge that IKhana Fund is to function as a giving-and-receiving community of both Indigenous and Western people who move together in Ceremony. As you have learned, that presents us with such a Hard Problem that even trying to face it made me violently sick. Green Corn Ceremony is the solution the Land has given us, but it can't be a solution unless those allies who want to work with us find out it even exists, can see it as a meaningful doorway, begin to understand it, and then, if they choose, somehow go through it with the humility, courage, self-reflection, and openness to renewal that Green Corn Ceremony requires of us all. This can be, and often is, a painful process. But the alternative at this point in history is an unprecedented tide of suffering and death worldwide.

So even if you are an ally who is not to become part of the IKhana Fund community, maybe there is something in the wisdom of Green Corn Ceremony that can be of use to you in *your* important work to prevent such catastrophic suffering. Or perhaps -- and only you can know this -- you have the wisdom and courage to open yourself to learning more about, and entering relationship with, the Indigenous Reality your Ancestors remember within you, that your ancient memory still recognizes. The problem, as you are beginning to see, is that this Reality, the one in which Indigenous people live, is not at all what Western people expect. And when people encounter that unexpectedly different experience of reality, it often scares and then angers them.

So, the ceremony that we did for that is a local Syilx ceremony that was called a Wheel. And going through that was really interesting, how they designated specific roles for people to take a specific point of view to just to ensure that all different points of view were incorporated into decision-making process. So, it's like a consensus-building process. The way that it's structured is so that certain people take the role of more like having like an Ancestor mind and trying to think of traditions and following traditions, and that they have to work in conjunction with people that specifically have that innovation type of mind. So there's almost, like, forces that work in balance with each other -- of tradition and stability versus innovation and moving forward. And then there's also the working in conjunction with "the nurturing mind" and, you know, the people that provide that nurturing and that sense of cohesion, working in opposition and balance with people that have that very structured, "just get the job done" mind, that sort of active mind. So, the nurturing and the action were sort of having to work in conjunction. But it made me really realize sort of my style also, of how when I'm in different meetings I automatically assume different roles. And so it was very interesting. It was very informative for me, like it was a really good process. I guess I'm saying that because we learned a lot for our program, but it was also very informative and I learned a lot about myself. And I realized that I tend to not hold those things in balance very well in my own person. -- Shawn Wilson

I don't know for sure what would have happened if the Elders had told the scientist that day, "We were not attacking you or your work. We were getting important new information from the Land about what might going on with some animals and plants, and we were doing it in a sacred space of Ceremony that you blew apart." But I was in science for several decades, and I do know what the responses were to me when I introduced Indigenous ways of knowing into a discussion of Western scientific research methods. The scientists openly ridiculed and denigrated me. If I stood my ground, they laughed in my face and did so derisively. They said things such as "Oh get serious!" and, sneering, "So are you gonna' shake a rattle over that fossil?"

These scientists weren't just telling me I was wrong about how I experienced the world, but that in order to be in research *I had no choice* about how I experienced the world. I had to experience the world the way they did because their way, the Western way, was ontologically True. In insisting on this, they did not merely express their own experience of the world, but a deeply unquestioned value system about *the ways that people know and learn about the natural world*. The ways people in a particular culture know and learn about the world constitutes that culture's *epistemic system*. When you *value* a particular epistemic system, it means that you see that epistemic system -- those "ways of knowing and

learning" -- as *better than* other ways of knowing, as a system that gives you correct and meaningful information about Reality.

In science, only the physical, material world is ontologically real. Things in the material or physical world can be observed and measured, and those observations and measurements are the same for everyone who looks or measures. If a thing can be seen and is 3 meters long, anyone who looks will see this thing and it will measure as 3 meters long. Data collected from the material or physical world, using the methods of this particular epistemic system, can be analyzed and compared in various ways to deduce, derive, infer, and conclude. These processes build on each other to produce new knowledge. And all these processes together, including their culmination in a view of knowledge itself as *a human construct*, meaning a thing that human beings intellectually construct as a conceptual edifice, is Western culture's primary epistemic system. This epistemic system is not only valued, it is usually also *privileged,* meaning it's seen as the *best* epistemic system when it comes to providing meaningful knowledge about anything at all.

The word "privilege" implies that other ways of knowing exist but aren't very reliable. And in Western culture in general, the fact that some people use other ways of knowing is only grudgingly accepted. Everyone knows that artists create, people in faith communities pray, and a wide range of people feel deeply moved by witnessing a sunset, holding a newborn baby, playing among a group of musicians, or running lightly down a solitary dirt road as the sun rises. We are talking, here, about ways of knowing that Tapestry explores as, respectively, mythic, spiritual, and experiential ways of knowing (Tapestry Institute 2020). People do these things. They can't be swept under a collective cultural rug and denied.

So, instead, intellectual ways of knowing (Tapestry Institute 2021) are *privileged* in Western culture -- meaning they are not merely valued but given precedence. That tactic at least pushes other ways of knowing, the existence of which can't be denied, to the margins of the room. This is a culture-wide phenomenon, not just a characteristic of science. Intellectual ways of knowing produce the only kind of information generally permitted in a court of law, public school budget justifications, and business or governmental decision-making practices. The other ways of knowing are denigrated as anything from "not very reliable" to outright superstitious claptrap. If you pay close attention to news media, peoples' conversations, and movies over even a few days, you'll see plenty of examples of this denigration in action. Ridicule and shame are the tools used to disempower other ways of knowing. That's why my colleagues in science ridiculed Indigenous ways of knowing (and me for using them). It happened because those methods fall outside the intellectual ways of knowing privileged by Western science.

Indigenous culture doesn't *privilege* "the <u>other</u> side" of things though, because our worldview is not either/or. It is not dualistic about either epistemic systems or the state of the ontologically real world. We use and integrate all the different ways of knowing. The single biggest problem I have when I talk about Indigenous epistemics with someone from Western culture is that they always assume we do not use intellectual ways of knowing. That is,

Western culture's dualism is such a deep, foundational part of its worldview that when people of the dominant culture find out that Indigenous people use art or spiritual experience as a way of knowing, they *immediately* assume it means "of course" we do not use intellectual ways of knowing such as observation, logic, or analysis. What this tells you is that the abyssal split between the material and spiritual parts of reality in Western culture *also* runs right through and divides the conceptual mind or brain of human beings in Western culture. And notice I had to use *both* the terms "mind" and "brain" to intentionally embrace both sides of the split. We've even been taught to use the language of "right brain/left brain." There's the split in both reality (the material brain tissue being literally split into two halves) and ways of knowing (the thinking or reacting brain functions being divided by that material or physical split into an "analytical brain" and an "intuitive brain").

All of this might seem like a fairly esoteric aside until you realize it's *the root of the Hard Problem* we're trying to resolve. The scientist I told you about was on the material-things-are-real side of Western culture's dualistic divide, so he saw only intellectual ways of knowing as valid and reliable. Things like ceremony and sacred relationships of reciprocity between humans and plants or animals were, to him, superstitious nonsense there was no way to meaningful talk about. His diatribe made it clear this had always been the case, that he had long seen his Indigenous collaborators' rules for how he should engage with them and their Lands as meaningless hoops he simply had to jump through to get data. The scientist *assumed*, as a real and true thing, that only the material or physical world matters, that only intellectual ways of knowing provide information about the material world, and that his Indigenous collaborators needed to "get serious" and "grow up" about how the world really works, not keep dragging him through silly superstitious demands that imperiled the *real* knowledge he gathered, that he was certain would help them if they'd just stop being so ridiculous.

The essential thing to notice here is that the problem was *not* that the scientist thought a particular thing about the nature of reality or the intellectual ways people know about that reality. Indigenous people know the material parts of the world are real and important, and we know that intellectual ways of knowing are real and important too. We have no problem with these things. *The problem was the scientist's deeply-rooted either/or dualism, and his unquestioned assumption that the either/or state of nature, and therefore of knowledge, is ontologically real and universally recognized as such by all human beings*. So when he heard his Indigenous colleagues talking about sacred relationships, to his mind they were saying, "*Your* work, Dr. Scientist, has no value." In other words, he thought he was about to lose a long-running battle between ways of knowing and views of reality that, to him, were in eternal and ontologically meaningful conflict. The anger he expressed was really fueled by fear, because -- at least the way he perceived things -- if he lost this battle, his Indigenous colleagues would stop working with him and he would lose the grants, research program, and publications that were the basis of his professional identity and financial security.

Chapter 16

Although Western culture assumes the deep split it perceives between the material and spiritual parts of life is ontologically real and universally recognized, not all Western people privilege the material world and intellectual ways of knowing about it. Some Western people privilege the non-material, spiritual side of reality. So whereas someone like the scientist comes into an Indigenous meeting and completely misses the fact that it's *also* happening in Ceremony, a Western person who privileges the other side of the dualism comes into an Indigenous meeting as if it's entirely Ceremony and misses the whole pragmatic side of things. And because of the split they perceive in reality, this second person expects Indigenous Ceremony to be a wholly spiritual event that's supernatural, because they assume the spiritual part of life is separated from and literally *not part of, but supernal to,* the natural (physical, material) world -- supernal meaning it's celestial or heavenly. So the first thing I want you to notice here is that no matter which side of the split a Western person privileges, when they come into Indigenous space they perceive it as split in their own cultural image. And then they proceed to tear it into pieces that fit their expectations.

I was once in Ceremony with an artist from the dominant culture. Although I didn't know it at first, she was also among a growing body of Western people who have gotten the idea that Indigenous people in Ceremony engage in

supernatural practices and activities that are not embodied and certainly not pragmatically Land-based. She knew our Indigenous group had gathered in Ceremony, and she apparently had an expectation about what this meant that wasn't grounded in Indigenous reality. I suspect, because of things I learned later, that her expectations had been shaped by the kinds of ideas about "Indigenous spirituality" commonly found in the New Age aisle of many bookstores. At any rate, despite the preparation I had given her, she was startled and then frightened when she felt Knowledge start to emerge within and from the group. This was clearly not at all something she had anticipated, and she suffered a massive panic attack as a result.

It is not uncommon for Western people who've had the opportunity to experience Indigenous reality to have a panic attack. I've even seen it happen to a Western person who'd lived in a massive metropolitan area his entire life, who simply happened to walk outside a high-altitude Colorado retreat center at night in a place far from city lights. He looked up, encountered the power of the real night sky for the first time, and quite literally collapsed in a terrified heap on the ground. This was a successful businessman. It took four people to get him out of a fetal position and the short distance to a car. What's sad is that such a person's terror is so great that when you try to comfort and reassure them, explain that it's a panic attack and they are quite safe, then explain that what caused it was simply perceiving the immensity of the ontologically Real world for the first time, they usually deny it. They tell you no, they are having a heart attack; or no, they caught a glimpse of grizzly bear in the bushes; or no, they've had a premonition of imminent natural disaster that means they must not take even one more step in any direction.

In the case of the artist I was telling you about, it was pretty clear she did not know what she was experiencing. And because Knowledge was actively emerging at that moment -- the miracle of enlightenment we'd worked so hard to facilitate was happening! -- I had to quietly take her out of the meeting to protect it from her. I wasn't about to see the artist damage such a miracle, the way the scientist had destroyed the one in the meeting of Elders I told you about. And I was right to worry, because the first thing she said when I got her alone --- even before I could begin to comfort her and explain things -- was, very angrily, that someone in the group was trying to kill her. She even said, very specifically, that they were trying to choke her to death. She did not mean they were using their actual hands to choke her. We both knew that no one had physically touched her. She explained, instead, that someone was using something like "spirit hands" to spiritually, invisibly, maliciously choke her.

A choking sensation is a common panic attack symptom and I told the woman so, reassuring her that she was safe and explaining the importance of the timing of things -- that this had happened at the very moment the Land manifested and Knowledge started to emerge in a palpable way. Her angry and adamant reply was, "No! You are wrong!! ***I*** know *exactly* what this is!! ***I*** know *exactly* what is happening!" When I kept gently trying to reassure and calm her, she told me that we clearly had not really opened our hearts to her and did not want her in our gathering at all. Feeling more than a little frustrated, I reminded her that we had *invited* her after *she* expressed

a strong desire to come. If we had not wanted her there, we would never have done that. And this is really an exceedingly important point. Like the scientist, the artist was quite literally an invited guest in an Indigenous space *she had asked to visit* because *she wanted to learn from us*. Yet she turned around and told me I didn't know what I was talking about, but that *she* was the one who knew "exactly" what was happening.

What you see here is the expression of an arrogant assumption that she had personal authority over Indigenous people. It's the same arrogant assumption of personal authority the scientist revealed when he reacted with so much anger to "straighten us out" the moment he thought his reality was threatened. The artist also felt threatened, and she also reacted with anger to "straighten me out" when I tried to tell her what was really happening. In both cases, the assumption that a person from Western culture has the authority to "straighten out" Indigenous people *when the Western person is in Indigenous space* into which they were invited as a trusted ally, is stunningly egotistical.

