WIKHIKHOTUWOK AND THE RE-STORYING OF MENAHKWESK: TELLING HISTORY THROUGH TREATY[1]

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Abstract

This article is based on a basket installation created for the 2022 Arts Atlantic Symposium. The work of forging active relationships in the spirit of the Peace and Friendship Treaties has both significant challenges and transformative implications in Menahkwesk (Saint John). We collaborated on two birchbark baskets that can hold the history of Menahkwesk and that model and explain our understandings of the relationships that Saint John was violently consolidated against in 1785. We honour principles from the Wolastoqey Latuwewakon in the structure of our collaboration, along with the fact that the first gift that Gluscap gave the Wolastoqiyik was the bark that would take care of the people. In this article, we show and discuss how the creative actions of treaty (and not just the language of treaty) allow us to share visions of the past while simultaneously envisioning a shared future.

Résumé

Cet article est basé sur une installation de paniers créée pour le symposium 2022 Arts Atlantic. Le travail d'établissement de relations actives dans l'esprit des traités de paix et d'amitié présente à la fois des défis importants et des implications transformatrices à Menahkwesk (Saint Jean). Nous avons collaboré à la création de deux paniers en écorce de bouleau qui peuvent contenir l'histoire de Menahkwesk et qui modélisent et expliquent notre compréhension des relations contre lesquelles Saint Jean s'est violemment consolidé en 1785. Nous honorons le principe de Wolastoqey Latuwewakon selon lequel il n'y a pas de distinction entre l'écriture et l'art visuel dans la structure de notre collaboration et le fait que le premier cadeau que Gluscap a fait aux Wolastoqiyik était l'écorce qui prendrait soin du peuple. Dans cet article, nous montrons et discutons comment les actions créatives du traité (et pas seulement le langage du traité) nous permettent de partager des visions du passé tout en envisageant un avenir commun.

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[1] We wish to extend deep gratitude to Gina's niece, Savanna Perley, for her assistance with the Wolastoqey Latuwewakon in this paper.

> *Artists are the prophets, sages, the real recorders of history. I am painfully aware that I am not the first or last person to voice this truth. But it needs to be written, said, shouted, sung, danced, and painted, woven, and carved over and over again.*
>
> — Shirley Bear[2]

> *Gluscap and his mother came to St. John harbour from the south. Their canoe was an island. They landed at March creek below St. John. The Indians saw him coming and were amazed at the sight of his canoe. At once they knew that he had greater power than anyone else, for he was doing amazing things.*
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> — Chief James Paul[3]

This article was created through treaty. The Nêhiyaw and Saulteaux educational philosopher Margaret Kovach has argued that in an era of increased classroom and scholarly focus on treaty education and on the historical treaty agreements that facilitated the creation and development of Canada,

> there would be no worse irony than for treaty discourse...to transform the potentially subversive idea of treaty, with its emphasis on ongoing dialogue among peoples, into a dead document of history—one item among many in a curriculum that seeks to ready students for a job market and not for life as citizens in a still-colonized land.[4]

In Kovach's article, which is about the practice of "teaching through treaty,"[5] she writes about why teaching treaties as historical documents and agreements, as discrete moments in time, can never be enough—that this approach to treaty, in which students and scholars seek to stand outside of treaty and then to analyze or somehow make sense of it, cannot equip students with the tools and perspectives they need to live honourable lives of good relationship in colonized spaces or on Indigenous land.[6] The perception of treaties as documents of history is in fact a well-established part of settler colonial dominion, part of what allows active treaty relations and responsibilities in Canada to continuously fall by the wayside, to fail to lodge appropriately in jurisprudence or in a collective public or social consciousness. It explains why, for example, Canadian legislators, lawyers, and scholars so often believe themselves responsible for analyzing, interpreting, and defining "the treaties," for mastering or resolving and thereby holding themselves above and apart *from* treaty as a practice, and for then imposing their definitions and close readings onto peoples and communities—rather than for upholding, honouring, or understanding those much more fundamental ways in which treaty itself, that ongoing and active relational process, defines Canada at its core.[7]

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[2] Shirley Bear, "The Importance of the Spiritual Influence," *Kwa'nu'te* (1991), quoted in Emma Hassencahl-Perley, "Changers: A Spiritual Renaissance—Recentering Indigenous Women's Self-Determination, Artistic Sovereignty and Excellence in the 1980s and 1990s," (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2022), 4.

[3] Chief James Paul, "Gluscap," in *Malecite Tales*, ed. W.H. Mechling (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914), 1.

[4] Margaret Kovach, "Treaties, Truths, and Transgressive Pedagogies: Re-Imagining Indigenous Presence in the Classroom," *Socialist Studies* 9, no. 1 (2013): 112.

[5] Kovach, 123.

[6] On Western universities' systematic graduation of "unprepared" students on a massive scale, that is, the continuous graduation of non-Indigenous students who have not acquired the necessary reflective skills that could enable them to live lives of good relationship on colonized land, see the Choctaw historian Devon Abbott Mihesuah, "Academic Gatekeepers," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, eds. Angela Cavender Wilson and Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 31.

Because the article you hold in your hands is written *through* a relational practice of treaty, it follows in the footsteps of scholars like Marie Battiste and others in that it is not precisely *about* the treaties in the way we so often see in the Canadian scholarly and legal communities. Rather, we are seeking to help close the distance that, despite the continuous efforts of Waponahki people over decades and centuries, endures in settler colonial scholarship and in scholarly spaces—the distance between talking about or analyzing "the treaties" from outside of them, as Canadian legislators, scholars, and historians tend to do, and living or being active parts of treaty in our daily and professional lives. In the dialogue that comprises much of what follows, we practice and share the relationship that we have built with one another over time, we try our best to explain ourselves—what we are doing and why—and we actively navigate our relationship in and while taking steps toward a shared understanding of topics that are fundamental to both our lives and of great importance to us both.[8] Our conversation is interspersed with images and with contextual explanations that will converge, we hope, and, however imperfectly, to help shift the ground on which scholarly conversations about things like the *Marshall* decisions enduringly and most often take place.

If this is a paper about *Marshall* and the somehow ongoing question of "Aboriginal" rights in the so-called Maritimes or in Canada, then it is equally a paper about the question of Canadian rights—and, as a tribute to the important work of Donald Marshall Jr., we wish to challenge the often taken-for-granted validity of a Canadian legal jurisdiction over this topic/matter, not to mention over unceded and unsurrendered Waponahkik lands and lifeways.[9] We want to talk about the conditions in which academic discussions about *Marshall* take place, and we wish to contest, again invoking Battiste's work on this topic, any portrayal of treaty as a political issue that can be somehow resolved inside settler colonial institutions and documents by lawyers, judges, or Canadian historians talking among themselves.[10] It will be very difficult for us to come to a shared understanding of history if we are not actively living treaty. "K'cikwohahtiba," wrote Gina's Elder Andrea Bear Nicholas in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Marshall* decision in 1999, "You did a great deed for the people....There is now no need to buy into Western values and practices as the only way for some to survive."[11] Twenty-five years later, to honour Marshall Jr. and his great deed, using our own gifts as storytellers, scholars, and active treaty partners, we wish with this article to identify and challenge some of the Western values and practices that continue to be presented to Waponahki people as the sole means of access and participation in the overlapping and interconnected spaces in which we go about our lives and our work.

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[7] See also Marie Battiste's discussion of the ways in which lawyers, judges, and Canadian governments variously contest, ignore, and redefine (for their own purposes, in accordance with their own values, and from various perspectives) the treaties, whereas Mi'kmaq have a long history of "living" the same treaties. Marie Battiste, "Narrating Mi'kmaw Treaties: Linking the Past to the Future," in *Living Treaties: Narrating Mi'kmaw Treaty Relations*, ed. Marie Battiste (Sydney: Cape Breton University Press, 2016), 1–15.

[8] For more on intentionally creating conditions in which genuine dialogue becomes possible among peoples within colonial contexts, see Elaine Coburn et al., "Unspeakable Things: Indigenous Research and Social Science," *Socio* 2 (2013): 331–348.

[9] On this question of jurisdiction, see Shiri Pasternak's work calling into question Canada's legitimacy in making jurisdictional claims in "Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: Where Do Laws Meet?," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society/La Revue Canadienne Droit et Société* 29, no. 2 (2014): 145–161.

[10] Battiste, 2.

[11] Andrea Bear Nicholas, quoted in Ken Coates, *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 8–9.

Because *Marshall* was not only about hunting, fishing, and gathering—more broadly, it was a call to action for all treaty people to honour and respect Waponahkik lifeways, a call for Canadians to implement treaty in their lives and imaginations and to assess and make room in all of those public, supposedly shared spaces for Indigenous peoples to be themselves.[12]

If we can agree that written sources have been used across time as a tool of the colonizing culture to commit harmful narratives of white supremacy, Western patriarchy, and other prejudices and inaccuracies to the public record, then we can begin to think about the degree to which that record is a truly public or shared space.[13] If we can apply the same thinking to scholarly spaces, then we can begin to think together about what a treaty space might look like. Following a brief section introduction by Juana Perley, the first (and earliest) Wolastoqey text included in Siobhan Senier's 2014 *Dawnland Voices* anthology of northeastern Indigenous writing, is a nineteenth-century pictograph sketched and translated by the famous guide, hunter, and storyteller Gabriel Acquin. The featured pictograph (see Image 1) is borrowed from another collection, Garrick Mallery's eight-hundred-page *Picture-Writing of the American Indians*, a report that was compiled by a team of ethnologists in 1888 and subsequently published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1893.

