

## Article

# Miskâsowin—Returning to the Body, Remembering What Keeps Us Alive

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**Abstract:** The nêhiyawêwin (Plains Cree language) Cree word, miskâsowin, relates to the sacred teachings of *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan* as a concept pertaining to wellness of “finding one’s sense of belonging”—a process integral in the aftermath of colonial disruption. Métis educator and performance artist Moe Clark offers an approach to healing and well-being, which is imparted through movement, flux and through musical and performance-based engagement. Moe works with tools of embodiment in performance and circle work contexts, including song creation, collaborative performance, participatory youth expression and land-based projects as healing art. She shares her process for re-animating these relationships to land, human kin, and other-than-human kin through breath-work, creative practice and relationality as part of a path to wholeness. The authors document Moe’s approach to supporting the identity, growth, healing and transformation of others.

**Keywords:** Métis; Indigenous; Indigenous language; healing; music therapy; performance

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## 1. Introduction

This article explores the nature of healing and belonging for Two-Spirit Métis multidisciplinary artist, Moe Clark. Honouring an Indigenous paradigm, the authors follow a circular methodology as demonstrated in Moe’s spoken word poem *Coyote*. In doing so, we are witness to a story of healing and transformation. Each author has taken a particular role in the articulation of this work through the shared tasks of interviewing, transcribing, writing, contextualizing and word-smithing. This embodied, transformative and multi-faceted approach to healing for the Métis, for the wider Indigenous and/or cultural communities can be inspirational and holds a place in the disciplines of cultural psychology, healing and recovery and the human potential movement.

Without taking up too much space for an already well-documented history, it is important to note that the Métis are one of three Indigenous peoples in Canada (in northern Turtle Island) who were colonized by England, France and then the settler-state post-confederation (1867). Perhaps the best narrative account of the historical experience for the Métis can be found in Maria Campbell’s (latest) publication of “Halfbreed” (1973). Here, Campbell documents the major and ongoing sources of strife for the Métis including land theft, poverty imposed through state violence, denied access to education, abuse and sexualized assault by police and barriers to adequate housing, food and clean water. Today, while many Métis are employed in middle-class or industrial jobs, the Métis continue to be subjected to racism and systemic barriers; many are forced to make untenable choices, such as working in jobs which perpetuate environmental destruction or remain unable to support one’s family (Richardson 2017). Particular ongoing issues of identity for Métis are fostered by the stereotyping found in terms such as “Halfbreed”, which, by the terms of eugenics and scientific racism, imply that the Métis are less-than-whole. One of the most perturbing conditions for the Métis is found through child welfare practices which continue to target Indigenous or “darker skinned” families, implying that their parenting practices

are sub-par, blaming individuals for systemic and structural barriers. There are more Métis children in government care today than during the “Sixties Scoop”, an époque highlighted for disastrous and genocidal racial profiling of Indigenous people. These are some of the conditions that Métis people today are trying to address. An ongoing, life-affirming energy is required to meet these challenges head on while building community and engaging in personal and collective transformation work. Relating to land, place, identity and our various kin (including non-human relatives) is central to the process.

Indigenous story work and circular methodology provoke experiential understanding of place and identity. Many Métis scholars have shared the importance of story and “First Voice” in both methodology and healing. Graveline (2000) approaches “First Voice” as methodology through “[a] fluid pattern [of] Medicine Wheel as ‘paradigm’” (364). The medicine wheel is representation of wholeness, characterizing balance in an integrated way. While the model is used to conceptualize holistic well-being, the medicine wheel is also a structure that was built into the earth. One may walk through the medicine wheel in places such as Wanuskewin, Saskatchewan or in the Bighorn mountains of Wyoming, USA. Circularity is an organizing principle in this article and can be detected through the storied sequence, moving from personal account, to dialogue, to reflection and finally to connection with larger socio-political or spiritual themes. Richardson (2004) contends that: “Métis themes tend to come in strands that are closely woven together. [...] Themes of healing, learning through stories, and finding belonging are [closely intertwined]” (p. 24). Here, Moe Clark guides us through her creative practice which involves connecting to community and landscape, and uncovering *miskâsowin* and *wâhkotowin*: belonging and kinship.