This is what makes the Hard Problem so hard. It's a genuinely tough problem in communication and understanding. Again, please let me point out that the problem is *not* which part of the split in Western reality (and the ways of knowing about it) people privilege. Granted, I personally think that if Western people didn't perceive reality as split, it might dissolve a lot of the polarization that's increasingly tearing their societies apart. But that's their business, not mine. The Hard Problem, visible here, is that the artist, like the scientist in the Elders' meeting, mistakenly assumed she had epistemic authority over Indigenous people. She thought she had the right to tell Indigenous people *in their own space* that *her* epistemic system provided reliable information about what was going on, that her Indigenous colleagues were malevolently misleading her so they could harm her, and that anyone who disagreed with her about this was simply clueless. Her arrogance was rooted in the assumption that the spirit/matter divide she perceived was ontologically Real for everyone, meaning universally perceived. Furthermore, she was used to there being a constant power struggle between matter-prioritizers and spirit-prioritizers because that war has occupied Western culture for centuries. As a result, she perceived all this as part of a power struggle that was *also* ontologically real and universal to her. She therefore assumed everyone else -- including us -- is invested in fighting the same war.

Well, the point of all this is that the artist did not merely make an assumption about Indigenous reality that she brought with her into our Ceremony. She interpreted what happened in our Ceremony based on her wrong assumptions, and then made an arrogant assertion of *her* authority and knowledge about Indigenous Ceremony, even though she most certainly did not have such authority. And *then* she refused to be corrected by an Indigenous person who practices Indigenous ceremony and was actively engaged in the one taking place in that meeting. Here is a very basic fact to remember, that applies to this situation, in case you've lost sight of it: Indigenous Ceremonies deal with practical issues. If you think about the unification and alignment focus of Ceremony, you can see how counterproductive it would be for us to go into Ceremony space and then beat up on one other or invited guests there. The very fact that I find

myself having to even write that sentence turns a floodlight onto the severity of the problem we're dealing with: that Indigenous people simply do not occupy and experience the same perceived reality that people of Western culture do. But this is *only* a problem because the Western people are absolutely certain we are wrong to say we experience a different reality, that in fact all humans live in and experience exactly the same reality, and that they therefore have the right and privilege of telling us what is going on in our world, and in our space, when we invite them in because they've told us they want to learn. *This* is the root of the Hard Problem that keeps us from being in Ceremony together.

Well, in the end and no matter how hard I tried, that artist did not listen to me or let me teach her anything real about Indigenous ways. And she never did make use of the rare opportunity she had been given. A miracle unfolded literally right in front of her eyes, and she was utterly blind to it. What she did, instead, was phone her "spiritual advisor" (her language) as the only person she personally knew whose authority surpassed hers. He or she provided the artist with a spell -- an actual sentence of words -- that all of us in Ceremony were supposed to recite to *her*, *in unison*, so she would be protected from whoever or whatever she thought was trying to kill her.

Remember what Ceremony is, and how it works. And remember that I had pulled the artist out of the Ceremony because Knowledge was even then emerging in that thing Shawn has called "the miracle of enlightenment," just as it had been that day in a meeting the scientist blew apart. Can you see what it would have meant to turn the focus of the entire Ceremony and every single person in it **to this individual person**? So, no. That could not happen. I did not permit it. As a result I spent an extremely unpleasant and harried four days protecting the Ceremony from this woman while trying, at the same time, to maintain my equanimity in the face of an onslaught of angry, pleading, passive-aggressive, and even insulting emails and phone calls by which she tried to have her own way. And during all this, I could not let her provoke me into anger. If I did

that, I myself would break the Ceremony since I was still engaged with it.

That effort turned out to be worthwhile, though, as the Ceremony was able to complete itself well and the group was able to accomplish what they'd come together to do. And once the meeting had safely ended, I very briefly shared what had happened with the others who'd been in Ceremony, so they would know not to invite this particular person into Ceremony elsewhere. There was nothing else I could do at that point. Ultimately, in a case like this, we have to protect our communities if a person will not listen to us and learn, if they insist they are right even as they are doing very destructive things that are grossly ignorant. All we can do is disengage from relationship with them. There is no other option.

And this is a very important part of the larger story. Our hands were tied in the examples I've shared, not by individual ignorance, because ignorance can always be remedied, but by an authoritative arrogance that refused to even admit it *needed* to learn. Yet how could these people think they somehow *knew* Indigenous Reality? When and how could they have learned it? Learning is primarily a matter of experience and opportunity. When would the scientist have ever had a chance, growing up, to learn that Indigenous people work together in community for the common good of all, and that when we do this we gather *in* Ceremony to ask for help in solving practical problems? When would the artist have had a chance, growing up, to learn the responsibilities a person in Indigenous Ceremony has to all the other people there and to the larger community the Ceremony is of and for? How would either of these people have been able to learn how these responsibilities govern a person's behavior so that the miracle of enlightenment can emerge within and from all the relationships woven together in the Ceremony, so that they would know how to behave as functional adult human beings standing in a place of great responsibility?

Even though all these things are natural parts of the Real world that Indigenous people still remember and teach our children as they grow up, many Western people have never had the opportunity to learn or even experience any of these things. There is no shame in that ignorance. It is not these peoples' fault they never had a chance to learn these things. But that doesn't matter when they shatter a Ceremony to which we have invited them as a friend and an ally we trusted, then storm off in anger because they are frightened and upset and can tell they've done something terribly wrong but have no idea what it was. And as long as such people are so arrogantly positive that they have the right to tell Indigenous people what's really what, to "straighten us out" by applying their epistemic dualism to our Indigenous space -- a space in which they are not just guests but total newcomers -- they are going to continue to destroy the relationships we try to forge with them.

This is the Hard Problem, right here. And there is one last thing to be said about it before we move on to the good news that does, in fact, exist -- at least, in terms of creating the IKhana Fund community. No one in Western culture *has* to come into community with us. No one even has to read this paper. In fact, I dare say that some people who think they want to join us in community will find out they really wanted something else and wind up doing that

instead. This does not bother us. But if you come into our community and tell us what we are "really" doing in our own cultures, what is "really true" for us, how things "really are" and that you "need to set us straight" -- that does bother us. A lot. It is Indigenous people who have the right to define our ways. They are our ways and have been for literally *millennia*. We know what we do, what we think, and why. A Western person has neither the right nor the authority to correct us about Indigenous ways or about the reality Indigenous people experience.

This hard problem we're dealing with is so *very* hard that for quite a while I could see absolutely no way to surmount it. And my own long lifetime of dealing with one experience after another of the type I have shared with you here, which is far more common than most Western people imagine, had made me not even want to *think* about sitting in another major Ceremony that starts to move in powerful ways, only to have a Western participant lose their bananas and destroy a miracle *we are* ***counting on*** to restore the health of our peoples and our Lands. Those are awfully big stakes to make me willing to risk such a thing.

But the Land clearly envisions a scenario in which this can somehow work. It's stated very directly in the first of the Three Baskets of Knowledge we were given. And because Indigenous people live in a Land-based value system, not a human-based one, that Knowledge we were given brings with it with a burden of responsibility. So the question is not whether or not I want to help that vision manifest itself. It's not even whether or not I believe it can happen. Because of my responsibility to Knowledge, and to the Ceremony within which we asked how to proceed and were honored with a response, there is only one question that matters. That question is HOW. How on earth can we do such a thing?

This is why I kept doing ceremony to ask the Land for help. I was asking "how." And I suspect you can see, at this point, why back at the beginning I said I had to overcome a lot of personal resistance to do the work, to believe it was even possible to find a way we could "move together in Ceremony" at all. Well. Now it is time to return to that part of the story. And remember that behind all this, assuming we can somehow fulfill the vision in those Three Baskets of Knowledge, there is still the mystery of why the Land answered a question we did not ask -- and the even bigger mystery of what that question it answered even *was*.

Shawn: "A little story came to mind. Uncle Charles Moran was the senior Elder in Bungalong Territory before he passed. He's now sitting in circle with the ancestors. And there was a story he always used to tell about the native bees here. The native Australian bees make honey, but it's not the same as bumblebee honey, because it's not as sweet and it's more runny. But they're tiny little bees, too, and they don't sting, so they're really nice little animals. But because they're so tiny, it's really hard to find their beehives. And because they're so small, it's really hard to track them in the air because they're so hard to see. So, if you find one that's on the ground or on a flower, you have to just watch really carefully. And then as the bee takes off, it will do little spirals. And so you just have to watch how high it spirals.

And the more times it spirals around and the higher it goes, the further away the beehive is. So, you won't be able to follow it as it flies, but what you do is you see how high it spirals and then you can see what direction it heads off in. And then, you know, like if it spirals a couple of times or if only it spirals once and then heads off in that direction, the beehive is really close in that direction. But if it spirals a bunch of times and heads off in that direction, it's farther away on the way it went.

"The reason that story came to mind is that it's kind of, I think, a lot of the time how we hold our meetings, right? It's like we spiral around an idea. It doesn't necessarily seem like we're going anywhere, but sometimes it's like, the more times we spiral, the further we're going to go when we actually start. It's like it's setting ourselves up to really go into something in depth, I think, the more times we spiral around it. So it's that thing around not having an agenda. Sometimes it's very deliberate because it allows us that space to spiral and that space to really prepare to do something in depth that we can't do if we just go straight there. If we just go around once and go there, then sometimes it won't just happen. It won't go as far that way as if we allow it to spiral around a few times."

Jo: "Like shotput in track and field."

Shawn: "Yeah, you've got to build up some momentum."

Dawn: "It makes me think of Andalusian horses, which are the Spanish horses. One of the things their humans do is they have a halter with the lead rope in their hand, and they trot the horses around so that people can see, you know, how they're built and how they move. The handler showing the stallion would bring it into the arena and spin it around slowly letting the rope slide through their hands. So, it's like they had a toy on the end of a string, right? So, they're looping it and looping it and looping it, and then they kind of let go. And by the time they let go, that horse's head was up and its nostrils were gigantic and it was prancing with huge, beautiful strides. And it was because it got so excited by building its energy up, doing that."

Fiona: "Bees and horses. It's something in there. We talk about connecting grantees. That's something sort of worthy of synergy. Something happened. There is a connection, or the purpose of connecting and deepening connections. I think that's part of what you said, Dawn, about doing 'due diligence is about relation.'

"I think we come back to Jules' question -- 'How do we get grantees or people to know about us?' And they need not to just know about the Fund, but know about this -- what this expectation is. That you're given this wheel with others or with your community. We don't know where it will take you. But that wheel, that relationship spiral or looping around is what matters. So what we wanna know, I think, is, we want to ask them, 'How was it for you? What does the field look like and where does it take you?' Like they're that one little bee. We ask them, 'Where did you end up? Where were the home places for you?' Perhaps, you know, that kind of conversation. That kind of agenda spread out from the beginning. It just builds in excitement when people go, that way. We want to almost like change the… what some of the Tribal chiefs say, they use the terms 'change the diagnosis, change the prognosis.'

"There is a thing about the vibration of relating and relationship that strengthens the confidence it gives people. The excitement of life for people, that changes the story that can be told. Then we were thinking of the potential threat to these people. The potential threats they face are to

relationality and to being in relationship with the Land. And I think that's almost like, in terms of the First Principles, we have to be like very, I don't know, sensitive, hypersensitive, hyperalert to that. And that's why I say when you've got, like, zero tolerance for that threat. I think that is important.

"I think that one of the things I would like us to do is somehow… It's not scaling up. I think people know this. But actually, it is understanding what other thing can be seen as a threat to this relationality with the Land. There's something there, right in terms of the diagnosis and prognosis, that we can see and come to state as a kind of -- in terms of expectations of the stories that will be told and how to be in that relational space."

Maybe you can begin to see by this point why I had so much trouble articulating the visionary statement given us in our gathering. I couldn't imagine how we could actualize that vision. I couldn't simply write a paper that said we were to be a "giving and receiving community that moves in Ceremony" and be done with it. I had to be able to at least *point to* a way we might actualize this vision, to have some idea of how we could bring such a community into existence. By October of the year we had met, in 2023, I finally understood we had been given the "simple point of entry" Tyson Yunkaporta is talking about when he says, "No matter how difficult a topic is, there are always simple points of entry and general principles and processes to be gleaned by novices encountering it for the first time" (Yunkaporta 2020, 84). That entry point for the IKhana Fund community seems to be Green Corn Ceremony. But if our Western allies demonstrably don't understand what Ceremony itself even is, this doorway cannot function in any meaningful way if all we do is point to it.

As Lakota scholar Vine Deloria cautioned us all more than twenty-five years ago, writing about Western people trying to learn and understand Indigenous reality in a slightly different context, "While this information can be transmitted or communicated in many ways, the specificity of it and the *requirement of personal involvement* eliminate the chance of duplication by

anyone through the simple memorization of the mechanics of the phenomenon" (Deloria 1999, 71; italics in the original). The *requirement* for personal involvement of which Deloria speaks (please notice the term "requirement" he chose here and the fact that he italicized it) is *personal involvement with the Land and with Indigenous Knowledge*. It's essential to realize that this is precisely the opportunity for involvement that Indigenous people gave to both of the people in the two main examples I shared, but that neither person was able to make use of or even, apparently, see.