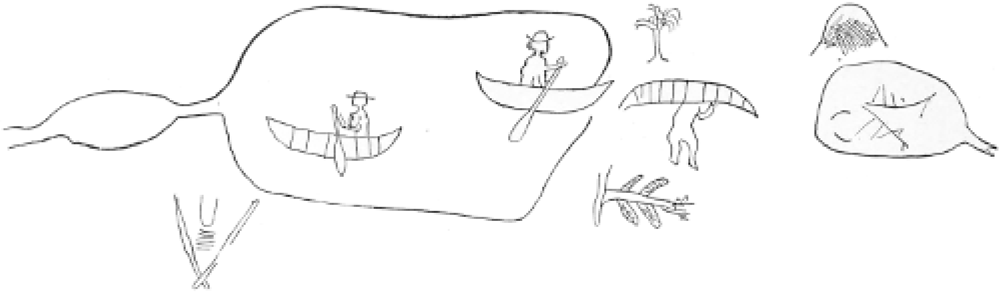

Image 1. Example of an "awhikhigan." Source: Gabriel Acquin, "Pictograph," in Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*, ed. Siobhan Senier and Juana Perley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 115.*

The pictograph is introduced and classified, in *Dawnland Voices*, as an example of an "awhikhigan," or what the editors describe as "birch-bark writing"[14]—a northeastern literacy that pre-dates the arrival(s) of Western hierarchies of knowing and knowledge in the Waponahki homeland. To accommodate Mallery, Acquin kindly translated this image into English words as follows:

> When I was about 18 years old I lived at a village 11 miles above Fredericton and went with canoe and gun. I canoed down to Washademoak lake, about 40 miles below Fredericton;

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[12] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes about how settler governments are recognizing hunting and fishing rights across Canada because "the recognition of these rights seemingly poses no economic or political threat to settlers, because hunting and fishing can now really be practiced...only on a microscale, as a hobby. And to keep it that way, the [state] recognition of these rights [does] not come with a return of land upon which these rights [can] be exercised." See Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 40.

[13] Michael Robichaud, e-mail message to author, 17 October 2023. See also Angela Tozer, "Racial Capital, Public Debt, and the Appropriation of Epekwitk, 1853–1873," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 57, no. 2 (2023): 233–254.

[14] Gabriel Acquin, "Pictograph," in *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*, ed. Siobhan Senier and Juana Perley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 115.

> then took river until it became too narrow for canoe; then "carried" to Buctoos river; followed down to bay of Chaleur; went up the northwest Mirimachi, and "carried" into the Nepisigiut. There spent the summer. On that river met a friend of my time; we camped there.
>
> One time while I was away my friend had gone down the river by himself and had not left any wikhe'gan for me. I had planned to go off and left for him this wikhe'gan, to tell where I would be and how long gone. The wigwam at the lower left-hand corner showed the one used by us, with the river near it. The six notches over the door of the wigwam meant that I would be gone six days. The canoe and man nearest to the wigwam referred to my friend, who had gone in the opposite direction to that I intended to travel. Next to it I was represented in my own canoe, with rain falling, to show the day I started, which was very rainy. Then the canoe carried by me by a trail through woods shows the "carry" to Nictaux lake, beside which is a very big mountain. I stayed at that lake for six days, counting the outgoing and returning. As I had put the wikhe'gan in the wigwam before I started, my friend on his return understood all about me, and, counting six from and including the rainy day, knew just when I was coming back, and was waiting for me.[15]

This translation reflects the intensely descriptive nature of wikhikonal while also functioning as a map that effectively walks readers through the pictograph[16]—which itself holds and carries the same meaning at least as well as the translation. Like other images sketched on bark to mobilize important instructions and orienting information, like Acquin's kind translation, like each subsequent entry in the Wolastoqey section of the *Dawnland* anthology, and like this article, the pictograph is a wikhikon, and it participates in a tradition of informational exchange and engagement that, as the Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks shares in her powerful work on this topic, expanded after Europeans invaded the northeast, changing to accommodate and graciously include Western forms of literacy.[17] For this article, we take inspiration from Acquin's translation, which shows us how writing or communicating in English can seek to hold, convey, and reference the same meaning and purpose as a visual representation, can hold the intent and meaning of wikhikonal—and when, in the following entry in *Dawnland Voices*, a 1911 letter sent to the anthropologist Edward Sapir, Chief James Paul describes two paddles, one with "some carving" and the other "probably a hundred years old," we feel it is much easier, in the wake of Acquin's pictograph, for readers to imagine how the information in Chief James's letter might have been visually represented or conveyed.[18]

Work by the Peskotomuhkati scholar Nolan Altvater is additionally suggestive of how much is lost when we attempt to shoehorn wikhikonal into "writing" as a conceptual and contextual frame. In Altvater's homeland, as in unceded Wolastokuk, writings are always wikhikonal; in the Wolastoqey

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[15] Acquin, "Pictograph," 115–116.

[16] Much has been written on the connection between writing, language, dance, song, stories, and much more. See, for example, Trudy Sable, "Legends as Maps," in *Ta'n Wetapeksi'k: Understanding from Where We Come*, eds. Tim Bernard, Leah Morine Rosenmeier, and Sharon L. Farrell (Truro: Eastern Woodland Print Communications for the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, 2011), 157–172.

[17] Lisa Brooks, "Awikhigawôgan ta Pildowi Ôjmowôgan: Mapping a New History," *William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2018): 263. The spelling we are using for "wikhikon" follows Nolan Altvater, and we wish to extend deep gratitude to Nolan and his community of Sipayik for his path-breaking work in this area. See the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Language Portal, s.v. "wikhike," accessed August 22, 2022, https://pmportal.org/dictionary/wikhike.

[18] Chief James Paul, "Letter to Edward Sapir," in *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*, eds. Siobhan Senier and Juana Perley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 117.

Latuwewakon, the word *wikhike* (unprefixed verb stem) means "she/he/singular they *writes,*" but it also means "paints, draws, takes a picture," etc. When it comes to the crucial activities of translating information—our thoughts, stories, memories, directions, messages, observations, intentions, analyses, or feelings—into tools or instruments of connection and engagement, there is simply no distinction in the language of this land between word and image.[19] In his work on "skicinuwi wehkewakonol"—or *skicin tools*—Altvater discusses the fundamentally disruptive and transformative implications of this for entrenched educational policy in what is colonially known as the state of Maine.[20] Here in Wolastokuk, as in neighbouring lands, the continued elevation of writing above other wikhikonal—and certainly, the belief that only writers should contribute to the journals that regulate and control historical narratives and impactful legal interpretations, that only writers may participate in serious scholarly discussions like the one taking place in this special issue of *JNBS*, or that only writers may formally advance scholarly, expert, or evidentiary knowledge—is a deeply Western idiosyncrasy that functions to affirm and maintain settler colonial control over Indigenous land, over knowledge about that land and its people, over history, over crucial decision-making processes in the courts, and over the public or supposedly "common" spaces (like universities) that Western people have (in theory but not yet in practice) agreed to share.

The systematic separation of writing from other forms and processes of knowing, creating, and engaging, along with the formulaic, carefully controlled way in which writing is so often taught and practiced in academic contexts, reflect another way in which—to again invoke Andrea Bear Nicholas's tribute to Donald Marshall Jr.—Western values and practices are systematically presented to Waponahki people as the sole means of access to and participation in powerful spaces where matters of great importance are discussed, debated, and decided. And so what else is possible?

The first half of this article has been about naming and pushing back against some of the Western values and practices that currently dictate the terms of engagement and participation in some scholarly spaces. We now wish to convey the way of telling and sharing history that we have collaboratively arrived at in the context of our own relationship. "wikhikhotuwok and the Re-Storying of Menahkwesk" was, at first, the title of a birchbark basket installation and public talk that we prepared together for the festival component of the inaugural Atlantic Arts Symposium that took place in Menahkwesk (Saint John, New Brunswick) in October 2022 (Figure 1). We had applied to participate in this symposium after being unable to secure an exhibition space for Gina's artwork in Saint John, after being ignored by some gallery directors and told by others that there was a long line of people in front of Gina and that the process of sharing the work of this Wolastoqewi grandmother in this old Wolastoqey village would take at least two years. At first, we saw the arts symposium call as an opportunity to jump this queue. Later, we would come to understand it as an invaluable opportunity to gather with other Waponahki scholars who, like Gina, are doing the work, outside of the university, of documenting their peoples' histories in accordance with the ways and traditions of their ancestors—people like the Mi'kmaw artist Tara Francis, whose quill work speaks powerfully about *Marshall* and about her peoples' treaty rights.[21]

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[19] Nolan Altvater, "Wabanaki Tools of Diplomacy: Storying Protocols as Political Will," *Dawnland Voices 2.0* no. 10 (25 June 2021): https://dawnlandvoices.org/prose-winner-nolan-altvater/.

[20] Nolan translates skicinuwi-wehkewakonol as "skicin tools." See Nolan Altvater, "skicinuwi wehkewakonol: Visual Art as a Tool for Community Capacity Building and Education Policy," October 11, 2021, Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, Maine, YouTube video, https://youtu.be/y_CbKovSZ8A.

[21] See, for example, Tara Francis, *The Marshall Decision*, Dyed Porcupine Quills on Birch Bark with Sweetgrass, 2021, The Downie-Wenjack Legacy Space in the Moncton Rogers Centre, https://www.galleryonqueen.com/tara-francis.