## 2. Emergence

Is it possible to hear the whispers of the northern lights arriving, particularly if one is just waking from a dream? And from whence do they appear, from the spirit world, from the Cypress Hills/*kâtepwa*, or from the Red River? These are ancestral lands for the Métis, as for Moe’s family. She acknowledges the Cypress Hills, *katêpwa* and other places that had been essential stopping points for her Métis family when they were pushed west from the Red River so many years back. The Métis people are taught about Louis Riel and the role of the artists, called upon to wake up the people:

*My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists  
who give them their spirit back*

(Riel 1885)

Today, many of the younger generation on Turtle Island speak of being “woke”, of having come alive, of becoming aware of who one is in the context of power, discrimination and (the absence of) social justice. This experience of “coming into greater consciousness” resonates with an African American usage (woke-ness) that was reintroduced into “mainstream public consciousness”. In 2008, rapper Erykah Badu sang “Master Teacher” with her lyrics “I stay woke,” designating the #staywoke hashtag (Minamore 2020). This chapter explores the process of “awakening to culture”, of finding belonging as integral aspects of healing and becoming whole. The pathway to this knowledge was eked out by Métis singer, spoken word poet and facilitator of *healing processes*, Moe Clark. She notes:

They speak about *miskâsowin* as a process of finding one sense of origin, finding ones belonging (Cardinal and Hildebrand 2000). You know they (the Elders) go further to say, *miskâsowin* means locating oneself within the circle, and to me I feel like this is an ongoing practice and process. I might belong in one way to a particular community and I might belong differently to another community; my roles are perhaps changing. Being able to reflect and to perceive that notion of belonging within different circles, which in turn makes you part of a whole, like a part of a whole system

(Clark 2020a, p.1)

One's relationship to land and ecological and human systems is acknowledged through a process of self-location. Moe begins her work by situating herself as such:

I was born and raised in Treaty 7, otôskwanihk (Calgary), the meeting place of the Elbow and Bow rivers. My Métis ancestral roots trace back from Saint François-Xavier, Manitoba in the Red River and into the southern plains and of what is now central Alberta. I moved to Tio'tiá:ke (Montreal) over ten years ago, following an inner prompting, to pursue an artistic career. Here, I have been building a life and an artistic practice, nestled on this island of salt-crust winter streets, at the foot of Mount Royal surrounded by the almighty Saint Lawrence river. These landmarks have become emblematic in my journey as a musician and poet, educator and artistic producer, shape-shifting between roles and mediums

(Clark 2020b, p. 26)

Like many poetically inspired beings, Moe begins her articulation of waking up to her culture through metaphoric story. Imagine awakening from a deep sleep, from a silenced place of not-knowing, to greet what is coming down the path. How quietly must one listen to hear the arrival of a muzzled coyote?

*Coyote came upon the turtle's back  
in a dream I was sleeping  
so deeply like my people  
for at least one hundred years*

Métis theorists have long written about this returning of culture (Campbell 1973; Scofield 2016; Dimaline 2017). The 1990s appeared to mark a wave of increased Métis identification, increased pride and reclamation of Métis culture. This movement was marked by the victory of a number of important court decisions in Canada, such as the Daniel's Decision and the Powley Decision, reaffirming Métis rights in the Canadian constitution. In the same time period, Richardson articulated a personal and academic narrative in *Belonging Métis* (Richardson 2016), based on her doctoral research. Herein, Richardson speculated on a slight increase in cultural safety in Canada (Blanchet-Cohen and Richardson/Kinewesquao 2017). Richardson documents a final "grandmother/kokum speak out" that often precipitated a new awareness in Métis families. After years of hints and suggestions that the family might have "Indian blood", a grandmother reveals on her deathbed that she is "Métis". Many family Elders had tried to protect their young ones from harm by finding ways to keep their Métis ancestry underground, despite the knowledge being present.