This is such a common problem that it's why I cautioned those of you reading this who are allies, to *not* think that Ceremony is a method, but to realize that Ceremony is instead a weaving of lived and living relationships that manifest Indigenous values. Speaking of the same basic distinction, Aboriginal Elder Noel Nannup advises people to "Look beyond the things and focus on the connections between them, then look beyond the connections and see the pattern they make" (Yunkaporta 2020, 77). And Tyson Yunkaporta points to this crucial distinction in yet another way, saying (Ibid, 104) "Working with grounded, complex metaphors that have integrity is the difference between decorations and art, tunes and music, recommercialized fetishes and authentic cultural practice. When metaphors have integrity, they are multi-layered, with complex levels that may be accessed by people who have prerequisite understandings."

What we are talking about here is the fundamental difference between Western culture's focus on *things* as the defining important stuff of the universe and life, and Indigenous reality's focus on *relationships* as the defining important stuff of the universe and life. Western culture separates the material and spiritual as "different things" and then reduces each thing to its component parts to understand it. Indigenous people focus on the deeply interwoven relationships between all things, including the material and spiritual, as the engine of life itself. And because we are looking at connections and relationships between things, and the higher-order phenomena that emerge from these complex connections and relationships, people with appropriate knowledge and expertise are able to perceive important information at multiple levels simultaneously. It's something like the way a gifted conductor can read all the instrumental parts in a musical score simultaneously and "hear" the entire integrated symphony in their perceptive mind even if no musicians are present at the time (The Open University 2025).[6] This is what Yunkaporta is talking about, in the statement you just read, that "When metaphors have integrity, they are multi-layered, with complex levels that may be accessed by people who have prerequisite understandings." This is what makes Indigenous Ceremonies so richly powerful and nutritious at multiple levels, in comparison to the ceremonies of copied songs and methods "performed" by New Age pretenders that offer nothing more substantial than bubble gum. It "is the difference between decorations and art, tunes and music, recommercialized fetishes and authentic cultural practice" (to return to and really comprehend the significance of Yunkaporta's words).

Yunkaporta goes on, in the passage I cited about an entry point, to gently remind us all that the learning we are talking about once people access this entry point requires ". . . stages of knowledge and no progression without

mastery and respect. It just requires a bit of discernment, humility, and awareness." As you've seen, though, the "just requires" part of this is a heavy lift for many people in Western culture. The Hard Problem is very deeply wrapped right into that skill of discernment and that attitude of humility. A lack of discernment and humility -- which are not character flaws, but simply the result of few or no opportunities to learn Indigenous ways -- are the things that so often cause a Western ally in an Indigenous gathering to leap into an assumed position of instantaneous mastery and authority they don't actually have. The resultant behaviors are so unspeakably destructive that I'm sure it was as painful for you to read the examples I shared as it was painful for me to remember and write about them.

Those examples show us that just having a doorway or access point is not, by itself, enough. Guidance and support are also required. And as Deloria says, there must be personal involvement. This means that merely reading printed materials or listening to talks *about* Indigenous experience of reality is not enough. It's important to remember that, in both the examples I shared with you, Indigenous people had created an opportunity in which a Western ally *could have had* personal involvement with Ceremony and with Indigenous Knowledge, and through these things with the living Land. *But they missed their chance*. Neither one of these people even saw what was unfolding right in front of them -- because both were looking in the wrong place and expecting the wrong thing. Yet, both the scientist and the artist had read preparatory materials that should have kept them from behaving as they did. In addition, the scientist had been in and among Indigenous people in their own villages before this point, and the artist had access at the time to an Elder who tried to give her personalized guidance. Yet none of this was enough to prevent catastrophe, and for the simple reason that it's exponentially *harder* to apply what's been learned to a real situation than it is to learn about something in a merely conceptual way. So when put in a real situation, the knowledge and worldview that both people immediately fell back on was Western.

This is what happens to us all, if you think about it. You might learn many things that convince you it's important to change your eating habits. You might even have medical test results that convince you these changes are important to your health. But what happens when it's time to actually put food on your plate and into your mouth? *Applying* what you've learned about what you should eat is not at all the same as just reading about it and agreeing wholeheartedly. We all tend to remain in our habitual ways of doing things even when we conceptually know better, for precisely this reason. When one of our Western allies can't put the things they've learned about Indigenous ways into practice when they're meeting with us in ceremony, however, they don't just adversely impact their own health. They adversely impact the health and well-being of *an entire community* because they damage or destroy the Ceremony they are in, and the vitally important work people had come together in Ceremony to accomplish.

Chapter 19

The Hard Problem we're dealing with is, as I've pointed out, very deeply wrapped right into the skill of discernment and the attitude of humility. Discernment changes our perspective. You'll remember that when Moose changed my perspective (Adams et al. 2022), I felt a little embarrassed to see humans the way he did. In order to remain fully open to his teaching I had to accept that new perspective and its little bit of attendant embarrassment with humility. In this way, learning that teaches discernment creates a sense of humility that is healthy. This was also something I learned the night my dad had me work through the hard problems in the physics chapter I thought I understood. It turned out the first step to really learning physics was developing enough discernment to even see what it was I didn't know. I'd been focusing resentfully on what I thought I *did* know instead. As for humility, I learned a lot about that the same evening.

The reason I was the first girl in my school to ever enroll in physics, with a friend who stepped up at once to make use of the opportunity with me when the school administration finally gave in and opened the class "just this year, as a test case," was because I wanted to learn the subject. But there was more to it than that. By the fall of 1969, my guidance counselor, the principal, and every boy in my other science classes had been telling me for two years that girls simply could not understand physics. I

insisted this was untrue and fought for my right to take the class. To feel confident enough to do this, I had to insist that I could do every bit as well in the class as a boy, that I was just as mentally capable. So I felt utterly humiliated by that D.

What I learned in the process of acquiring discernment, in this case a new perspective about *how people learn physics*, was that feeling humiliated is an aspect of *pride*, not of *humility*. That D humiliated me because I'd been insisting to myself and to all my nay-sayers that I was perfectly capable of doing well in a physics class -- emphasis on the word "perfectly." I was afraid that if the D was "real," all the people who had tried to keep me out of physics were somehow right about me, that being a girl really did mean I had a second-class intellect and could not make it in science. That is, I saw the test as having evaluated me, personally, instead of having simply evaluated what I had learned about vectors and units of force. My father gently helped me face the fact that I *had*, actually, fallen short; that I had *not* learned the material the way I thought I had -- and he did this by changing my perspective, in much the same way that Moose did this. My dad looked at my homework papers and my book and the problems I could not solve, and he just kept redirecting my gaze until I saw those things through his eyes. To get to this point, I had to drop my pride and accept with humility the simple fact that I don't, and can't, somehow automatically know things I've never had a chance to learn. When I did that, when I dropped my pride, the shame and humiliation of my low test grade evaporated. Humility allowed me to see that test, and myself, as partners in an unexpected adventure of learning that was much bigger and more exciting than I could have imagined. And *that* is when I could actually start to learn physics. This was pivotal because physics turned out to become an important part of my personal and professional life, giving me delightful perspectives on, and appreciation for, the ways animals move and the extraordinary biomechanics of those movements.

The process of dropping my proud insistence that "of course" I could "do" physics even though I'd never had a chance to learn it was painful. The paradox was that the moment I finally stopped being afraid to admit I didn't already know something, but needed to actually learn it, all the pain of my shame, and the fear of being shamed by others if they saw it, vanished. You'd think that would make it easier for me to keep humility in my pocket so I can learn discernment from every moose, rabbit, and elephant I meet. Alas, it doesn't seem to work that way. None of us wants to admit our shortcomings But I have done it and will keep doing it -- admittedly with griping and a dragging of feet when I am forced, yet again, to face things I don't even want to think about. Heck, you've been seeing me do it right here, in this paper. And I will continue to face things I don't even want to think about because *that's what it takes to heal ourselves and the Land*. But I am no better, no braver, no wiser than you, the person reading these words, no matter who you are. So if you want to be in a community of Indigenous-Western relationship that moves together in ceremony, whether it's part of IKhana Fund or not, I am positive you can face the pain of learning discernment and humility on your side of the frayed relationship between our peoples. The fabric we begin to reweave in that process is the same, frayed and unravelling in the very same places, as that of

the relationships between so many people and the Land these days.

Yes, it will take effort. You too will almost surely gripe and drag your feet, and maybe sometimes swear a blue streak when you are forced to face things you don't even want to think about. But it's worth every bit of that effort, and as much more as it might take. Because what we are talking about here is nothing less than *true reconciliation*, which is *the process of healing the frayed relationships that create and sustain life itself*. Reconciliation is a healing that benefits *everyone involved*, not merely those on "one side" of a given relationship. As one example, when I reconciled my relationship with learning and with knowledge when I was a teenager, that process also effected some important reconciliation-type healing between the physics teacher and his job of teaching high school physics. He was nearing retirement age then and getting a little burned out. But before long, that year, he became quite vocal about the fact that the girls in his physics class asked wonderful and unexpected questions boys had somehow never thought to ask, and that these helped him see material that had grown stale in a whole new way.[7]

You are beginning to understand now why this process of *true reconciliation* is so important in a much larger way. A rich web of healthy relationships is the essential fabric of life itself, a fabric into which we humans are woven, by which we are supported, and in which we are suspended. Those relationships are fraying to a dangerous degree at this time, and they cannot be "fixed" by the outside tinkering Western culture calls "objective" *because no human exists anyplace outside of this fabric* (Adams 2021g). The frayed relationships -- *the living relationships* -- must instead *heal*. And, as Cree scholar Cash Ahenakew points out (Ahenakew 2016, 180), "healing requires *un-numbing* and facing the messenger, facing the inevitability of pain, and developing the courage and resilience to have a relationship with it." *This is precisely what Green Corn Ceremony is about*. It provides us with a framework of support for un-numbing, facing the pain that exists in our lives and our world, and developing the courage and resilience to reweave a relationship with this pain that permits us to begin to reweave all the other vital relationships that have frayed in our lives and our communities. The pain tells us where the Hard Problem is, the problem that can teach us what we most need to understand.

So what we have to deal with, at this point in the process, is the crucial question of what Green Corn Ceremony *means,* or even *can* mean, in a community that is not just

pan-tribal but pan-Indigenous, and in which most of the participants are not of Corn Nation peoples. What does it mean when Western allies are also part of this community? What could such a ceremony even look like in a community such as this? How can such a ceremony be meaningful outside the appropriate cultural context of a *specific tribal* Green Corn Ceremony? *These are absolutely essential questions.*

Furthermore, these are precisely the issues that people who misappropriate and misuse Indigenous Ceremony do *not* deal with but should. People of the dominant culture are already far too quick to put on faux versions of ceremonial clothing and make up an "Indian rain dance" or encourage classrooms of schoolchildren to do the same. Vine Deloria had some extremely pointed and choice words to say about the elaborate and misappropriated Native dances that various groups of Boy Scouts have done for more than a century.[8] Even worse, now some New Age people have managed to muddy the waters of Indigenous culture to the point where people like that artist whose story I shared with you actually think they can and should tell *us* who *we* really are and what our ways really are. There are people like this who teach our children in schools and engage with our people in health care clinics or social service organizations. They have come into our communities because they *think* they know and admire Indigenous people. But what they really do among our people is steal yet more of our culture they don't understand, even as they contaminate our communities with false ideas and practices they push on us as aggressively as the artist in the story I shared with you did. That's colonization at its most egregious, and it is happening right now, today. It is not past history.

All of this matters very, very much because of what our Ceremonies -- our real Indigenous Ceremonies that are being diluted by this relentless onslaught of Western people aggressively colonizing *our very ways of thinking* -- are supposed to DO *for the living earth and All Our Relations*.

This kind of arrogant and ignorant interference even impairs our ability to authentically engage with people such as those of you reading this paper, who might be an essential part of the healing community of genuine reconciliation the Land holds out as a source of hope for us all. After all, we had *invited* the artist who so nearly destroyed our Ceremony to participate in it, specifically because we thought she was a likely ally we could work with more closely.

But when a problem developed, instead of listening to and learning from the Indigenous people she was with, whose Ceremony she was *in*, she turned to an outside "spiritual advisor" who gave her advice that clearly showed he or she was not an Indigenous Elder. No Indigenous Elder would have told this woman to have everyone in a Ceremony tend to *her* needs. It's that basic and pan-tribal. So the fact that this advisor tried to assert their authority *over us,* by having us all recite his or her "protection spell" to the person we'd been trying to partner with as an ally, *during a Ceremony* they knew for a fact was taking place, tells us all we need to know. The aggressive "push" of colonization -- in this case, it qualifies as imperialism -- came, in this case, primarily from that "spiritual advisor." But the person who lost the most from it was the artist who'd been deceived. She will never be invited into our community again. We simply cannot risk it.

At this point, we get to the crux of the matter, which is the presence and threat -- to all people, not just Indigenous ones -- of actual Western imperialistic behavior. People in Western culture tend to think of colonization and imperialism as roughly the same thing, and see both in primarily political and historical terms, thinking these events no longer happen. I think by now you can see how very much colonization is still actively on-going. As for the difference between the two, colonization primarily erodes non-Western cultures by simply assuming Western culture's values and ways of knowing are the ideal norm for all human beings, then pushing everyone to live within cultural guidelines and practices that enforce and reinforce these supposed norms. Imperialism does the same thing, but adds the aggressive kicker of extending actual authority over other people by insisting they follow the cultural guidelines and practices of the dominant group *and correcting them if they dare to do otherwise*. This strong element of overtly controlling others is imperialism's calling card.