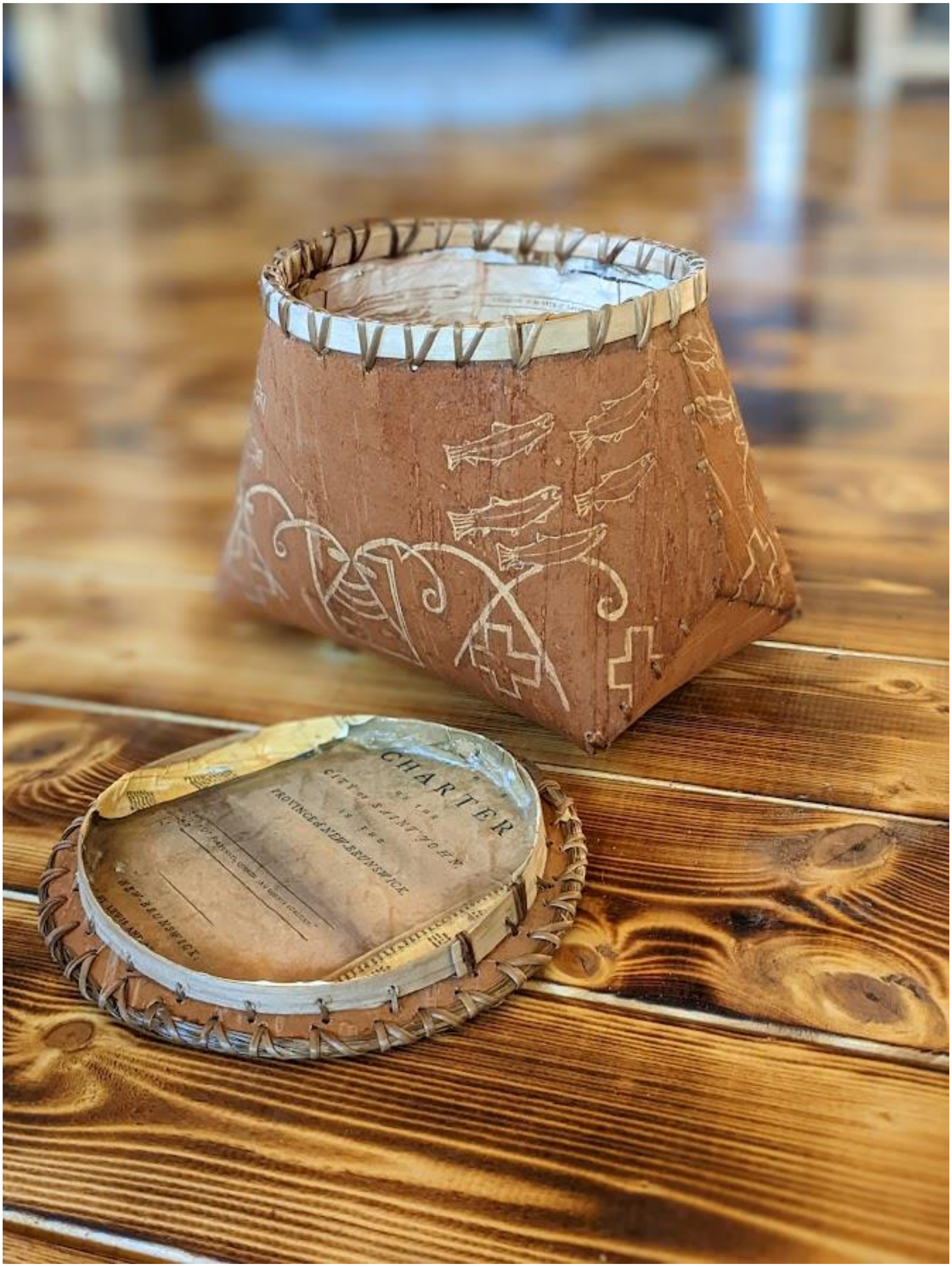
CHARTER
OF THE
CITY of SAINT JOHN
IN THE
PROVINCE of NEW-BRUNSWICK.
NEW-BRUNSWICK.

Figure 1. Photo, by the authors, of Menahkwesk basket on the floor of Gina's home, September 2022.

A basic intent that we harboured in the early stage of our collaboration was to better understand and explore what a process of telling history together—a telling through treaty—might look like, where it might lead us, and how it might help us each remember ourselves. With our response to this call for contributions to the *JNBS*, we wanted to honour and even more widely share the power of a basket to hold and carry all our intent and co-created meaning at least as well as any essay or academic article. In this sense, our conversations throughout this collaboration have been inspired by Waponahki scholarship on ways of telling northeastern histories in a good way—work that, as the Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks teaches us, "emerges, spiraling, from the layers of the past into the present moment, carrying memories with it so the next generation can become manifest and better navigate this complex space."[22] Our approach has been additionally informed by the Wolastoqewi Elder and archaeologist Ramona Nicholas, who—in her writing on Waponahki engagements specifically in the field of archaeology—employs the concept of "boundary objects" to discuss how settler colonial institutions in Waponahki homelands have been structured to systematically privilege, normalize, and defend Western historical interpretations and ways of knowing with respect to what is fundamentally a shared history. Discussing the state of archaeology in the province, Nicholas explains how

> archaeological managers have attempted to assert control over narratives about the past by removing archaeological objects from boundary contexts, and in particular, from the boundary between First Nations and the Provincial government, thereby stabilizing their own interpretations and meaning over those of others. For example, recent government policies have restricted access to collections, mandated a lack of physical contact with objects, and have substituted replicas and casts in displays and presentations.[23]

These regulations are often defended or couched in what are, in the context of other treaty disputes, strikingly familiar colonial narratives about the superiority of Western science over Waponahki knowledge and the supposedly irrefutable nature of Western conservation logic. They emerge from an enduringly pervasive myth, which Marshall Jr. and others have so fearlessly contested, that the "public" such rules are written to serve and protect has ever included Waponahki people. Restrictive policies around historical materials and artifacts control the production of expert archaeological knowledge, defending settler colonial interpretations of history while also making it very difficult for Indigenous peoples to conceptualize and develop their own relationships with the past or even to participate in conversations of great mutual importance.[24]

For the arts symposium component of our collaboration, two baskets were displayed in a glass case in the Saint John Arts Centre from October 19–23, 2022, and we braided stories from these baskets in a thirty-minute "treaty talk" in Thompsons Theatre that was also part of the scheduled symposium programming. Like all materials that tell stories about the past, these baskets are boundaries between distinct epistemological worlds—and, as such, there is a great deal that they can teach us about "how to exist in a world that is honourable, just, and caring of each other."[25] During our presentation (see Figures 2 and 3), the baskets (wikhikonal) functioned as both "visual accompaniments to speech" and as tools of engagement that—as they were passed freely back and forth between us and also around the room—drew the members of our audience into conversation and community with us, into direct relationships with the baskets, and into our active and shared process of making meaning.[26] As we discussed the history of the land on which we were gathered—Menahkwesk—the audience was invited to experience, for a moment, some of the powerful ways in which the creative and transformative actions of treaty (and not just the language of treaty) help us share spaces and visions of the past while simultaneously creating conditions for a shared future.

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[22] Brooks, "Awikhigawôgan ta Pildowi Ôjmowôgan: Mapping a New History," 265.

[23] Ramona Nicholas, "Listening to the Ancestors: A Wabanaki Perspective on Engagement in Archaeology" (MA thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2016), 20.

[24] For another excellent Waponahki conversation about these fundamental differences in perspective on art and artifacts, see Cheryl Simon and Kay Sark, hosts, "Matues Revisited, Part 1," Epekwitk Quill Sisters (podcast), January 10, 2022, accessed October 15, 2023, https://www.podcasts-online.org/epekwitk-quill-sisters-1567885864. In this episode, Cheryl and Kay speak with museum curator Aiden Gillis about how they grew up understanding that items are meant to be touched and used by people, meant to participate in our lives and then go back to the earth—rather than kept alive forever in boxes or in glass cases.

Figures 2 and 3. Photos taken in Thompsons Theatre by Clem McIntosh at the inaugural Arts Atlantic Symposium, Menahkwesk, October 2022. The Menahkwesk basket is being passed around the room.

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[25] Kovach, 116.

[26] Willard Walker, "Wabanaki Wampum Protocol," *Papers of the Fifteenth Algonquian Conference* (1984): 107–122. Walker's work on "visual accompaniments to speech" is also featured in *Wapapi akonutomakonol: The Wampum records: Wabanaki traditional laws* (Fredericton: Micmac-Maliseet Institute, University of New Brunswick, 1990).

There are a multitude of transformative implications in the work of telling history together in a place like Menahkwesk, where Loyalists chartered a city structure (Saint John) against the sophisticated relationships that were meant to sustain all beings over and across time. Jason Hall, a historian who works for the Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick, has argued that the city of Saint John was chartered against Menahkwesk, in no small part, to cut Waponahki people off from what early settlers had identified as a lucrative harbour salmon fishery.[27] Much more recently, and while hearing about how the case of Donald Marshall Jr. case was unfolding in the courts, Gina had become a fisheries officer for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Saint John because she wanted to understand why her people were being systematically blocked from fishing for salmon in their own river, in their own old village, on their own homelands.[28] Gina grew up with the knowledge that Menahkwesk was an important place for her people because, for Wolastoqiyik, the traditional stories of Gluscap start here.[29] It was important to Gina that the baskets we made to share this history would call on Gluscap, who returns to Menahkwesk every time this story cycle is shared, and by pursuing the work of historical storytelling on/through bark, she wanted to acknowledge and honour the fact that one of the first gifts that Gluscap gave the Wolastoqiyik was the bark that would take care of them.