The disclosure "We are Métis" has become a battle call for Métis organizations. Upon hearing these words, a reaction was prompted through the Métis family as each person opens up to this reality in a different way—some with relief and joy, others with confusion and denial. Being Indigenous in a virulent racist society 1996<sup>1</sup> requires a certain amount of courage. Moe's courage comes through in the story, as *coyote* prompts her to question her situation:

*Wrapped tight around his nose  
a coarse iron rope muzzled his throat  
and in his eyes a stone cold silence  
why the violence?  
he glared*

In coming to terms with her Métis identity, after years of denial in her family, Moe recounts the process of moving towards identity and wholeness, through a "piecing together" of the different parts of herself and her ancestry. Through his glare and muzzled lips, what is it that *coyote* wants back? Could it be his story or his people? The land where he/they have lived since time immemorial? Is he reminding us that we can also look into

<sup>1</sup> See Red and White appendix in (Dumont 1996).

the things that were taken, that we long to re-embrace? Moe's story of *coyote* denotes the process of breaking the silence in order to more fully occupy her place as a Métis person:

I've always identified as an artist, but I haven't always identified as Métis. The story behind this identity reconfiguring continues to reveal itself. Grandpa Ron, my Métis grandfather, died before I was old enough to know or ask him to know more about this hidden chapter. But after his passing, stories and questions surfaced in our family and we began piecing together the family genealogy and lineage. But like many, these fragments only took me so far. I have also relied on my own memories of being held and welcomed by the land, of the songs and campfire teachings told to me as a small girl and all the pieces I've gathered along the way from community, archives and whatever family stories have surfaced. From these fragments I have built new kinship relationships and adopted elders, community and artists as family. These relationships continue to accompany, inspire and support artistic and personal growth

(Clark 2020b, p. 26)

Moe's words point to one's belonging with and on the land, where much of the DNA of her ancestors is embedded. In addition, the living memories activated through relationships she has had with her family on the land, provide substance for this reconnection and healing. To reciprocate and give back to these life-giving relationships of land and sky, and the healing they provide, Moe speaks of making offerings. More particularly, how she is drawn outside to make offerings to the northern lights (the Ancestors) and it is there, she is met by the howling call of *coyote*. This encounter marks a pivotal moment in her healing journey. Moe writes:

That night on the prairies, I decide to step outside and make an offering of *cistēmaw*, tobacco, both as a way to pay my respects for their visit and to indicate I'm happy right where I am, on this land, and will not be going with them. As I do this, I am met by the haunting cry of *mêscacâkanis*, *coyote*

(Clark 2020b, p. 28)

One of the Cree teachings of Turtle Island is that we do not look directly at the Ancestors in the sky, out of respect, lest they interpret our gaze as calling them to take us away with them (Buck 2009). This offering of tobacco thus becomes a way of looking without gazing directly. Tobacco becomes the witness who acts as the bridge between Moe and her ancestors. From a Cree perspective, tobacco moves first, and carries our prayers to spirit world so the ancestors know we are grateful (Clark 2020a). Maintaining embodiment practices such as these, Moe remembers, reaffirms, and honours the reciprocity of these sacred relationships. In the ongoing healing process, relationality and meaning-making are essential. Moe upholds these practices by communicating with her Ancestors on the land. By doing so, she is "... [activating] ancestral memory [and] engaging with lineage [ ... ] with all that has been and all that will come" (Clark 2020a, p. 3). In recognizing their presence and tending to *coyote's* call, Moe is intentional in how she finds and affirms her belonging/being.