Liberal pluralistic people in the dominant culture engage in imperialistic behavior every bit as frequently, and with just as much infuriating assumed privilege and authority, as do conservative by-the-book people of the dominant culture. Like the scientist and the artist, the difference between them is primarily which of Western culture's dual realities and its attendant epistemic systems they presume to enforce. In the example I gave you, a note imperiously demanding that an entire group of Indigenous people in Cermony turn 100% of their attention to saying certain dictated words to this person's protégé expressed the blatant assumption that a white woman's "spiritual advisor" had the authority to say such a thing to Indigenous people in Ceremony -- which they absolutely did *not*. That act alone speaks to the Western identity (and over-enlarged ego) of this unseen person who was, I would hazard a guess based on the nature of the words I was told we "must" recite, affiliated with what would be considered a fairly liberal point of view.

What you're seeing is that imperialistic attitude and action are the critical issue. Lack of knowledge itself is not a serious problem. I have never met a Western person making a successful journey into Indigenous reality who did not start out, at least at some point, reading books by "Carlos Castañeda" or trying to find an Indigenous person who can tell them "what seeing a hawk means." What these people tell me, when I talk to them, is that they intuitively know there's a big piece of the world that somehow no one talks about or gives them information about. So they start actively looking for it, and in that search the first hints to "something else" they come across are usually in books about Indigenous spirituality in the New Age aisle, vendor tables in an Indigenous arts store, or the reading list of an Indigenous Studies course that is -- as most usually are -- taught by a non-Indigenous person. They tell me they know enough to recognize the glimmer of something different there, but don't know enough to understand whether what they've found is or is not "authentic cultural practice," to use Yunkaporta's apt phrasing. If they are fortunate enough to purchase a dance fan or a shawl, beaded jewelry or a basket from a reputable source, they feel something special in it but don't understand what it means or how to learn more. And, they tell me, this is the gap into which non-Indigenous pretenders tend to step, seeing a lucrative opportunity to meet a need and put cash in their pocket at

the same time. Unfortunately, they don't meet the need by providing legitimate information.

At the same time, as these same people seeking authentic knowledge have told me, it's exceedingly difficult for the average Western person to find an Indigenous person who can give them an opportunity to learn. Of course that's true. Indigenous people are trying to survive in the margins we've been shoved into, and we are trying to protect and care for our children and for the Lands we still have, and to reclaim as much of what we've lost as we possibly can so we can protect and care for that as well. Think for a moment about the torrential tsunami of millions upon millions of European people and their descendants that simply rolled across North America, South America, Australia, and Africa, assuming ownership of Indigenous lands and consuming Indigenous people worldwide. It was like locusts stripping everything, leaving nothing. It really was, and this is not hyperbole. There are an awful lot of you, and not that many of us, and you all are very hungry people. So it's a simple fact that Indigenous people don't have the time or energy to teach that many hungry Western people. If we tried, we could not satisfy the need. Whoever did try would be eaten up from head to foot. There wouldn't be enough left to bury.

One reason the three baskets of Knowledge we were given in this second IKhana Fund meeting were so hard to process is that we knew at once that if Western people were going to "be" community moving through Ceremony with Indigenous people, which is clearly the Land's vision, it meant we'd have to figure out how to teach and mentor however many people we're talking about here. And since not everyone who starts that process will decide to stay the course, we're talking about more than just a few people from the beginning. This kind of mentoring is exceedingly time- and energy-demanding, so that's a daunting task -- however clearly sacred the ask is. So presumably people who want money and power, who have no responsibilities to the Land or to their own people (or to anyone but themselves, for that matter) will continue to step into the gap and make hay out of the fact that it's amazingly easy to teach people (paraphrasing Yunkaporta) how to make decorations rather than art, how to sing memorized tunes instead of making real music, and how to engage with commercialized fetishes instead of authentic cultural practice. In the "war between good and evil [that] is in reality an imposition of stupidity and simplicity over wisdom and complexity, (Yunkaporta 2020, 3)" it is stupidity and simplicity that can be taught fastest and to the most people, at the lowest cost and the highest rate of return. Wisdom and complexity are much harder to come by, take more time to impart, take more effort on everyone's parts, and are priceless. And the rate of return, if properly done, can't be plotted on a graph or measured incrementally because it is *emergent*.

I am explaining this as clearly as I can so that those of you who are not Indigenous will understand the care I take now in explaining, within that context, in what ways this ceremony the Land has given us <u>is</u> Green Corn Ceremony and in what ways it is also <u>not</u> Green Corn Ceremony. I do not mean this the way that a Boy Scout might say he does a dance that is this particular tribal dance and yet also is not this particular tribal dance, evading the truth as he tries to claim he hasn't misappropriated a dance that does not belong to him and that he has no way at all of understanding. In Indigenous reality, the statement I

made is not a way of evading the truth. Instead it manifests a real and very powerful attribute of reality that's called, in English, ambiguity. Because ambiguity is essential to understanding the nature of the ceremony we've been given, we must briefly digress to explore the ambiguity that exists in the reality Indigenous people experience, that therefore exists in the language we use to try to transmit the power of that ambiguity.

Indigenous Knowledge is not a rigid construction of logical proofs, but an emergent, living entity with agency. So Indigenous people do not place excessively high value Knowledge that has rigor. A characteristic of Indigenous Knowledge that we consider both important and powerful is *ambiguity*. Linguistic ambiguity permits us to communicate Knowledge about things that are, themselves, really and truly ambiguous. That statement is almost nonsensical to people in Western culture, but this does not mean (as many Western people assume) that Indigenous people need to stop speaking ambiguously. It means, instead, that Western people need to understand how Indigenous people see ambiguity and why we think it's too important a concept to surrender to the forces of epistemic colonization or cultural misappropriation, either one.

A word such as *Knowledge* or *Ceremony* can be intentionally used in an ambiguous way that permits it to mean slightly different things in a single sentence if you tip your head a bit one way or the other. We do this when the actual thing we want to talk about is ontologically ambiguous in that same way. If that's the case, it's important to convey this ambiguity if we want to communicate something real about the thing we're talking about.

If all this is a bit hard to imagine, looking at a holographic

image on your credit card or another object can help. Yes, I am suggesting you get out something in your possession that has a hologram on it, right now, and actually look at it as you finish reading this and the following paragraph. Doing so can help you understand an extremely important aspect of Indigenous reality that's typically a major roadblock to our allies. If you don't have a hologram handy, you can see one demonstrated here. (Scroll down past the first photographic image to the video showing a piece of holographic art called "The Conqueror" that was created by Martina Mrongovius in 2019; The HoloCenter 2025.)

As you turn a holographic image in the light, you perceive different views of what seems to be a 3-dimensional object that's somehow represented in 2-dimensional space. The object literally looks different from different angles, as it would in real life. If the picture is of a person's face, and if the right and left sides of their faces look different, which is the case for pretty much everyone, you can see the different appearances as you move the hologram. If you say, "But which face is really the true image of this person?" the answer is, "Both of them are," but also, "Neither of them is." That is, none of these images is the *one* true image of this person. Which face you see, and how it looks, depends on where you're standing with respect to the person. The same is true of the hologram as you turn it in the light. And yet all the different images you can see as you turn the image in the light show you the appearance of, and tell you something about, a single entity or object -- not many different ones.

Ambiguity of language -- of the way we use words -- permits us to convey the depth of a "3-dimensional" thing that looks one way seen from here, and another way seen from there, in a "2-dimensional" language. So Indigenous people use ambiguous language to convey essential information about something that is itself ambiguous. There is really no other way to do this. Western culture sees the physical world as an *un*ambiguous reality in which a thing is really and truly *one way* OR really and truly *another way* instead. And it agrees that the language we use should fit the thing we are talking about, which means that Western culture values *un*ambiguous language as clearly describing or expressing a physical reality that is seen as equally *un*ambiguous.

The result of this cultural difference is that when Indigenous people are asked to explain even a very basic part of our ways to Western people, there almost always comes a point where a Western person "catches us" being ambiguous and points it out. They bring it to our attention because they think we've engaged in a logical fallacy without realizing it, and that of course we'd like that error brought to our attention so we can tidy things up. If we say that in fact we *meant* to be ambiguous because the thing we are talking about is itself ambiguous, we are met with consternation. If we refuse to resolve the ambiguity we now admit we've invoked, they assume we can't possibly be thinking clearly or analytically about whatever it is that's being discussed.

Indigenous people don't see ambiguity as a logical fallacy or a problem of fuzzy thinking. We see it as an aspect of reality that's powerfully meaningful. As Shawn Wilson pointed out when speaking to Western evaluation scholar Ed Gordon, who was trying at that moment to understand the difference between Western and Indigenous ways of

knowing (Adams et al. 2022, 24),

> "Well, one difference [between us] I do think I notice is the idea that ambiguity *needs* to be resolved. You spoke of it as a challenge to relational adjudication just now, that it could produce a paradox that has to be resolved. But in my experience, I've found that ambiguity is sometimes necessary. I don't feel the need to resolve it. So maybe our different assumptions about the need to resolve ambiguity are one real difference between our systems of understanding."

Complex 3-dimensional things *do* look different when you observe them from different angles, and they *do* behave differently in different circumstances. But the important thing is that there's real correlation betwen the way the things you're looking at are put together, and the way your perception and thought processes are put together so you can look at them. They have to match for good Knowledge transmission to happen. Fiona points out that she thinks that's because "you have to be inside a world to be able to look around and describe it; that you have know the people, know their language, know their world before you can even begin to think, feel, sense the world in the ways they do. And even then, it's an ongoing relationship that supports the growth of that intuition, that way of knowing the world." This is the connection Yunkaporta expresses in the passage we've seen twice before (2020, 104): "When metaphors have integrity, they are multi-layered, with complex levels that may be accessed by people who have prerequisite understandings."

The metaphors are the common factor, so the metaphors can be natural expressions of the Land's ambiguity, as in an ecosystem. Or metaphors can exist in the way we communicate information about an ambiguous natural system. Information about an ambiguous thing can only be transmitted by means of language, art, or ceremony (for example) that are structurally rich enough to express ambiguity. Modern Western languages such as English can't do it very well. Trying to describe an ambiguous natural system in English is a lot like trying to explain a colored sunrise sky using a language with no words for color beyond "black" and "white." How would you explain what you mean by "red" in such a language system? And what about the finer difference between a morning sky that's blood red or one that's coral red? As Shawn pointed out when we talked about this idea, "even the descriptions of the colors can, in themselves, be seen as metaphors: *blood* red and *coral* red use an analogy in nature to describe something that is otherwise indescribable." And of course, you cannot explain the potential *significance* of the morning sky's color without that language.

This begins to explain why it's nearly impossible for a person from the dominant culture to "perform" an Indigenous dance or other ceremony in a meaningful way unless they are being guided by a knowledgeable Indigenous person. Without that guidance, they are like a person who's only ever seen a sunset sky in black and white photographs, who's painting pictures of sunset images in shades-of-gray and thinking they tell others what a beautiful sunset looks like. All they can produce, in that case, is a facsimile of something they've never seen and for which they don't have conceptual language.

When people of the dominant culture, who are in precisely this situation, then aggressively try to redefine real

Indigenous cultural space in their own image, by telling Indigenous people what our ceremonies and art "really are," it's a serious problem. However unintentially, it's an attempt to remake the rich and ambiguous full-color *world itself* into the unambiguous black-and-white world that fits the dominant language. The problem with this, of course, is that a black-and-white world is not rich enough to stay healthy. It dies.

Some of the most powerful parts of the real natural world are highly and meaningfully ambiguous in the ways I have tried to help you begin to understand here. Indigenous Knowledge is one of these things. So are Ceremony, Community, and Story. When you notice that I'm using a term in a way that's a bit slippery, where it seems to be one way on this page or in this paragraph, and a different way a few lines or pages later, it's essential you understand that the ambiguity of this language communicates the real and meaningful ambiguity of the thing I'm trying to tell you about. In the one place, the thing is this way. In the other place, it is that way. Your job, as a reader with relational accountability to the Knowledge with which you are choosing to engage, is to hold such apparently contradictory ideas in your mind, side by side, so that Indigenous Knowledge can emerge from their interplay.

So: The Ceremony we have been given is *not* actual Green Corn Ceremony. But the Ceremony we have been given *is* Green Corn Ceremony, in multiple ways that are very important to us as we seek to understand what it is that's moving through and within IKhana Fund as a living community of relationships.

The first thing that can be said about the Ceremony that's to serve as an entry point to IKhana Fund's giving-and-receiving community is that we absolutely *will <u>not</u> use* any of the specific ceremonies in any of the Green Corn Ceremonies any Indigenous tribe or nation practices. I don't think any actual fires will be extinguished or relit. I doubt any actual green corn will be harvested or eaten. For certain we are doing <u>no</u> traditional dances from any Corn Nation's Green Corn Ceremony, singing <u>no</u> traditional songs from these ceremonies, or doing any of the other things these people do as part of their Green Corn Ceremony. That's why I so adamantly said *we are <u>not</u> doing actual Green Corn Ceremony*.