Shortly after we decided to submit a wikhikon to this journal, we met in Rachel's office in the Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre to see if we could replicate the kind of shared space that we had created with our treaty talk. In what follows, the basket visually accompanies our speech as we pass it back and forth, following its lead in the creation of a shared space between us.

> **Gina:** When Gluscap left, he made sure all the animals were well versed in who we were. He taught them, and that's why they're our teachers. He told them very clearly that they needed to take care of us. Moose was very upset because he had to sacrifice and give up his children for us to survive. But Gluscap always provided for the Indians because that's who he was—that's what he came here for. He made moose smaller, and though moose could still avoid us, now we could chase him and get what we needed. So Gluscap gave certain things to us, but the first thing was the bark because it was so pliable and beautiful, and it would never go away. Even when they clearcut it's the first tree that comes up because it's the strongest. You could pound it down and eat it if you needed to. It keeps you warm. It has so much life to it because it has all these eyes, and the eyes represent the wisdom. It has so many stories to tell—and that's why you can etch it.
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> **Rachel:** When you say eyes—you mean these lines? [see Figure 4]
>
> **Gina:** Yes, these are the eyes of the tree. So, birch is one of the many gifts the people were given—something that Gluscap provided so we could use it in so many different ways. It has so many properties. We've never even talked about the leaves. And it has such powerful sugars to it—sugar that doesn't harm your system, so it's great for people with diabetes. But you have to know how to use it.

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[27] Jason Hall, "River of Three Peoples: An Environmental and Cultural History of the Wəlastəw / rivière St. Jean / St. John River, c. 1550–1850," (PhD diss., University of New Brunswick, 2015).

[28] Gina worked as a fisheries officer for DFO from 1996 to 2009.

[29] We rely on the Jim Paul cycle of Gluscap stories, following guidance found in Andrea Bear Nicholas, "The Assault on Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Past and Present," in *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, Ethics*, eds. Renée Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod (Halifax: Fernwood, 2008), 7–43. See also stories about Menahkwesk, and especially Reversing Falls, shared by Solomon Polchies in *Tales from Maliseet Country: The Maliseet Texts of Karl V. Teeter*, ed. Philip S. LeSourd (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

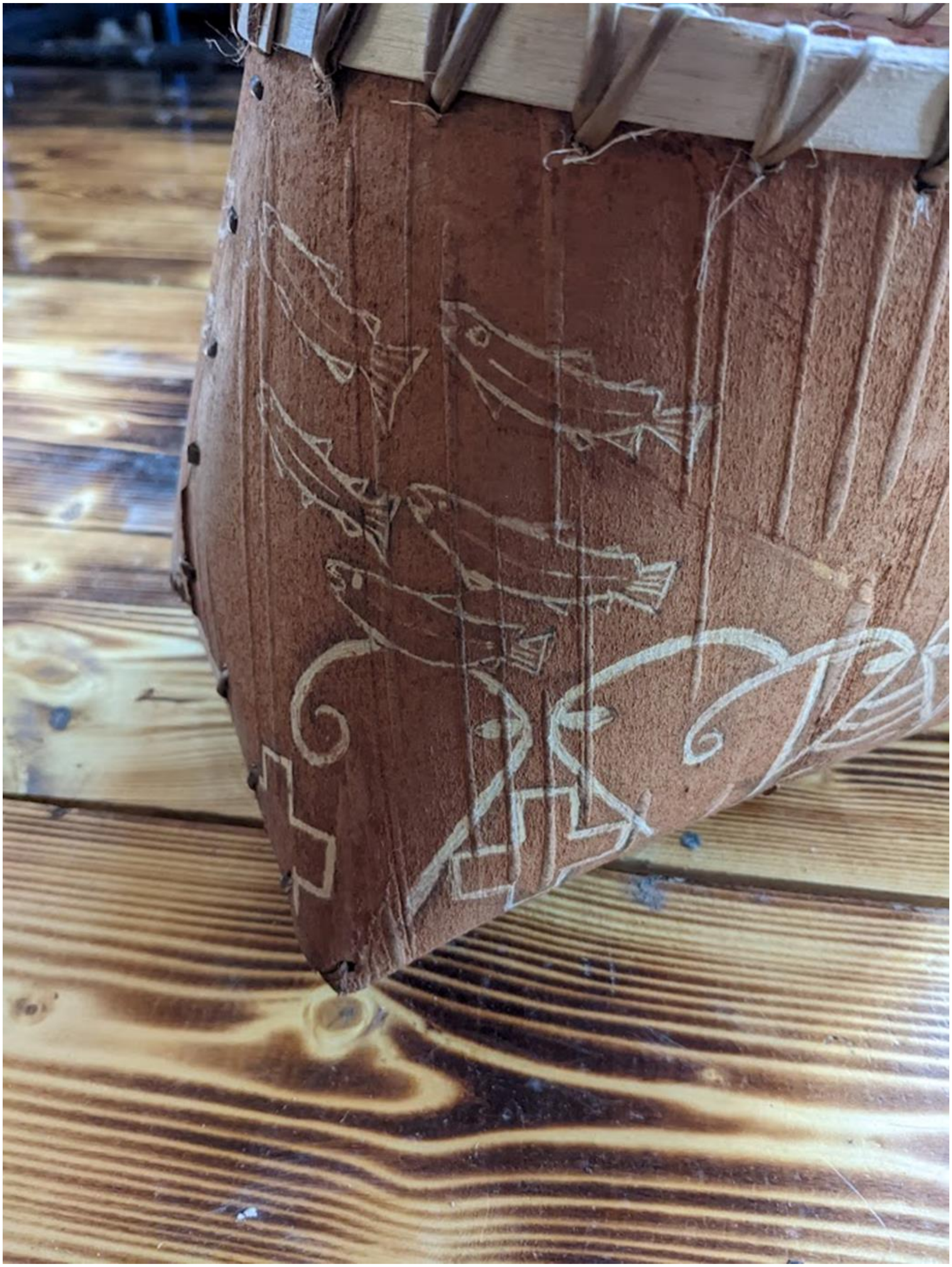

Figure 4. Photo, by the authors, of the eyes of the bark, Gina's home, September 2022.

Like the stone that Gluscap's canoe transforms into in the traditional stories that Chief Jim Paul shared, bark has always been used by Wolastoqiyik to make a wide variety of important tools, including vessels of all sorts and wikhikonal. The Menahkwesk basket was created with sweetgrass from a local saltmarsh and from materials—bark, spruce root, and ash—that were harvested by Gina from the land surrounding the body of water colonially known as Miramichi Lake, where Wolastoqiyik Mothers and Grandmothers, with the support of other water and land protectors, thwarted a working group's plan to spray Noxfish Fish Toxicant II into the water in 2021, 2022, and 2023 (Figures 5 and 6).[30]

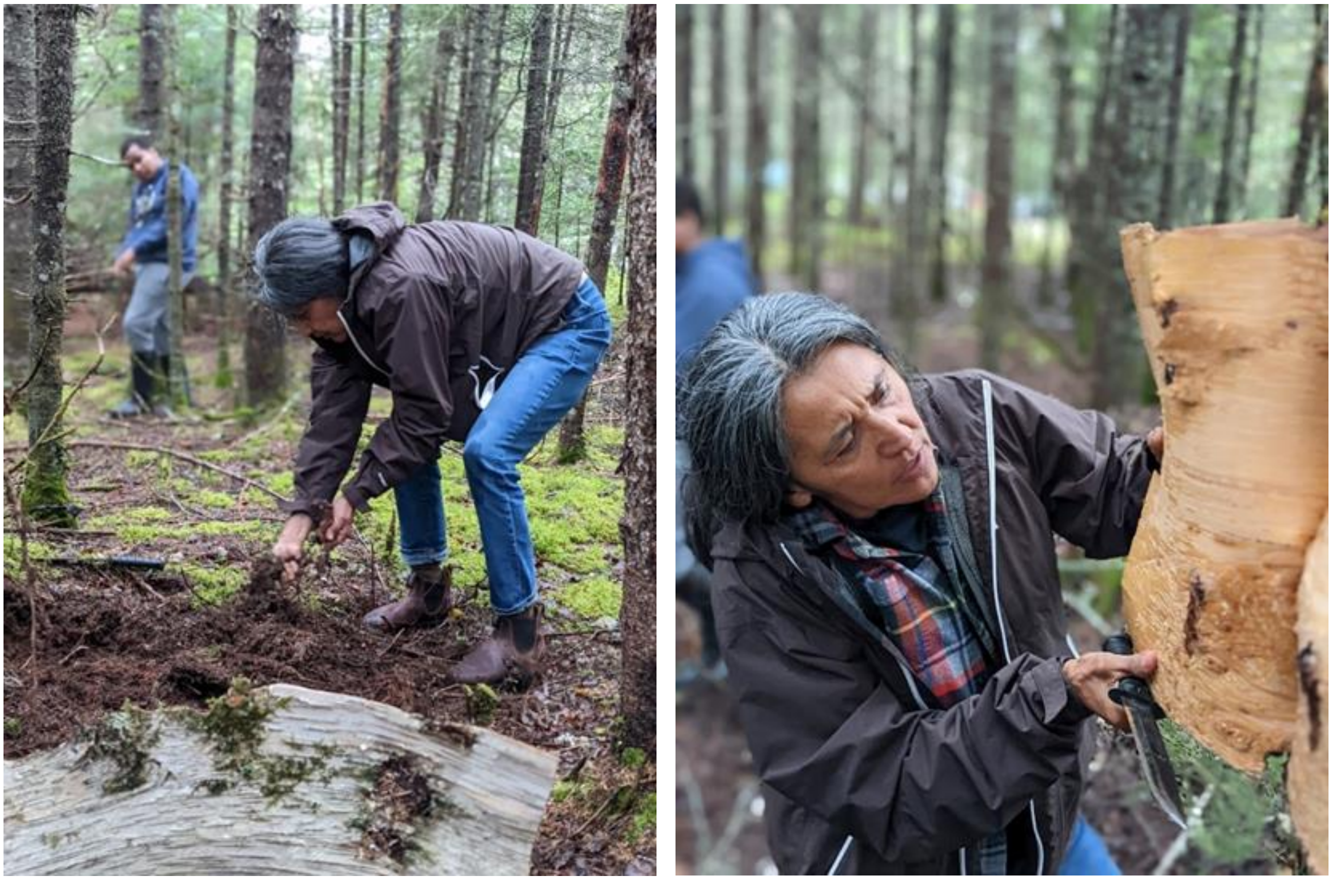

Figure 5 and 6. Photos, by Rachel Bryant, of Gina harvesting bark and spruce root as her great nephew Quinton looks on, Miramichi Lake, August 2022.

> **Gina:** This territory has really been taken apart, and when you look at the skicinuwok, you'll see that we're in the same state that the territory is in—because we are the land, and the land is us. This is the bark that came from the activation—not the *activism* so much as the activation—of getting back on the land and understanding the stories that lay within it, and the importance of that place to skicinuwok. We might always be misunderstood, but the spirit of the land never misunderstands us—and so I go there, and I pick up these old languages

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[30] See Terry Ann Sappier, "We Are Here for the Heart of Our Land: Wolastoqey Mothers and Grandmothers Were Not Consulted on Plans to Poison Miramichi Lake," *NB Media Co-Op* (July 31, 2022), https://nbmediacoop.org/2022/07/31/we-are-here-for-the-heart-of-our-land/. See also Andrea Polchies, "Is There Something in New Brunswick's Water?," March 22, 2022, University of New Brunswick Sustainability Lecture for World Water Day, Fredericton, New Brunswick, YouTube Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Tfw33eztvnc.

that tell me about why we're here and the importance of taking care of the land. The bark has incredible story to it because it's so alive. It talks in ways that we have to learn how to listen. Bark, for me, teaches me how to listen to the old ones. These stories in this bark are the old stories of this tree but also of the land because it's all connected—especially to the water.

Rachel: I remember very clearly that you were sitting by the fire with the other protectors out at Miramichi Lake; it was a large group, and you were sharing with them about the connection between the bark and the water. You were putting the bark near the fire to show how it reacted to the fire. A lot of people learned to make containers that day and the next. People were coming out from Macehcewik sipohsisol and Wotstak because they heard what you were doing, and they wanted to learn [see Figure 7].

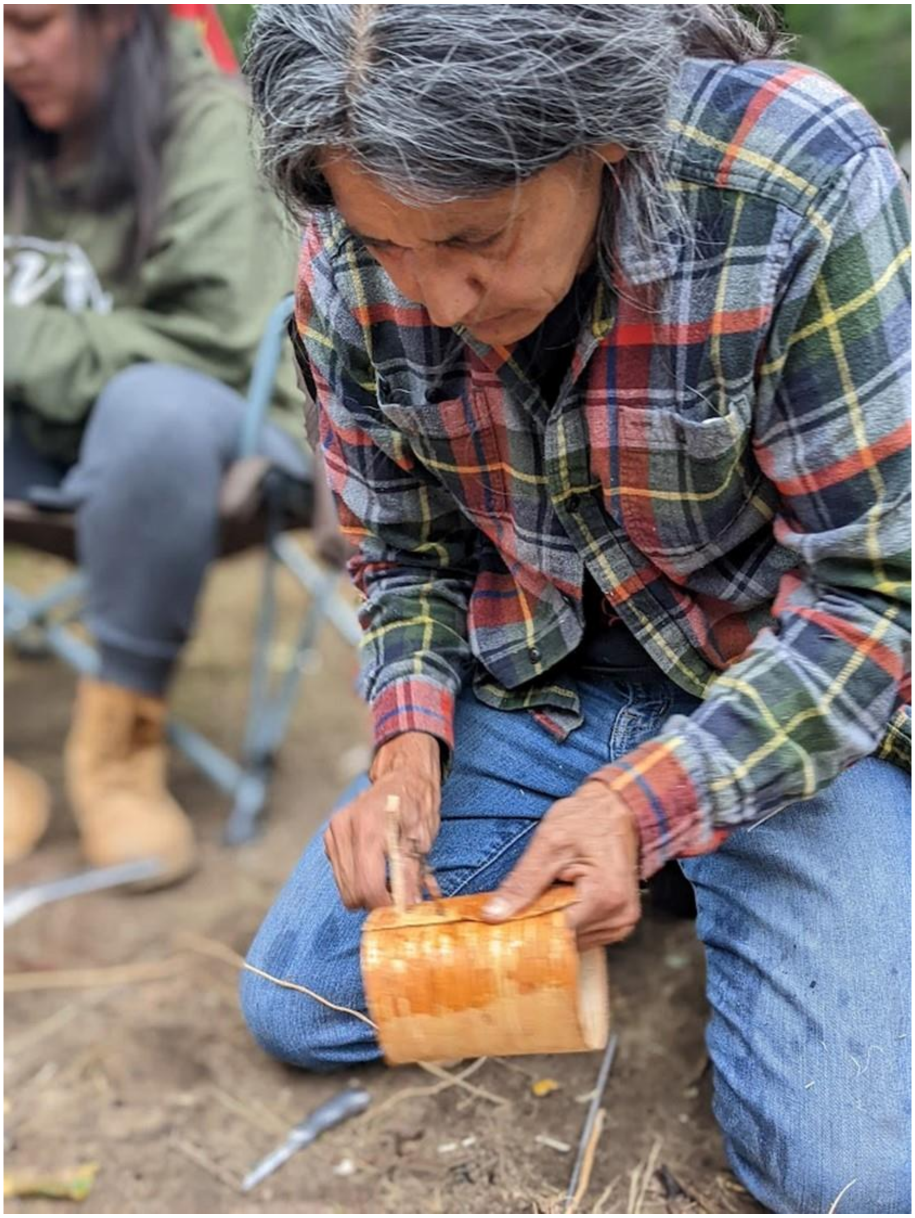

Figure 7. Photo, by Rachel Bryant, of Gina teaching by the fire at Miramichi Lake, August 2022.

> **Gina:** This bark took me to a place where I could tell a story because I'm a storyteller. And I don't take that lightly. These have a lot of medicine in them. There's a lot of oil in this bark. We haven't even talked about what these medicines offer. But there's a lot of oil in this bark, and when I heat the oil, it has a little bit more flexibility to it. And I find that the best bark is the bark that is closest to the water. The bark can tell you about the quality of the land. These are big beings with big root systems. The water keeps the eyes very close and tight so they're still intact, and the fire was really just to heat it up so I could move it around a little bit better. Each one of these trees will give you the best that it can in the space it's in. Finding the bark is kiwathukot—there's so much loneliness to it because a lot of their relatives have been taken prematurely, especially the old growth. I'm mindful of that. This basket was picked up in an area where they needed us there. Some great work came from that, but a lot of things didn't change because it's hard to change people's minds. And maybe if we could get the basket in their hands, it would change things.

Gina lined the basket with facsimiles of pages from the *Saint John City Charter*. Rachel involved her children in choosing the right paper—they settled, after a process of trial and error, on linen—and they soaked the pages in tea to try and make them look old and weathered. When they delivered the pages to Gina at her home and studio north of Ekpahak, the children helped harvest turnips, carrots, and potatoes from Gina's garden.[31]

> **Rachel:** This was a different process for you.
>
> **Gina:** It was—the lining actually strengthened the basket. I was pleased with it.

We lined the basket to help it speak about the treaty relationships that Saint John was (and continues to be) violently consolidated against.[32] In 1783, the first wave of Loyalists flooded into Menahkwesk, Rachel's ancestor Gideon Corey among them, and in May of 1785 the city of Saint John was chartered under the assumed authority of George III through the first common law municipal corporation in Canada—Saint John is, famously, Canada's oldest or "first incorporated" city. The colonial administrator Thomas Carleton felt a charter was needed to "regulate the colony," and in a June 1785 letter to the British Home Secretary, he wrote,

> The sudden increase of inhabitants at this port and the confusion incident to so novel a situation have induced me to comply with...granting them a charter of incorporation....I think on all accounts it will be best that the American's spirit of innovation should not be nursed among the loyal refugees...for purposes to which the common law and the practice of the best regulated colonies, the Crown alone is acknowledged to be competent.[33]

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[31] Eqpahak, or Ekwpahak, "where the tide stops coming in"—this is commonly used to refer to the Fredericton area, which is connected to Menahkwesk, "where the sea takes the land," by the mighty tides of the Bay of Fundy.