If this puzzles you, that I'm talking about carrying out an important Ceremony that involves none of the specific actions, objects, or trappings of that Ceremony, it's because you are having trouble *applying* Knowledge you've only read about to this point. That Knowledge is: *<u>Ceremony is not a method, but a weaving of lived and living relationships that manifest Indigenous values</u>*. The fire, the corn, the dances, the songs of Green Corn Ceremony are not merely symbolic, but they are also not the beating heart of the Ceremony itself. That's why when people of the dominant culture "grab" and misappropriate Indigenous songs, dances, regalia, or paraphernalia, whatever they do with it is a just a hollow mockery of real Indigenous Ceremony.

With this in mind, look again at Tyson Yunkaporta's words with eyes and heart and mind open to the deeper Reality that manifests in those words: "Working with grounded, complex metaphors that have integrity is the difference between decorations and art, tunes and music, recommercialized fetishes and authentic cultural practice. When metaphors have integrity, they are multi-layered, with complex levels that may be accessed by people who have prerequisite understandings (Yunkaporta 2020, 104)." The words "grounded" and "complex" are specific and deeply significant here, not casual. Think of what "grounded" means to Indigenous people, and of what I mean every time I tell you about a natural system or process that is "complex." If you continue to parse through the words of this quote that way, you will discover that it is an extremely rich passage that appears deceptively simple to anyone paying only cursory attention. *That is the nature of Indigenous reality and cultures*, right there.

The fire, the corn, the dances, the songs of Green Corn Ceremony manifest the lived and living relationships between a *specific people* and a *specific Land*. Remember that "Land" here refers to the ground beneath peoples' feet *and also* to far, far more than that. Land is the "enormous woven network of the seen and unseen, of relationships and the physical manifestations of relationships" in a given Place (Adams 2019d). Remember that these *relationships* are the key to all of it, to absolutely everything. Knowledge of every kind, and Life itself, *emerge from these relationships* in a wholly natural -- not at all supernatural -- process of self-organization in complex systems (Adams 2021g,h). This means that these connections, the relationships from which Life itself emerges, are the engine of an incontrovertible natural process as real as gravity.

Physics has recognized the incontrovertible nature of gravitational attraction and described it with several physical laws,[9] the word "law" used to emphasize the aspect of being incontrovertible.[10] Indigenous people have recognized the incontrovertible nature of emergence in living systems and described it as a natural law that we call *relationship and reciprocity*. Humans cannot simply and willfully act in violation of relationship and reciprocity without cataclysmic personal outcome, in the same way that they cannot simply and willfully act in violation of gravity without cataclysmic personal outcome. The difference between the two scenarios is that when humans act in violation of relationship and reciprocity, entire communities and ecosystems eventually collapse and die -- along with, of course, the humans who are part of them. It just takes longer for ecosystems to collapse than it does for a person to hit the ground after jumping off a highway overpass. So people don't immediately notice the impact of violating reciprocity and relationship the way they notice the impact of violating gravity. But even that's starting to change as the consequences of violating the law of relationship and reciprocity accelerate (Robles et al. 2021; Jong 2024).

Indigenous peoples and cultures are Land-based rather than human-centered. As we explained in *Standing Our Ground* (Adams et al. 2022, 34):

> . . . the natural world itself sets the agenda for Indigenous-led environmental projects because *our epistemic system is Land-based*. As the Native

Hawai'ian scholar of epistemology Manulani Meyer says, the land is our 'epistemological cornerstone.' (Hopson and Cram 2018, 7-8) Because of the deep connection between Land and Knowledge, which you saw for yourself in the Story about Moose, the land is '. . . more than a physical place. It is an idea that engages knowledge and contextualizes knowing'. (Ibid.)

"Indigenous scholar Vanessa Watts, Mohawk and Anishinaabe Bear Clan, Six Nations of the Grand River, puts a slightly different spin on this that can deepen your understanding of the relationships between Land, animals such as Moose, humans, and Knowledge. She writes about a concept she calls Indigenous Place-Thought, describing it as 'the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking, and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts . . . [This] necessarily disrupts a concept of knowledge separate from the geosphere and biosphere, and posits instead that land and thought are integral to one another. Biota, geology and thinking are one and the same (Davis and Todd 2017, 769).' "

Consider, in that context, neurological research of a number of different kinds that's documenting the *emergent* nature of human perception, cognition, and higher-order human thought processes -- in other words, "thinking." The complex *connections and relationships* between different neurons, sensory cells, and whole-body neural networks are the driving engine of the emergent process of thinking in humans (Adams 2021a,b). But it's not this way in humans alone. The processes of Knowing, and the agency that accompanies Knowing, emerge from all natural complex systems with densely woven webs of relationship. Such Knowing and its agency are a universal characteristic of the natural world, something of which complexity scientists in the field of physics are uncomfortably aware. Indigenous people have always said that thunderstorms, rivers, and all aspects of the Land are alive, that these things have agency, and that Knowledge comes from these things. And now complexity scientists are beginning to see this for themselves, going so far as to publish and then argue about their conclusion that, because of complexity, even a thunderstorm is alive and has agency (Adams 2021g). Insight or understanding, what we call "thinking," emerges from relationships and connections between the constituent elements of a human's neural system, and Knowledge also emerges -- through precisely the same processes -- from relationships and connections between the constituent elements of the Land's ecological systems. This is not a belief system or a religion. It's the natural physical process of complex self-organization.

Now apply this information to the subject under discussion. I have told you that *Ceremony **is** a weaving of lived and living relationships that manifest Indigenous values*. The primary Indigenous value the IKhana Fund community serves is *reciprocity and relationship*. Reciprocity and relationship is the natural phenomenon -- the physical phenomenon if that's the only term of ontological reality you can accept -- that permits living ecosystems to emerge from what would otherwise be mere

assemblages of biotic and geologic entities. If a rich web of reciprocal relationships is the key to emergence of Knowledge and Life, any act that enriches or strengthens these relationships increases the health and viability of the whole system. This is precisely the reason Indigenous people engage in Ceremony, is to maintain and strengthen the web of relationships that help keep the Land and All Our Relations healthy and vibrantly alive. I am telling you *that's what Ceremony is about*. That's its purpose. Even a small personal ceremony realigns an individual more fully with that larger web of relationships we call the Land, strengthening the larger whole. At the same time, that individual ceremony plugs the person into the system in such a way that they're able to access the system's emergent Knowledge and use it in ways that permit them to live ever more responsibly in relationship and reciprocity. It's a win-win-win situation for absolutely everything.

Are you beginning to see why I said Ceremony is not merely a method? Can you see why I say when a person of the dominant culture misappropriates the Indigenous songs, dances, regalia, or paraphernalia of Indigenous Ceremony, they can produce nothing but a mockery of that Indigenous Ceremony?

A number of different Ceremonies reweave frayed relationships and their flow of reciprocity, but Green Corn Ceremony may be particularly powerful when it comes to healing relationships that have frayed to the point of needing genuine reconciliation as a *starting* point, before deeper and more substantive healing can even begin. You have learned that Green Corn Ceremony engages people very deeply in reflection, self-denial, reassessment, and renewal, with an emphasis on forgiving others for everything short of murder, and on behaving in moral ways even when this requires us to face things we'd rather avoid. So it's an ideal point of entry for a community of both Western and Indigenous people who intend to walk together in Ceremony.

But Green Corn Ceremony didn't become a part of this work because I thought it was a good choice. The simple and essential fact of the matter is that I never sat down and said to myself, "I know what we need to do here. We need to do Green Corn Ceremony." No. It was the Land that wove Green Corn Ceremony into all of this. And that's extremely important.

Chapter 23

From the very beginning of this whole process, I avoided the precise things it turns out I had to face in order for the Land's vision of IKhana Fund as a giving-and-receiving Community moving in Ceremony to manifest. This Community was to have both Indigenous people and Western people in it, and we clearly had to "move together" through Indigenous Ceremony. And then, as if to lock the exit doors, the Knowledge came in a form that made the Land's agenda inescapable: IKhana Fund was to *be* the Ceremony, was to *be* the Community, was to *be* the Story -- a new Story that would replace the Pioneer Story we'd been so thoughtlessly using.

We were not, in other words, to be a group of Indigenous people with some Western "guests" along for the ride. Our Western allies had to learn enough, and learn deeply enough, to eventually *be* IKhana Fund. I want to say "too" but there's no "too" in the Knowledge. Yet I've shared a few of the many stories from just my own life experience that demonstrate what happens when a community of Indigenous people invites Western people to gather and work with them in a space created by Ceremony, if they've never had an opportunity to learn what Indigenous Ceremony is, much less the responsibilities of those who participate. That's the Hard Problem we identified. So for a long time, the prospect of fulfilling the Land's vision seemed utterly hopeless to me.

As you know, though, I was certain there *had* to be a solution I was simply unable to see. The Land would not have suggested this otherwise. So I engaged in small personal Ceremony, trying to align myself more deeply with the Land and its vision. I did this on and with the powerful sacred Land from which the Knowledge given us in our meeting had emerged. And, as I have also told you, the response was Green Corn Ceremony -- not in word or thought, but in the slowly and unmistakably thickening presence of the Ceremony itself -- Right here in northwestern Nebraska. At the wrong time of year. With no corn anywhere in sight.

You know what happened then too. I have told you the story. And I have told you how it played out, step by step, the Land leading me first to IKhana Fund's Hard Problem, and then to a Ceremony that is tailored to resolving that precise problem. Except that these steps did not play out in a linear fashion, the way it seems they did when I write them in sequential words this way. Everything happened at the same time, in several interbraided paths of iterative learning on my part and complex connection-forming on the Ceremony's part. So it took me a while to understand, at each step, what was going on. When the Land leads so strongly, you're always running along behind and picking up breadcrumbs. At least, that's how it is for me.

If it had been any other Ceremony but Green Corn, I doubt I'd ever have realized the Land was weaving Ceremony at all. But the memory of Green Corn Ceremony is written into my bones. I couldn't help but follow the pull of deep recognition any more than I'd been able, as a child, to stop my feet from following in the footsteps of the dancing rabbits with which my ancestors had been in reciprocal relationship in our original homeLands. The Ancestors live inside of us, after all. And time is not linear, despite how it feels. So the Ancestors are right here, right now, all the time, Knowing what they know and recognizing what they see. I have never been to Choctaw Green Corn Ceremony but my Ancestors have. And they are doing that Ceremony right now.

I think that's why the ceremony came to me as Green Corn Ceremony. But this is by no means the only Ceremony that reweaves frayed relationships and their flow of reciprocity. And IKhana Fund is certainly not the first community needing to resolve explosively painful histories in order to heal and restore the fabric of Life.

Nearly 900 years ago, in the mid-1400s, the people of the Lands that stretched west and south across North America from the Great North Woods to the shoreline forests of Lake Erie were at war, and they had been for many long and traumatic years. Peace came when two great men, Degenawidah and Hiawatha, wove a famous and powerful confederacy out of five warring nations there, adding a sixth a short time later, to create "the oldest living participatory democracy on earth" (Hansen 2018), one that still functions today. This confederacy is the Haudenosaunee, sometimes called the Six Nations and sometimes the League of the Iroquois. The powerful historical story of its creation and the peace it established has been preserved by those people in a small and beautifully eloquent book called *White Roots of Peace* (Wallace 1994).

At the time of American independence, the Haudenosaunee confederacy had already been

functioning successfully for more than 600 years. The Haudenosaunee confederacy was so powerful that the Founding Fathers of the United States intentionally copied the articles of incorporation for their new nation from those of the Haudenosaunee, whose town councils they had attended and by which they had been very impressed. "'It would be a strange thing,' wrote Benjamin Franklin (Wallace 1994, 19), 'if Six Nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such a union, and be able to execute it in such a manner as that it has subsisted ages and appears indissoluable; and yet that a like union should be impracticable for ten or a dozen English colonies to whom it is more necessary and must be more advantageous, and who cannot be supposed to want an equal understanding of their interests'." The Great Seal of the United States even incorporates many elements of the Haudenosaunee confederacy in its design. In fact, the rather stunningly backhanded nature of Franklin's compliment seems particularly unwarranted when you find out how much he and the other Founding Fathers "borrowed" from the Haudenosaunee.

If you ask Indigenous people -- all of whom greatly esteem, to this day, the courage and wisdom of Degenawidah and Hiawatha as well as that of the others who helped accomplish this difficult task -- where this peace-making and community-weaving work originated and what engine drove it, they will answer with some linguistic variation of "the Land." You can see the evidence for this, at least if you are an Indigenous person, if you read the story (something I highly recommend). For, in one of the most extraordinary twists of any story, the man who was the single cruelest and most terrifying leader of all those who had been making war was not killed and also was not deposed, *but was healed by being brought into community*. Degenawidah and Hiawatha's peacemaking work manifested the highest Indigenous values of relationship and reciprocity, privileging the need of an entire community for peace above any personal desire anyone may have understandably had for security, justice, control, personal reward, or even revenge.[11]

Choctaw author LeAnne Howe (Howe 2013, 173) frames the Haudenosaunee story within an Indigenous Earth-based context she calls *tribalography*, the "reciprocal embodiment between people and the land," and points out that Degenawidah and Hiawatha "were *the embodiment of the land's desire for peace, expressed through their actions*." We have already talked about Knowledge coming from the Land, Vanessa Watts so beautifully pointing out that "land and thought are integral to one another. Biota, geology and thinking are one and the same" (Davis and Todd 2017, 769). When you interweave these two powerful expressions of the reality Indigenous people experience, ones in which both thoughts and actions originate in and are "one and the same with" the Land, you begin to see why Indigenous people say "Everything comes from the Land." Language, culture, art, story, ceremony -- all these things that human beings conceptualize and then do are a combination of thought and action.