[32] On how Saint John continues to adhere to the "basic principles contained in the early Charter," see Eric Teed, "Foreword," in *Canada's First City Saint John: The Charter of 1785 and Common Council Proceedings under Mayor G.G. Ludlow, 1785–1795* (Saint John: Lingley Printing, 1962), 1–2. See also Rachel's previous research on the charter and how it has been adapted over time to hold space against treaty, especially "Toward the Sharing of Saint John: Reckoning with the City Charter," May 9, 2021, New Brunswick Media Co-Op, Tertulias Lecture Series, Saint John, New Brunswick, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBSzStyknvU.

[33] Thomas Carleton, "Letter from Governor Carleton to Lord Sydney, St. John, 25 June 1785," in *Canada's First City Saint John: The Charter of 1785 and Common Council Proceedings under Mayor G.G. Ludlow, 1785–1795* (Saint John: Lingley Printing, 1962), 51.

Carleton was at least in part afraid that the thousands of people who suddenly lived in Menahkwesk, if left too long to their own devices, might create something new for, between, or among themselves—he thus drafted a charter to "[secure] the perfect Obedience" of the area inhabitants, and his document was based on "the...plan...of the City of New York, when Under His Majesty's Government."[34] Carleton often relied on templates from colonial New York when setting up structures and institutions in New Brunswick because this is how the English common law works—it is a system based on precedents. You build on precedents, and you modify and adapt those precedents over time, and this is part of how Western models of governance and society have reproduced themselves in these kinds of fundamental, structural way all over the world.[35]

> **Rachel:** There is nothing in this city's Charter about the Peace and Friendship Treaty relationship. This was about controlling this land and all the people in it.
>
> **Gina:** The more I learn about the Charter, the less I want to know about it.
>
> [laughter]
>
> **Rachel:** We need to be able to talk about what something like Saint John is, though, because it's being held up by this whole world that people can't see because all they can see is Saint John. I think your basket shows all of this in such a powerful way, and the message is so clear and immediate. Saint John is just something that this man wrote, using a template from New York, but it's being held by all of this richness, this much larger world, by everything else that this basket is about and everything the Charter forgets about treaty. That's the world we have to learn to live in together now. Look how thin this paper is compared to this bark!
>
> **Gina:** I used to take bark from a lot of different trees. Sometimes I'll take the tree down and just take all the bark and then use the firewood or do whatever I need to do. But the land will tell you how much you can take and how much it can take and give. The bark has to be harvested at certain times in different areas. And you can't just say, "Well, what's the date?" Because I can't predict the future. And time runs by the moon calendars. With this bark, the wintertime tells me when I can use it, but also different birds will tell you when you can harvest things. With this, I go by the buds of the wild roses. There are many things that can help, and it's not a trade secret—it's an understanding with the land and with these beings. The knowledge is about the relationship to the land. You go to the land, you make mistakes, and you learn. I go to different areas, and they tell me different things. They tell me how much I can take and when I can take it—because the tree won't let it go if it's not

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[34] Carleton, "Letter from Governor Carleton," 50.

[35] Our interpretation here is in line with standard definitions of the common law. In the *Barron's Canadian Law Dictionary*, for example, the common law is described as "the system of jurisprudence which originated in England and was later applied in Canada" and that "depends for its authority upon the recognition given by the courts to principles, customs, and rules of conduct previously existing among the people." This definition comes from *The King v. Mason* (1918). Routinely, courts across the former English empire cite each other for precedents—and so even today, it is not rare for Canadian courts to cite South African, Australian, English, or U.S. courts in their decisions about matters of great importance to Waponahki people. *Barron's Canadian Law Dictionary*, c.v. "common law," accessed October 13, 2023, https://advance.lexis.com/document/documentslider/?pdmfid=1505209&crid=8303eab2-aa8d-47cb-a83b-3d6c8cc844bc&pdistocdocslideraccess=true&config=&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fdictionaries-ca%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A5GXY-V5G1-JN14-G4BH-00000-00&pdcomponentid=327826&pdtocnodeidentifier=AADAAGABG&ecomp=-3v7k&prid=1dc1dc73-ec1e-4c49-a8ff-ff3991763bd9.

> time. Sometimes the bark pops off perfectly, and it's the same with the spruce root. There's a good time to get that and there's a buggy time to get it too, and the mosquitos will let you know. This has been an opportunity for me to learn this bark; these baskets have given me so much understanding of how to do the spruce root, how to etch, when to harvest, how to use them, how to gift them, and how to tell stories with them.

In our conversations about the Charter, something that we come back to again and again is the Latin inscription on the front page: "O! Fortunati, quorum jam moenia surgunt," the Saint John city motto that translates into English as "Oh fortunate ones whose walls are now rising" (see Figure 8). Through this document, "American and European white inhabitants" claimed "for Us, our Heirs and Successors" forever "all the land and waters thereby adjoining or running in, by or through" the space defined and enclosed in the document "to the total exclusion" of "all others under any pretense whatsoever."[36] The city was chartered against any prior promise or commitment that the British had made to share space with Waponahki people—and it would be over six decades before city officials would amend the Charter's explicit appeal to white supremacy. Over this period of time, the ways, laws, terms, values, and mythologies of the fortunate ones came to represent the dominant means of access and participation within the city space.

> **Gina:** The thing about the Charter is that you have to be able to see it for what it is. What you and me are doing is laying out this understanding *along* with the misunderstanding. Treaty really is about this ability to help people understand and to really look at this land and what it was for: the well-being of all of us, not just some of us. People think in this contemporary economic way where industry is what provides—and then industry gets the riches, industry and institutions distribute the riches, and the rest of us suffer.
>
> **Rachel:** The fortunate ones.
>
> **Gina:** Yes, exactly. That wasn't the agreement. This basket really braids in this understanding of how these structures like Saint John prevent us from looking at the land and seeing the Indian.
>
> **Rachel:** Or seeing that commitment to share. So much about life within these spaces and institutions is about control. We're so fearful all the time about what might happen if we trust ourselves or each other. But there is so much freedom, like you say, in treaty, or in life on the outside of this basket. Right before our treaty talk, I was trying to get you to prepare our presentation with me. The way I was trained to prepare in the university environment is all about control! When I teach, when I'm going to present, I go in there with a whole script written out—otherwise I feel anxious. I prepare in such a way that it eliminates the moment. I never create the moment there with the other people in that room because I already created it earlier, in my office, while I was alone. It's like coming in here to Menahkwesk with a template from New York. We never learned how to make things together or to create those spaces together in the moment—and we still don't know how to do this. So, I kept trying to get you to sit down with me and make an outline for this treaty talk, and when we finally sat down at a picnic table right before the event, you just said, trust me—we've got this. Being in that moment with you and with that audience for those thirty minutes was like nothing else I've experienced in my career. I'm so grateful to you for this lesson, which I now see so many ways to honour.

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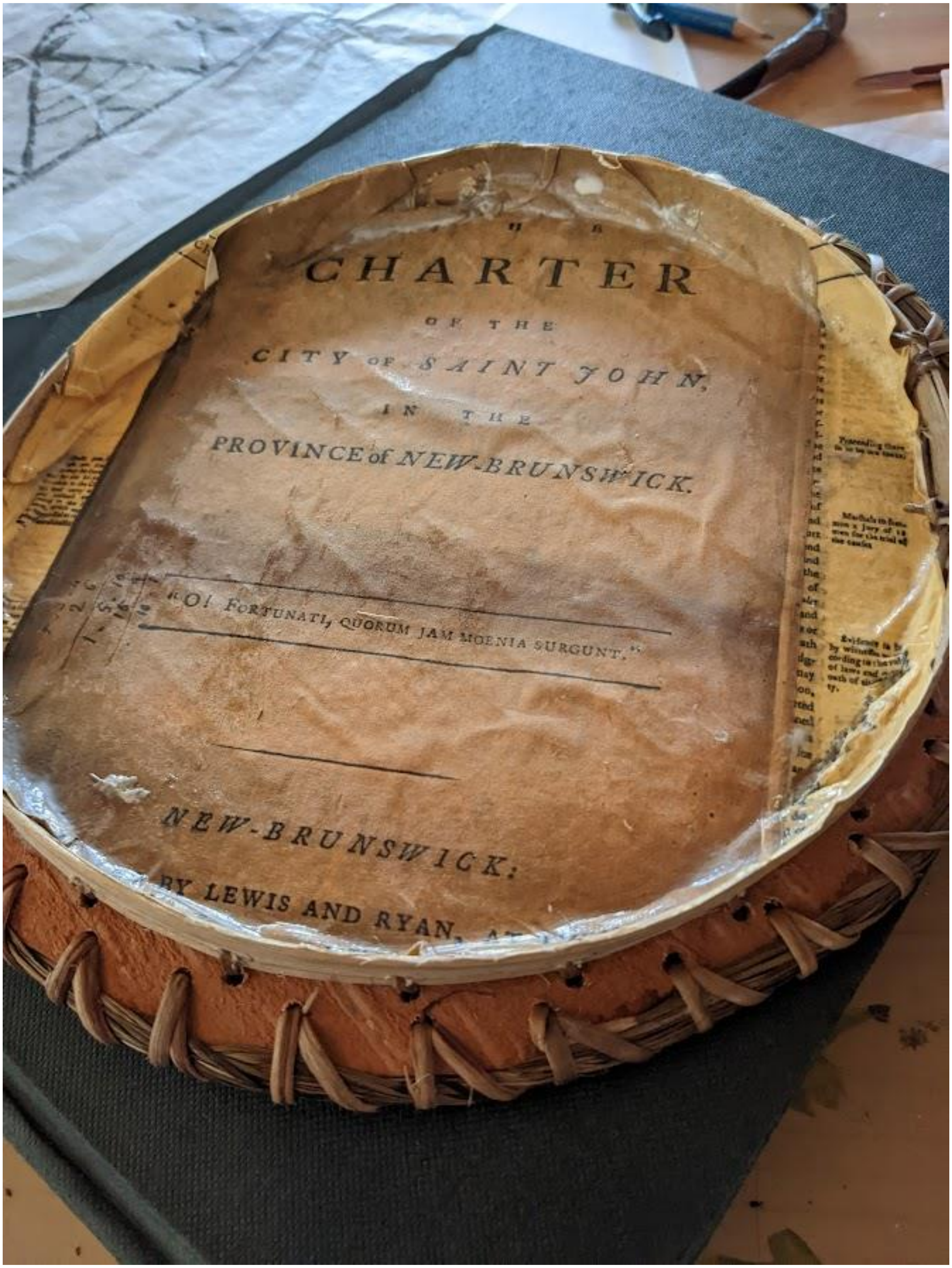
[36] Thomas Carleton, *The Charter of the City of Saint John*, in *Canada's First City Saint John: The Charter of 1785 and Common Council Proceedings under Mayor G.G. Ludlow, 1785–1795* (Saint John: Lingley Printing, 1962), 21, 32.



CHARTER
OF THE
CITY OF *SAINT JOHN*,
IN THE
PROVINCE of *NEW-BRUNSWICK*.

"O! FORTUNATI, QUORUM JAM MOENIA SURGUNT."

NEW-BRUNSWICK:
BY LEWIS AND RYAN,

Figure 8. Photo, by the authors, of the front page of the Charter lining the lid of the basket.

Gina: You and me are all about direct action. And the work we're doing with these baskets is that if we can get it in their hands, we can change their minds. That's why we pass it around. And these are old baskets and old ways of knowing things. I learned certain things and made a lot of mistakes, but some mistakes are the greatest learnings.

Rachel: Can you talk about some of these etchings? [Figures 9 and 10]

Gina: These old treaty signatures remind us of the language of the land and of these beings that protect and provide for us. When we fought for these treaties, and much later when Andrea Bear Nicholas laid on that ground and found [Mascarene's treaty], that protected us. So, when I look at the *Marshall* decisions or any kind of treaty decision, I always think about these beings that are etched in these old materials. That power and protection is still there in the land, in these beings, and in these stories.

I like the quote from Shirley Bear because you always look at people and you never know how much you influence them. I never knew Shirley, but I knew of her because when I went to look for myself, I found her art. And in that art, I found myself. That led me to a place where I learned about these designs. This is similar to Gabe—he etched and recorded these things that were saved for us. And I think the more quiet I am, the more able I am to receive these things that were saved.

Gina: I found this story through language. Part of our work is restoring ourselves through language, so I talked to my niece, and she helped me with this. Aputamkon [the river/sea serpent] was chasing a small snail upriver. The snail wanted life so badly that he moved very fast, and he banged into the side of the riverbank so hard that he lives there now—to protect himself. He became this symbol of protection, and he prays for the well-being of the Indians in their land. That's the first time he had ever moved so fast—when Aputamkon was going to eat him. And he offers that protection to us in our homes and in our ways and in our wares.

This basket's image is really about how the animals were part of who we were, and they were our teachers. The salmon, polam, were the staple of the Maliseet. We are the people of this beautiful river, but it was the other beings of this beautiful river that really took care of us. We knew these ways, and we laid down our understanding of this in our stories and in these old designs. The animals have suffered like us, but it's through this freedom, and this understanding, that we could be free again.

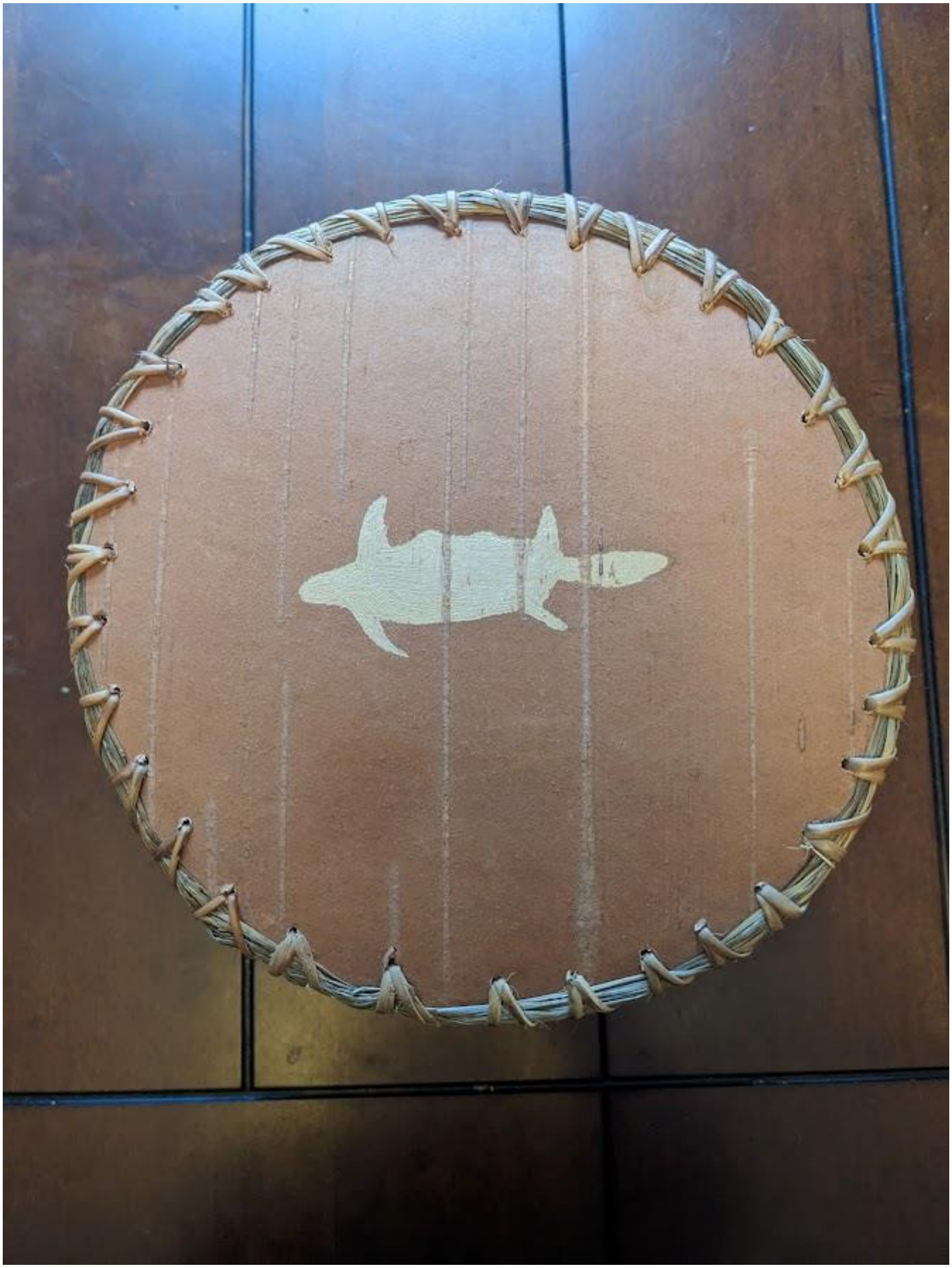


Figure 9. Photo, by the authors, of etching on the lid of the basket, Rachel's home, January 2023.