Knowledge itself encompasses both thought and action. It is not enough to simply know a "piece of information." To be responsible to Knowledge and to the community from which that Knowledge emerged, we must also understand *what to do* with the Knowledge we are given. How is it to be properly and safely used? With whom should it be shared, and under what circumstances? What are the limitations on its use?[12] Remember that I told you it was

not enough for me to simply write out the Knowledge that IKhana Fund is to be "a giving-and-receiving community that moves together in ceremony." I had to have some idea of how we could *actualize* this vision in order to even understand the Knowledge deeply enough to share it. That struggle to get from thought to at least very basic action has filled the pages of this paper, <u>because</u> *this process -- the process of translating words of thought into words explaining and describing the actions through which the thought becomes embodied* -- is the process that <u>is</u> this thing that both is and is not Green Corn Ceremony. The struggle to embody the thought that IKhana Fund is to be a giving-and-receiving community that moves together in Ceremony simultaneously weaves and enfolds us all in *an understanding of Ceremony* that begins to address the Hard Problem.

It is important to remember, in this discussion, a point that's easily lost when someone is just beginning to learn Indigenous ways. This important point is that Knowledge has agency. No human discovers or invents it. We ask for Knowledge within and from a living web of relationships, and Knowledge emerges from these relationships as a gift that is *shared with* us. No human being owns Knowledge, though Indigenous people have had to start speaking of the community in which Knowledge emerged as "owning" it (specifically as Intellectual Property), in order to protect it from being stolen by Western organizations or individuals who then demand the community of origin pay to use their own Knowledge. This is actually one of the reasons I am writing so very carefully in this paper, is that **<u>non</u>**-Indigenous people who teach "Indigenous Studies" for profit, and those of the non-Indigenous community who claim to be Indigenous and operate "Indigenous Ceremony" for profit, are notoriously quick to seize ideas from Indigenous people, even though they do not understand them at all, specifically so they can monetize these things for personal gain. This is, of course, another aspect of that Hard Problem. While some of these individuals may be genuinely amoral, my sense is that most are simply ignorant. So I have tried to write about Ceremony clearly enough to educate would-be cultural thieves about the seriousness of their transgressions and the very real harmful impact it has on *literally* the entire world.

Chapter 25

Now. Let's circle back to Davis and Todd, and to Howe, who say that the thoughts and actions of Indigenous people who understand and have reciprocal relationship with the Land *embody* the Land's intentions and goals, which is to say its vision or agenda (depending on whether you want to opt for the English word that falls on the spiritual side of Western culture's split reality, or the material side of their split reality).

Ceremonies manifest the vital and essential *patterns* of the Land itself, of the natural world. Before these patterns were ever Ceremony in which a human participated, they were expressed in and by the winds and the waters, the cycles of seasons and day/night, the ever-whirling Circles of matter such as water and carbon that are the engine of Life itself. In a healthy world, these patterns *continue* to manifest through, and to be expressed by the winds and the waters, the seasons and the cycles, and all the other circular processes in ecosystem communities of prairie and mountain, of deep sea and tidal basin, of desert and tundra. The plants manifest these patterns, the animals manifest these patterns, the insects and algae and plankton and fungi and protozoans manifest these patterns. The rabbits, yes, the rabbits manifest these patterns. They dance Ceremony in the counterclockwise direction in which the winds move to bring rain to the middle portion of this continent.

And the Indigenous people also manifest these patterns that are Ceremony, that weave reciprocal relationships from which Knowledge and Healing emerge. We are drawn to the clearing where winter-bare trees shake down snow from their branches onto the leaping forms of rabbits dancing with joy beneath the moon because *relationships are reciprocal*. Ceremony weaves the relationships that form Community. And that Community is of *All* Our Relations, not just human beings. Indigenous people, who still live with, in, and according to the Land's own natural laws, are consciously a part of this Community, practicing Ceremony to remain aligned in ways that permit deep communication of Knowledge. This is *how*, and also *why*, Watt and Howe tell us that the thoughts and actions of Indigenous people who understand and have reciprocal relationship with the Land *embody* the Land's intentions and goals, its agenda. Its Vision.

Now look again, in this context, at the Knowledge we were given about how to "do" IKhana Fund. We were told: We *are* the Ceremony, We *are* the Community, We *are* the Story. Given everything else we have figured out to this point, about the Hard Problem and the ways that Green Corn Ceremony makes it possible to address that Problem, these become statements of how *the Land's desire for reconciliation* is to be expressed through the actions of a specific group of people who are a giving-and-receiving Community that moves together in Ceremony.

Peace emerges from a pattern of relationships. Peacemaking reweaves frayed and broken relationships damaged by war. The peace-*making* is the behaviors through which those rewoven relationships are restored so they can then once again be fully expressed. Reconciliation also emerges from a pattern of relationships, though the behaviors that reweave frayed relationships -- behaviors through which the restored relationships are expressed -- are slightly different from those of peacemaking. And no, I don't think I can articulate, yet, precisely how these two patterns and processes are different. I think the pattern that restores reconciliation hasn't woven itself into IKhana Fund's existence and/or awareness yet. All of this will happen in, will emerge from, our Community as it moves together in Ceremony. This is an active and on-going process, this larger Ceremony.

But I can see this much: the Six Nations that Degenawidah and Hiawatha wove together to form the Haudenosaunee confederacy all shared the same basic experience of reality, the same ways of knowing, and the same basic value system. The Indigenous people and the Western people that must be woven together to form the IKhana Fund community do not have this shared baseline as a starting point. Yunkaporta sums the difference up this way (Yunkaporta 2020, 3): "There is a pattern to the universe and everything in it, and there are knowledge systems and traditions that follow this tradition to maintain balance, to keep the temptations of narcissism in check. But recent traditions have emerged that break down creation systems like a virus, infecting complex patterns with artificial simplicity, exercising a civilizing control over what some see as chaos. The Sumerians started it, the Romans perfected it. The Anglosphere inherited it. The world is now mired in it." That difference, and the impact it has on our Indigenous and Western peoples being able to come together, is, of course, that

ever-present Hard Problem. But it is the Hard Problem for which the Land has given us a solution: Green Corn Ceremony.

Inescapably, in an ultimate way, the pulsing and living heart of the Ceremony called by the name of Green Corn *exists*. Different Ceremonies manifest the patterns of different types of healthy relationships. So when the connections that weave a particular pattern have frayed, a particular Ceremony restores and reweaves it. Of course this is so. Indigenous Ceremony is quite literally the manifestation of the powerful natural patterns of the Land itself, and of Life, as these patterns manifest through and are expressed by the actions of Indigenous peoples and all other living beings, seen and unseen, biotic and geologic and cosmic. Because of this, humans who participate in Ceremony encounter, engage with, and remember what is Real so they can align with it, so they can remain in relationships and reciprocity with the world of which they are a part. Ceremony is therefore the rich and emergent expression of Knowledge itself, spinning itself into existence in a time of ever-ongoing non-linear creation, bringing the same gifts of relationship, wisdom, and well-being into existence now that it did before and always will and always has. This is why we say that the Land is the source of everything. That is the reality we experience. The Land is the source of our languages, our cultures, Knowledge, Law, Story. Ceremony. The Land is the source of everything. Even when we Indigenous people begin to forget some important thing, and the Knowledge is endangered within us, the Land holds it safe and gives it back to us, knowing Indigenous people will still recognize it in Ceremony.

Chickasaw author Linda Hogan writes about the Indigenous experience of remembering, recognizing, and responding this way (Hogan 1995, 170-171):

> "I was devoted to woods the wind walked through, to mosses and lichens. Somewhere in my past, I had lost the knowing of this opening light of life, the taking up of minerals from dark ground, the magnitude of thickets and brush. Now I found it once again. Sleep changed me. I remembered things I'd forgotten, how a hundred years ago leaves reached toward sunlight, plants bent into currents of water. Something persistent nudged me and it had morning rain on its leaves. . . Maybe the roots of dreaming are in the soil of dailiness, or in the heart, or in another place without words, but when they come together and grow, they are like the seeds of hydrogen and the seeds of oxygen that together create ocean, lake, and ice. In this way, the plants and I joined each other. They entangled me in their stems and vines and it was a beautiful entanglement."

Seneca leader Oren Lyons, a highly respected peacemaker among the present-day Haudenosaunee confederation, says (Gennvi 2013), "When we lose an Elder who carries a great deal of traditional knowledge, people say it's gone: 'When she died, we lost it.'" But, he explains, "It's not lost. It's still there. It's not lost at all."

The Land can return to us Knowledge we have lost, can give us new Knowledge we need as the natural world shifts and rebalances in response to so much damage and change. The Land can spin out new Ceremony around and among us in such a time of great change, new or modified

Ceremony that can reweave the relationships frayed in more extreme ways -- the relationships from which Knowledge and Life itself can and will continue to emerge, that must not fray into collapse.

As it happens, this is precisely the work IKhana Fund came into existence to support (Tapestry Institute 2024).

So what does it look like, then, the Ceremony that is not really Green Corn Ceremony but that also is, that teaches discernment and creates a healthy sense of humility in a space that is safe enough for people to face the pain of such processes? What does this Ceremony look like and consist of, that promotes and supports all of us in processes of reflection, reassessment, abstaining and self-denial, moral behavior, and forgiveness? It takes courage to be vulnerable, and we must be vulnerable to open ourselves to an authentic process of renewal. Whatever form it takes, it is a Ceremony that will heal the frayed relationships between Indigenous and Western people coming together to form a giving-and-receiving community that can move, together, in Indigenous Ceremony. It is a Ceremony of Reconciliation.

We are not the first to think about such a thing. In LeAnne Howe's full passage about the Haudenosaunee tribalography (Howe 2013, 173), she asks ". . . if Degenawidah and Hiawatha were the embodiment of the land's desire for peace, expressed through their actions (and I think they were), how might embodiment be expressed in other lands by other peoples?" You know by now how exceedingly dangerous it is for a person of the dominant culture to step up to the microphone when this question is asked, to say, "No fears! I've got this!" Because, no. They don't. Even if you've "worked with Indigenous people for 40 years," if you are a person of the dominant

culture you have not "got this." This is a question for Indigenous people to gather, as a community, in Ceremony, to work on and with. The answer has to come from the Land, not from *any* human head.

Some Indigenous people are starting, now, to do work of this kind. Tyson Yunkaporta tells us (Yunkaporta 2020, 101):

> "I have observed math classes conducted by my colleague Dr. Chris Matthews (an Aboriginal mathematician) in which corroboree dances have been expressed as mathematical equations, and then new equations have been formed, and new dances created to express them. What made these rituals effective was not simply the cultural content of the dances -- it was the Dreaming action of translating a real-life event into metaphor, then manipulating the metaphor to gain understanding, followed by innovation transferred back to the real world. Traditional culture is important, but it is not just a performance or display -- the Dreaming process is the key. . . The key to Aboriginal Knowledge, as always, lies in the processes rather than just the content."

There is language and there are conceptual tools in the pages you have just read, that can help you unpack the very densely complex information in that remarkable and beautiful paragraph. You are free to read these pages again and again as you practice thinking about how to apply what you've learned to understanding this specific example. But please notice my language. What I am encouraging you to do is apply your new knowledge to *understanding* Yunkaporta's words. Do not try to apply what you've learned to adapting or creating Ceremony. If you are a person of the dominant culture, don't even think about it. This is still, again, and for the fairly long foreseeable future, something that Indigenous people have to do.

As for us, we have to do this work Indigenous, meaning in Ceremony, on the Land, *as community*. For us, that community is Shawn and Fiona and I, Jo, Jess, John, and Jules, plus anyone else who becomes part of the developing IKhana Fund community. Jessica is coming through that point of entry right now, and more will come along behind her. More Indigenous people will join us as well. It will take time, and we will have to reach out and back and across to other Indigenous communities and Elders and other groups to work all this out. We will have to try things and then modify them. We will have to ask some Holy People for advice, pray for dreams, and work together to understand the visions and metaphors by which the Land will help and guide us.

Because, despite the fact that we are no longer using Pioneer Story, this whole thing that's manifesting *is* new territory for us. But, you know, even if you are on your own Land, sometimes things change. There's a rockslide. Or a natural dam gives way and a lake drains to reveal a valley you've never seen. Maybe a volcano births hot new ground right out of the Land itself. When these things happen, you have to scout out the new place to see what's there. That's what's happening now. The Land has done something new, and it is helping us understand it in comparison to things we already know. They are things that matter so much, the Land has written them into Ceremony before and will write them into Ceremony again

in the future. But even these words do not adequately explain to you what's moving here. Because we don't fully understand it ourselves. Only the Land does. And that is exactly how it should be, how it *must* be.

Indigenous ways are Land-based. Everything real, everything of value *comes from the Land*.

This entire paper so far has been an effort to explain enough about Indigenous Ceremony and the role of the Land and relationship in Ceremony, of community in Ceremony . . . that these words, *written in* Ceremony and that *weave* this Ceremony -- around you, the willing and engaged reader -- could serve as a common ground on which a giving-and-receiving community of both Indigenous and Western people could come together and move, together, more deeply into Ceremony. That's not just a mouthful of a sentence, it's a significant challenge.

Maybe that's why, as I wrote those words, preparing to bring this section about Ceremony to a close, I suddenly saw, in my mind, a Western reader slapping an incredulous hand to forehead and hollering, "*What!?!?* That's ***it****!?!?* After all those pages about Ceremony and Green Corn and all of it, it ends in a handful of paragraphs about 'Well, we will have to figure this out together at some point'!?" And that image made me laugh out loud, because that really is the gist of this whole thing. This paper is a Ceremony of reconciliation, the Land's variant of a Green Corn Ceremony that can begin to address the Hard Problem -- that being (in case you somehow got hit on the head and forgot) the fact that people in Indigenous and Western cultures see ceremony so very, very differently that it causes problems when we are *together* in a ceremony that's specifically Indigenous. It's not about the actual Ceremony we will (maybe) "do" at some point. It's not about any regalia or paraphernalia or song or dance or feather or fire or rattle. *It's not about things. It's about relationships. And it's not even, ultimately, just about the relationships themselves, but the patterns of Knowledge and Healing and Life that emerge from those relationships*. Yunkaporta just said as much: ". . . it is not just a performance or display -- the Dreaming process is the key. . . The key to Aboriginal Knowledge, as always, lies in the processes rather than just the content." And this entire paper is process. That process IS our Ceremony. At least, for now.

But, you know, we still have to close one more circle before we open the next one. And that circle is the Story of this whole ambiguous is/isn't Green Corn Ceremony itself. Despite everything I know, so much of which I have shared here with you, I had never in my life expected the Land would generate and sustain a Ceremony of its own devising in my own lived experience. It certainly never occurred to me that, if it did, it would explain itself to me through the vital and ageless patterns of the Green Corn Ceremony woven of and by the Choctaw homeLands from which my family was torn 200 years ago. I never expected to feel such a Ceremony swallow and swaddle me so inescapably, even relentlessly, and with so little fanfare. It felt like a time I was canoeing before sunrise in the Great North Woods when a fog slid silently across still lake waters to envelop woman, canoe, dripping paddle, and bobbing loons in a world that was suddenly very different from what it had been a moment before. I was not sure it was even actually possible for a Ceremony to do such a thing. Yet apparently it had.

To be clear, I wasn't worried about whether Green Corn Ceremony furnishes apt metaphors or symbols for what we're doing. Those are not the important parts of the Ceremony. What mattered was being able to correctly evaluate the situation, to make certain I was not accidentally deluding myself or anyone else. It's a matter of being responsible, engaging in what Shawn calls

relational accountability (Wilson 2009: 133).

As fall became winter and the rising sun began to slide southward along the horizon, I felt increasingly troubled and torn. I read and re-read the emails from Shawn and Fiona in which we had discussed and re-discussed the possibilities, the probabilities, the dreams, the visions, and even the rabbits that had given us insight. I remembered and thought about what I had been experiencing for months now. But each time I considered accepting the reality that Green Corn Ceremony seemed to be weaving its own self into IKhana Fund, I pulled up short. Mistaking the process and claiming the Land is doing something, when it's actually not, is *not* a thing to play around with. It's too easy to make a serious mistake. And, given the purpose of IKhana Fund, the consequences of such a mistake would be horrific. In the growing darkness of December, my sense of unease began to feel like a chunk of snow that had fallen inside my collar and was melting on the nape of my neck, starting to trickle down my spine. The more I tried to write, the more I was painfully aware of being the one charged with the responsibility of processing the Knowledge that has come to our community. The fear of "getting it wrong and messing everything up" began to feel paralyzing.

A few mornings before Winter Solstice, I sat for a long time gazing out the window eastward at the low hills rising from the dark prairie in the very dim light before sunrise. It had been almost three months since the day I'd discovered we were in an actual, physical "blackberry month" despite it's being September on the calendar then. It seemed to me like I had continued to feel Green Corn Ceremony swirling around me like a thick and living mist all this time, nurturing my thoughts and pushing me gently, one step at a time, towards being able to write the words you have been reading. But that morning, I suddenly had calendar-assessment thoughts again. "It was gift enough that blackberries so improbably marked the time of Green Corn in September," I told myself. "Now it is December, almost Solstice. Green Corn Ceremony certainly doesn't last three months, so even if it was happening then, it cannot possibly still be going on now." A moment later, I realized with a sharp pang of fear that the calendar problem was even worse than that. In our original homeLands, Green Corn Ceremony is carried out when the blackberries are ripe, around the time of the Summer Solstice, in June. How likely was it, I thought, that the Land could or would weave a Ceremony around IKhana Fund that somehow spanned six months and both ends of the seasonal rounds?

Despair dropped, heavy as wet cement, into the core of my being. I simply *had* to be mistaken about all the things I'd thought I was seeing and feeling, I decided. I could not possibly write the paper as Green Corn Ceremony. It wasn't right. It couldn't be. I closed my files and set aside my laptop. I was afraid to make a mistake. I was afraid to cause harm. I felt isolated and very small, and utterly alone.

Chapter 28

All my life, when I have felt this way, I have reached for writings by a Native author, by which I mean someone from a North American tribal nation. It comforts me like a warm fire on a spring morning when the floor is cold against bare feet. I had recently gotten a book by the Choctaw author, LeAnne Howe. In fact, I just shared some passages of it with you, in text I wrote long after the day I am telling you about right now. On this particular winter morning of darkness, when I had set aside all that had happened as having been somehow projected by my own ego, when I therefore had no idea how I could begin to tackle the Hard Problem but still had to do it . . . I picked up her book, opened it, and started reading on the place my eyes fell. That's what I do at such a time. Right away, the language and cadence of her words began to make me feel better, as if a comfortable shawl had been draped over my shoulders.

And then I turned the page of a story Howe was telling about her grandmother, in which she pointed out that red-tailed hawk fledglings are ready to leave the nest "in late June, close to the time of the Summer Solstice." The passage continued with these words (Howe 2013, 181):

> Traditionally, Choctaws (and other southeastern tribes) extinguished all 'fires' on Summer Solstice, known as *Luak Mosholi*. Fires being a multi-purpose metaphor for settling all scores, ending the old six-

month cycle and beginning a new cycle that will end on Winter Solstice."

You recognize *Luak Mosholi*. You know what she is talking about here, the thing that takes place around the time of Summer Solstice: Green Corn Ceremony. But look where it goes from there -- fire is "a multi-purpose metaphor for settling all scores." Stop. Think of the honest reconciliation that has to happen between Indigenous and Western people if a giving-and-receiving community moving in ceremony is to come into being. And then came the kicker, that made my breath catch in my throat -- that *Luak Mosholi*, the Summer Solstice time of the Green Corn, ends the six-month cycle that began with the previous Winter Solstice, and starts a new cycle that will end at the Winter Solstice to come. I had known that our traditional yearly season was in these two parts. But I had not, until now, understood the significance of the relationship between this yearly cycle and Green Corn Ceremony, *Luak Mosholi*.

My perception of Reality shivered and shook like a door someone was pounding on. I was pretty sure I knew what was on the other side, demanding to be let in, demanding that I finally and fully align with and receive the Knowledge I'd been asking for. My heart was pounding and my mouth was dry.

At that moment, the outside door of the house creaked opened and I heard the tromp of Jo's heavy winter ranch boots as she came in from having fed the horses. I heard the beep and then the snoring-bubbling of the coffee maker going on in the kitchen as Jo moved around, a rustling and the click click of things being set on the kitchen counter. "Oh," said Jo suddenly, and I heard her steps coming into the room where I was. "I forgot to tell you. Yesterday when I went to town, the store had gotten a shipment of something they haven't had on their shelves for over a year. I figured it was discontinued. Even the space they used to be in on the shelf was gone. But look!" She raised a can of the blackberries in front of me and waggled it happily, grinning. "They had some of those canned blackberries you like in stock again! I got a can of them as a special treat for Winter Solstice!!"

And so I began to write the words that opened this Ceremony, *in more ways than one*. Now you know enough to see that these words are not just poetry and also not fiction. They are real.

Fichik Chito, Morning Star, is a gleaming crystal in the pale, prescient light of a winter dawn that hasn't yet arrived. The clear ink-wash sky begins to glow pale peach against the long black silhouette of low prairie hills at the eastern horizon. To the west around the rim of encircling land, the light shades to pink and then to gray-lavender. Night rises slowly from the dark rolling hills there, pale wisps of light drifting upward from the shadowed hollows like streamers of mist from the surface of a warm pond in morning air sharp with frost. In four days it will be Winter Solstice.

At the same time, at this very moment, there are blackberries. The low hum of drowsy bees weaves between vines heavy with fruit. A hot wind rustles the long leaves of corn plants taller than a man, and they flutter like pennants. When they catch a beam of

sunlight, they flash with a gleam sharp as crystal. Tanchi, Corn, whispers on the rustles of the summer wind, singing softly to her children snugly cocooned in cradleboards made of her own leaves. They are soft and pale, these children, plump with their mother's sweet milk. Summer Solstice runs down the sky like warm honey.

This is where it begins, the things we must speak of now. It begins in this place where Winter and Summer intersect to create the axial loom on which the Land weaves the Circle that is ceremony and story, community and language, law and Knowledge itself. You might ask me which season is really present by demanding to know what my calendar shows at this moment. I would reply by saying that I write these words in the dim winter light of December and that fresh blackberries sit in my kitchen. Both seasons coexisted when these words came into my life, and they coexist now as they come into yours. The seasons dance Ceremony, circling and mirroring one another, weaving this particular Story of Indigenous Knowledge with stately steps and the rhythmic swing of shawls. This Story, that the Land dances into being now is not the one we expected.

No. It was not the one we expected.
If was infinitely more beautiful than that.

And now, circle back once again, to look once more at the words Fiona wrote to describe the event of Knowledge emergence in our gathering. I put them in the form of a prose poem to open the passages in which I shared that Knowledge with you. There's a power in Fiona's words that speaks directly to the heart, if a person will sit for a moment and visit with them on their own, not rush past them as merely an introduction to something else. You know enough now, if you didn't before, to do this.

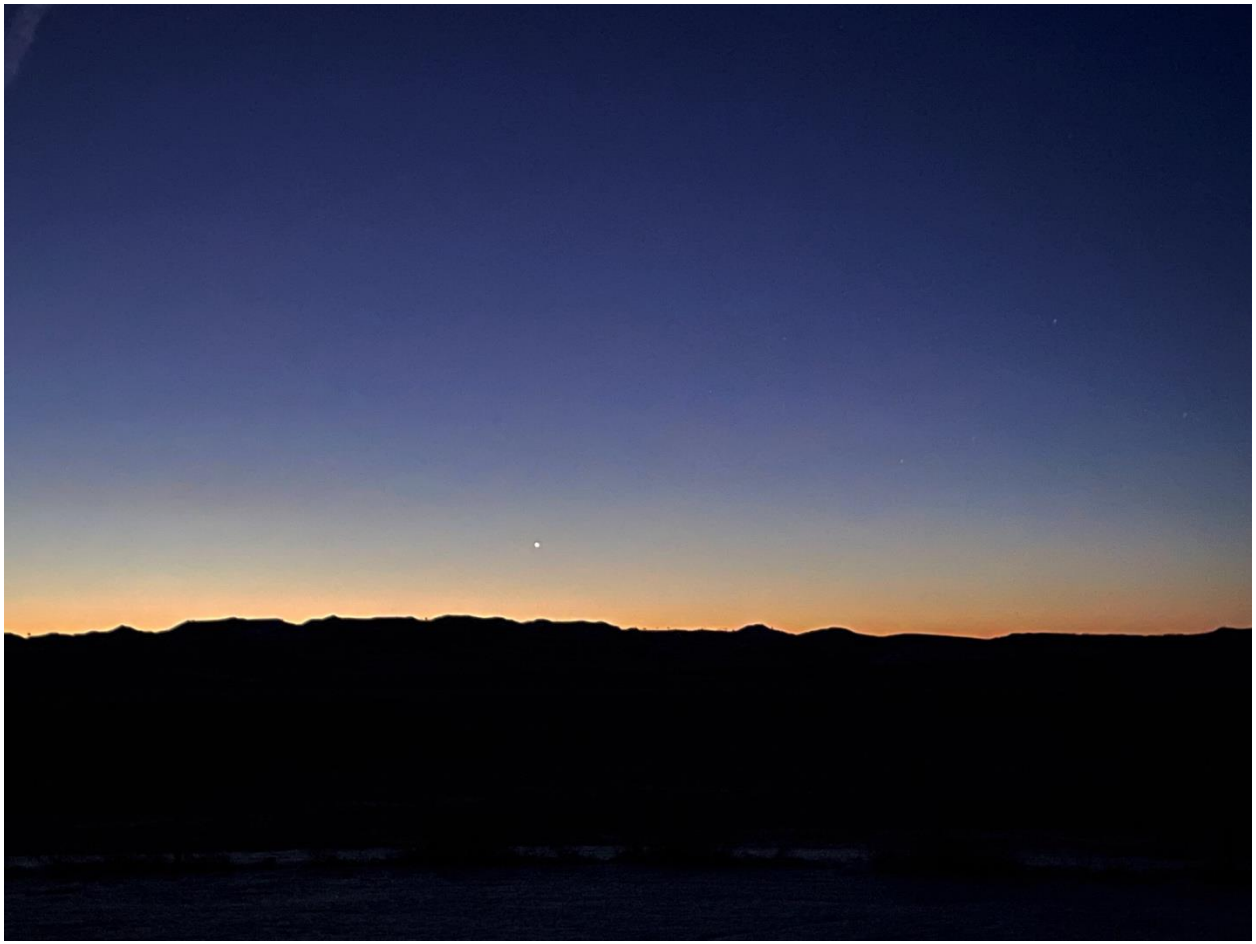
Knowledge wove itself through our voices and words
on the third and then the fourth day of our gathering.
Knowledge emerged because we were in a space opened
by and for Ceremony,
and we were therefore well-connected with the Land.
Our on-line Community held that space open
so Knowledge could emerge.
The outcome gifted us was three big baskets of
Knowledge:
Ceremony. Community. Story.