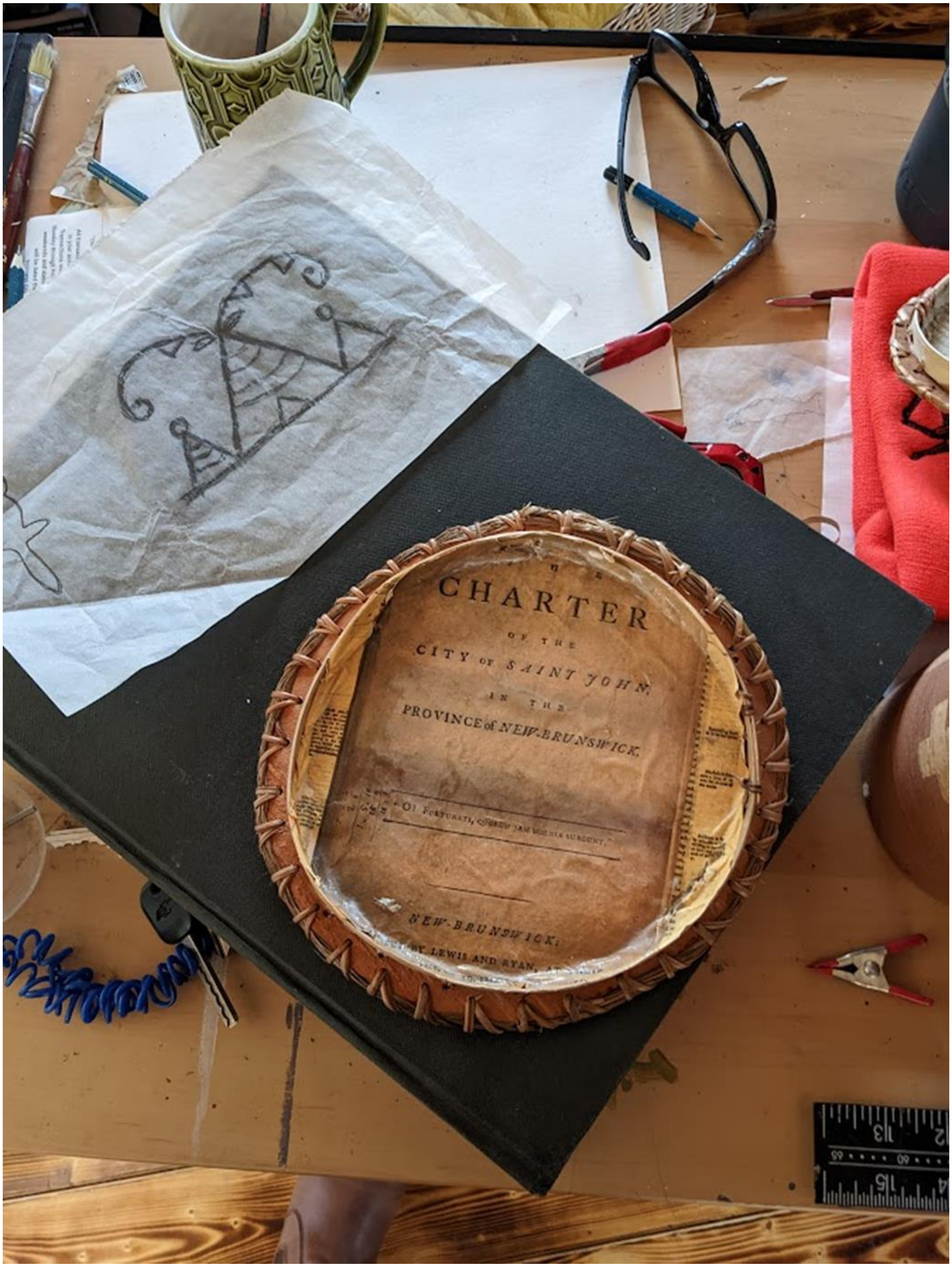

CHARTER
OF THE
CITY OF SAINT JOHN,
IN THE
PROVINCE of NEW-BRUNSWICK.
NEW-BRUNSWICK:
BY LEWIS AND RYAN,

Figure 10. Photo, by the authors, of the lid of the basket and a sketch of the design that Gina etched in the bark, Gina's home, September 2022.

> **Rachel:** I think we should talk about why we applied for this symposium in the first place.
>
> [laughter]
>
> **Gina:** Two years. They always tell me two years.
>
> **Rachel:** You wanted to have an exhibition of your work in Saint John. The Arts Centre was the only place that even responded to me, so I don't want to be too hard on them, but there was this long process you'd have to go through to get your art into their space. They thought it might be possible by 2025. And this was in early 2022 or maybe even late 2021. So again, I don't think many people are thinking about what Saint John is or about how Waponahki people really continue to be cut off from this space by the way these structures and institutions function. I don't think many people are thinking about academic spaces in this way either—that these aren't shared spaces, that we didn't create them together.
>
> **Gina:** People don't understand the language. Like Menahkwesk—they don't understand what that means. And they take it for granted. It's hard because when people don't understand, they don't want to think they don't know it. We have to be brave and go there even when we don't know it. There's this idea that the Indian automatically has to know all this. You don't know this; you learn it! And when you don't know, you're afraid of even talking about it. But you've got to go to the land and make those mistakes. Pull on the wrong root—it will let you know. That's the only way you learn. I find the best place to be is inside of the work and working with the land so we can get the stories out.

For Gina, the initial response to her exhibition inquiry was emblematic of the way in which Waponahki people continue to be cut off from Menahkwesk by the structures of Saint John—and of the way in which settlers in Saint John continue to ignore their responsibilities under the Peace and Friendship Treaties to protect and facilitate Waponahki access to everything that supports and sustains them as a people, be that the salmon, the land, or all manners of economic opportunity. Participating in the Arts Atlantic Symposium gave us an opportunity to address this issue of treaty with an audience of artists and arts professionals—many of whom serve on committees and boards that control participation or determine access to spaces around the city. We are seeking to address another powerful institutional audience with this article. Whether these efforts might lead to different kinds of facilitation remains to be seen. While the Arts Atlantic Symposium was taking place in Menahkwesk, we rented space for a pop-up gallery in the Shipping Container Village near the harbour. This gallery held works by Gina and the Wolastoqewi artist Susan Sacobie and was staffed for the weekend by Gina's children, who joined her in Menahkwesk for the weekend.

> **Rachel:** We've talked about Nolan's scholarship a lot, but there's another Peskotomuhkati scholar named Anthony Sutton; he's a professor at the University of Maine, and he talks about what he calls "sites of sustenance."[37] These were places like portage landings or fishing spots or places that had medicines—places that informed the way Waponahki people lived and moved around on their land. And settlers targeted all of

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[37] Anthony Sutton, "Wabanaki Fisheries: What Rivers Can Teach Us About Partnerships," February 14, 2022, Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, University of Maine, Orono, Maine, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOztwS_qozQ.

> those life-giving places when they were looking to build their forts, their mills, their cottages, their subdivisions, or their hydroelectric dams. My people have blocked and controlled access to so many important sites, which as Sutton says are not just about physical sustenance—they are about gathering, and teachings, and families. We can think about this with *Marshall*, too, that this was never just about fishing for eels; it was about the freedom to connect with land in ways that aren't always mediated by these Western values and structures. It was about going out with your kids or your friends, being together in those places that remember you and just practising who you are. I've been thinking about these ideas a lot because of the way your family reconnected here in Menahkwesk during the symposium. And because of this work we are doing now—which is in some ways about how my people are still not sharing. My people have forgotten who we are as treaty people—that our rights to be here have only ever been in this relationship with you all.
>
> **Gina:** When I was in Menahkwesk and my children came down, they were just amazed by my art. They came to a place where they could see it—and then they could also see their own potential. I'd leave them there when they were helping me [in the pop-up gallery] and they'd have to stand there by themselves. The art made them feel powerful and they knew it wasn't just their mother's. It was theirs. So when they came here with me, I got to share stories with them, and it built a whole energy of—*this is my place. Our people were here. This is where we should have been, and we're here now*. My children are older, but they know that feeling of art and stories and language and place—and how they *become* there. They become more themselves, and I could see that transformation. I could feel that kinship between the three of us and how sacred that little bit of time was. It changed them; it changed us back into ourselves. When you go into places that you know, and you feel that understanding, you want more of that. This is why I can hardly wait for springtime so we can go back to that place. My kids want to do that, and it's important for them to see themselves through my art, like I did with Shirley Bear. I had this feeling like I had laid all this down for my kids, and when they're ready, they're going to pick it up.

In April 2023, we shared our baskets and our way of telling history with a public audience at the Rough Waters workshop on the legacy of the *Marshall* decisions at Mount Allison University. For us, this legacy involves the honest and collaborative assessment of all of the supposedly public spaces that Waponahki are still excluded from, cut off from, or marginalized within.[38] What are the terms of participation in these spaces, where did those terms come from, and whose values do those terms reflect? What would it mean to fundamentally re-create these spaces together in the spirit of treaty? In the minutes before our treaty talk in Sackville, Gina asked for a smudge, and so Elders William and Connie Nevin led us out of the building and over to a parked SUV where they had sage waiting. “Can’t smudge in the buildings here,” they explained. Connie gifted Gina with an abalone shell and some sage that William had gathered from the prairies. Later, when it was our turn to share, Gina sang a song to call on her ancestors and to fill up the theatre space, like smoke, with the presence and participation of her people. After a presentation on *Marshall* in the context of Canadian law by Alex Cameron, a lawyer remembered today in Mi’kmaq communities for his work as a Nova Scotia Crown and for his writings and stances on what he calls unwarranted treaty entitlements, Gina asked him who he was talking to. “You’re not talking to me,” she said, looking him in the eyes; “you’re not talking to my community.”

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[38] Though not written in exclusive relation to *Marshall*, John Borrows wrote about how these general conditions persist in Canada in a research paper commissioned during the Ipperwash Inquiry in 2005. There, he writes about the system of blockades that non-Indigenous peoples have erected and sought to normalize on Indigenous land and the conflict conditions that currently exist all across Canada as a result of this ongoing occupation strategy. He explains that when Indigenous peoples push back against colonial conditions, it is their actions that make headlines, that receive public notice, scrutiny, or comment: "It is...ironic that Aboriginal blockades and occupations have received the lion's share of attention in the past few years when the predominant use of this device in Canadian history has been by non-Aboriginal peoples to occupy Aboriginal lands. Non-Aboriginal occupations and blockades have been a significant problem for Aboriginal peoples throughout Canadian history. They continue to present problems today." John Borrows, "Crown and Aboriginal Occupations of Land: A History & Comparison," The Ipperwash Inquiry: Research Papers Commissioned by the Inquiry (2005): 22, accessed April 12, 2022, https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/inquiries/ipperwash/policy_part/research/index.html.

We offer our basket to you in the tradition of Donald Marshall Jr. and in deep gratitude for the great deed he did for the people. Twenty-five years ago, the Supreme Court’s *Marshall* decision did not create or change the law of treaty in this beautiful land but rather sought to remember it. We invite you to hold this basket in your hands and see what you can remember.

To comment on this article, please write to editorjnbs@stu.ca. Veuillez transmettre vos commentaires sur cet article à editorjnbs@stu.ca.

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