As for me in this part of the story -- I willingly surrendered canoe, paddle, and laptop to this Ceremony once I finally discerned the relationship between humility and not over-thinking things. Reflection, reassessment, and renewal helped me write all the words you have read. The Land's Green Corn Ceremony, whatever fabric or pattern it forms in IKhana Fund, will help all of us weave real and honest reconciliation between people of Indigenous and Western cultures. I can resolve the Hard Problem in those allies who can learn the discernment and humility that opens the door.

I am starting to hoe up the mounds of earth in my garden now, planting the seeds of Ceremony that are words.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Fichik Chito, Morning Star, is a gleaming crystal in the pale, prescient light of a winter dawn that hasn't yet arrived. The clear ink-wash sky begins to glow pale peach against the long black silhouette of low prairie hills at the eastern horizon. To the west around the rim of encircling land, the light shades to pink and then to gray-lavender. Night rises slowly from the dark rolling hills there, pale wisps of light drifting upward from the shadowed hollows like streamers of mist from the surface of a warm pond in morning air sharp with frost. In four days it will be Winter Solstice. . .



Breathe this new dawn
Assist it as it opens its mouth
To breathe.

from "Prepare"
Joy Harjo. *Poet Warrior: A Memoir*. 2022.
W.W. Norton & Co.

This is where it begins, the things we must speak of now.

Makhulla.

Every single member of the IKhana Fund planning team, and all the Lands from which we gathered around the world via digital meeting software, brought this work into being. IKhana Fund co-leaders Shawn Wilson and Fiona Cram were particularly important to the process. Their tireless strength, sparkling creativity, vast knowledge, and profound levels of expertise in multiple areas helped shape everything. All the team members contributed, in profoundly important ways, to what happened during the two weeks we met, did ceremony together and as individuals outside on our own lands, and worked hard to understand what was moving. The work was hard, but we all loved to hear John's beautiful laugh, Jules' fresh perspective, and Jess's war stories. Our Maskoke relative Marcus Briggs-Cloud once again blessed the space in which we gathered with Opening and Closing Ceremonies that securely held the Center.

Jessica Sweidan, who joined us for her second year as a participant-observer, continues to learn the byways of Indigenous relating and thinking. In the process, she helps us better understand a Western perspective and how we might communicate more clearly with our allies. Karen Inwood served as an external Western reader and provided very helpful insight on the draft at several stages. Tapestry co-President Jo Belasco, a partner in this work for more than 25 years, is the lodge-pole that holds up the whole thing and without whom this publication would not exist. Jo contributed to the meetings, read multiple drafts of multiple ideas, contributed insight and information to help shape whatever was cooking there, and handled so much detail I can't even list it all. She even handled the move our little organization went through while I was writing these documents. And while she's always been a good photographer, this time she got up in the middle of the night or went out in raging snowstorms to get pictures for these volumes that I thought might be "out there somewhere." And she got what I asked for, every time.

All Our Relations, who are so often in the photos on these pages and present in the daily moments of all our team members' lives, are essential parts of anything anyone learns here. In particular, I thank *Ohoyo Issi* for protecting the ceremonial space in which we met for two weeks in May, 2023. I also and most humbly thank the Ancestors for supporting this work so strongly through Dream and Vision, always helping this narrative story tell itself into the world as it seems to wish to be told. Any shortcomings that may exist are due to my inability to appropriately hear and respond to these generous Ancestors and Relations.

Finally, I wish to express my very deepest gratitude to the Land of Pine Ridge and the prairies at its feet in northwestern Nebraska. To the Land . . . the sun, the moon, the stars, the winds, the waters, the soils and stones, and all who are part of it, visible and not visible: *Yakoke*. Without you, we would not be. Without you, this would not be.

1. *Epistemology* is the study of the various ways that people in a specific culture learn and know information. An *epistemic system* is the actual way that people go about learning and knowing. People operate out of a particular epistemic system that they learn growing up, even if they don't know anything about epistemology. So the relationship between the two is like the relationship between a forest and ecology -- one is the actual functioning thing and the "-ology" is the field of study *about* that functioning thing. The Western and Indigenous epistemic systems are extremely different, primarily because (as many have pointed out, including Vine Deloria) the Western system restricts permissible "valid" knowledge sources to about one-fourth the full range of permissible knowledge sources available to, and considered valid by, Indigenous systems.

2. Some Western readers may trip over the connection made here between the emergence of Knowledge from and within living relationships and the emergence of much-needed rain from and within the ecosystem that is those very same living relationships. There is real *process-based* overlap here, and it's important. But it also exceeds the limits of the conversation we're having in this venue. If you wan to pursue the line of thought farther, though, you can find a starting point here -- https://tapestryinstitute.org/publications/occasional-papers/mitigating-natural-hazards-vol-5-no-1-aug-2021/complexity-inside-and-out/ Be sure to remember that human's learn (that's where the human brain part fits into the picture) when Knowledge emerges from living relationships. Relationships, and the higher-order processes that emerge from those, are the key.

3. Though I wrote that "Most feel that that the moment in which a human being's spiritual self separates from their material self is the moment of that person's *death*," I'd like to acknowledge that quite a few people hold a materialistic view of human consciousness as an emergent phenomenon of the brain's fully operational neural system. That particular view of human consciousness is an extreme expression of Western culture's separation of the material and spiritual realms, with the material realm being seen as the only one that's ontologically real. So "life" is literally defined in purely materialistic terms that deny the existence of anything beyond the material realm. In that system, it is nonsensical and meaningless to speak (as I did) of "the moment in which a human being's spiritual self separates from their material self."

4. With respect to the example I presented in my story about the researcher and the Elders, I want to remind you that *I altered the details to protect Knowledge that doesn't belong to me*. A TEK scientist was involved, exactly as I depict, but the specifics of the Indigenous observations that upset him were not those you see here. So do not use this passage as any sort of data about animals, plants, or TEK. I will add, however, that many Indigenous people see the collecting of data from animals, plants, and people via electronic monitoring and digital devices as generally, and increasingly, contributing more to a number of problems than to any cures. This is a

general opinion rather than privileged Knowledge, however, so I could use it to construct a stand-in dialog that conveys the heart of what happened in this event.

5. Stars produce heat and light through on-going nuclear fusion explosions. These explosions generate enormous outwardly-directed forces that would, if not balanced by an opposing force, throw the star's matter out into space. What prevents that is the gravitational attraction between the particles of matter that make up something as massive as a star. That gravitational attraction generates inwardly-directed force that tends to contract a star. It is the balance between the explosive force of nuclear fusion and the contracting force of gravitational attraction that determines a star's diameter. See the diagram on page 2 at the informational Cal Tech site https://sites.astro.caltech.edu/~george/ay20/Ay20-Lec7x.pdf

6. Even in Western culture, there are important ways of knowing and learning, and ways of transmitting complex knowledge, that are seldom discussed in classrooms, education curricula, or even educational psychology research. The website on music theory to which I've linked cracks open a delightful window into some of the richness most of us never encounter. https://www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=26860&printable=1

7. You're here because you want an example, don't you? OK. But you have to remember, this was in the days when no boys took home ec and no girls took shop (woodwork or auto mechanics; I tried, but I lost that battle). So, when, in a lecture, the teacher told us that liquids get thinner as they are heated, it was my friend and I who immediately looked at one another and then asked him, "What about cake batter? Why does it get thicker and become a solid when you heat it?" The teacher was so delighted by this question that he literally hopped back and forth from one foot to the other as he thought through the answer out loud for us, his face beaming with joy. And no, I am not going to tell you that answer. But before you look it up online, I'd like to suggest you think about it for a while first. Just for the fun of it.

8. You can read a brief contemporary overview of the status of the Boy Scout's use of traditional Indigenous dances in an article here. https://www.voanews.com/a/usa_native-americans-boy-scouts-stop-plundering-our-past/6173248.html

9. Physical laws describe the ontologically real cosmos. This ontologically real cosmos or physical world is the thing Indigenous people call the Land. So all the physical laws of motion, thermodynamics, gravity, and so on are really Land-based natural laws that people did not invent or create but merely observed in the world around them and then described in mathematical terms. The problem with calling these laws "physical laws" is that when you say they apply to the physical world, you buy into the Western cultural split between the material and spiritual elements of reality. And of course, anything that reinforces that split, even subliminally, is a problem at this time in history. So I am using the somewhat awkward term "Land-based natural law" instead.

10. Science, and the general public with it, frequently ties itself into knots over whether this or that thing is "really a

law" or "only a theory." I think the question of whether gravity is a real thing (I have to shake my head over that one), is related to anything called a law (I actually chose my words in that passage very carefully), or is merely a theory (which opens the door to semantics as well as philosophy of science) tells us primarily about the knot Western culture is tying itself into as it struggles to escape the consequences of its own estrangement from the natural world. I don't think it tells us anything important about gravity itself. In other words, I would like to suggest that the real problem here is not which term anyone uses, but the difference between "the Real thing that exists, the natural world" and "how humans think about the Real thing that exists, the natural world." The space between them is the precise location of the chasm that exists between Western culture's thought processes and the natural world itself. So to me, the terminology debate tells us more about Western culture than it does about any aspect of the natural world.

11. Regarding Degenawidah and Hiawatha , please remember that we are speaking here of individuals who align themselves so well with the Land, to "plug into" the larger complex web of emergent Knowledge, that they were *able* to embody the Land's thoughts and actions. Before Degenawidah and Hiawatha, there was terrible war. Presumably the Land had a desire for peace all along, but no one was able to overcome the personal traumas and emotions war engenders, in way that would permit them to discern that desire from a position of humility. It's not an easy thing to do, living well and properly in Indigenous space. There are people in every culture whose behaviors fall short of their values. What matters here, that this paper is attempting to explain, is what Indigenous values are and how this impacts Western-Indigenous reconciliation efforts in the IKhana Fund community. The historical man Hiawatha or Ayonwatha, by the way, whose name has also been expressed in English writing several different ways, is the personage whose name and identity Henry Wadsworth Longfellow appropriated for his poem about "Hiawatha." The story in Longfellow's poem is entirely fictional, however, and unrelated to the real life of the actual historical person.

12. The issue of our responsibility to Knowledge and to the community from which that Knowledge emerged -- what to do with the Knowledge, how to use it properly and safely, who to share it with and under what circumstances, and limitations on its use -- has actually created many problems for Western culture. Western culture operates within a knowledge system where any decisions about how to use, share, or limit the use of knowledge *belongs by proprietary right* to the person who claims to be its discoverer or inventor. Then it's up to regulatory agencies and/or governmental bodies to decide how knowledge should or should not be used. As a result, it's very common for regulatory and legislative bodies to find themselves racing to catch up to an unregulated industry rapidly applying new knowledge as it primarily serves a profit-making ethic to satisfy its investors. The separation of responsibilities means that an industry on a track that seems too fast even to its own eyes ends up demanding that regulatory agencies develop guidelines for it, rather than developing such guidelines as part of being responsible to the community and to the Knowledge itself. For a current example, see https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-three-challenges-of-ai-regulation/.

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List of Photographs

Almost every photograph in this publication, including that on the cover, was taken by Tapestry Co-President and IKhana Fund team member Jo L. Belasco, Esq. All were taken on the shortgrass prairie at the foot of Pine Ridge, in northwestern Nebraska, USA. No special filters or software editing was used on any of the images.

The following images are Adobe Stock photos:
p. 12, Pine tree drawing on the Main Section title page
p. 21, Drawing of woodpecker feather
p. 42, Burned redwood tree with sprouting needles
p. 45, Graphic of backlit and overlapping leaves
Multiple pages: Chapter header "stone" background
Multiple pages: Plant line drawing section divider

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