### 3. Healing through Intentionality

The process of meaning-making differs for every individual. Leanne Simpson (2017) speaks to this undertaking as she writes: "... Individuals carry the responsibility for generating meaning within their own lives; they carry the responsibility for engaging their minds, bodies, and spirits in a practice of generating meaning" (p. 52). As an artist, performer and educator, Moe carries the responsibility for meaning-making through ongoing relationships with community. Through the creation of song, story, engagement with creative kin and community through performance and arts facilitation, a reciprocal healing process has arisen—one that does not exist solely in Moe's body, but is shared between many bodies/minds/spirits of those who come into creative practice with her. She says:

Therefore, much of my healing has come through being in relationship with others and others' healing. We grow together and that circle expands collectively and in community. Therefore, I definitely feel like the teacher is the student, and the student is the teacher, and this process experienced through intergenerational relationships and transmission of knowledge, is so important, one that has always been part of my life

(Clark 2020a, p. 2)

Through this transmission of knowledge, prayer, and ceremony, creation is born. Verral (1988) cited in Iseke-Barnes (2003) shares the Cree word *mom-tune-ay-chi-kun* which refers to "the sacred place inside, where we can dream, imagine, create and talk to the grandmothers and grandfathers" (pp. 218–19). Iseke-Barnes then recites Métis grandmother Maria Campbell as she states: "*Mom-tune-ay-chi-kuna* in English is translated as mind or wisdoms or 'the thoughts and images that come from this place . . . [which] can be given to others in stories, songs, dances, and art . . . All these are gifts that come from that sacred place inside'" (Maria Campbell quoted in (Verral 1988, p. 3) cited in Iseke-Barnes 2003). Moe describes finding this inner place where she can create these gifts and build connection, she writes:

Each time I prepare to write, to sing, to perform, I bring in plant medicines, sage or sweetgrass, and burn them to smudge. I engage in a process of making sacred, each act of creation (Clark 2020b, p. 31). I see the creative process as relational, ceremonial, and in constant renewal; helping to reaffirm and grow relationships with community, with ourselves and with the land. In this way, the creative process invites *miskâsowin* and *wâhkotowin*: belonging and kinship

(Clark 2020b, p. 29)

Through voice and music, Moe has acquired a deeper understanding of *miskâsowin*, how she belongs with " . . . the inner circle, [the] circle of close family and friends; then community; and then belonging in relationship to the larger circles of society, land, and the invisible world" (Clark 2020b, p. 31). The process of coming into being and healing through memory and visions requires inviting connection to these kinships. On relationality in ceremony and prayer, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) writes that: "[t]he purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves" (p. 11), therefore ceremony allows for: " . . . [a] raised level of consciousness and insight into our world" (p. 11). Moe speaks to the use of plant medicines in her creative process as helping to bridge this distance by opening her spirit (Clark 2020b).

For Moe, *coyote's* arrival serves as a symbol. It is a prompting, a place of beginning, establishing the creation of this spoken word poem. This piece confronts colonial violence, forced displacement, and imperialism, which Moe says is "calling out" the "Iron Wire" (Clark 2020b). Listening intently to *coyote's* call, Moe generates a story, the meaning is the onset of an unwinding. By tending to this story, Moe names the violence instead of surrendering to it. She notes that: "in these places of [naming the violence], loosening the wire, new openings were formed. Through these holes, new visions could be seen for stories to be told" (Clark 2020b, p. 31):

*I loosened the rope  
from around Coyote's throat  
he opened his mouth wide  
no more did he hide the beads  
burning holes in his tongue*

*through the holes I gazed  
awake in dreams  
a stream of neon green  
spilled out in solar flames*

Here, an integral aspect to Moe's healing process is revealed: the importance of stories in generating meaning, expanding her understanding and helping her grow. Moe has

found wisdom through kin and kinship relations, the movement from “I” to “we” and the expansion of collective (Métis) awareness. The transmission of knowledge is facilitated through relationships and story-sharing. Kinships are inherent along Moe’s creative path, and ongoing exchanges with Elders and Knowledge Keepers help Moe integrate and uplift the meaning of her experiences. One cannot do this alone.

#### 4. Embodying This Story: Connecting with Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Elders’ and Knowledge Keeper wisdom plays an immense role in community and individual healing. Iseke-Barnes (2003) observes that “Indigenous Elders encourage us to walk with our traditions, finding support for our lives and our work in these ways” (p. 211). Elders are the leaders of their communities, supporting, strengthening and affirming Indigenous cultures and pedagogies (Iseke 2013). Through storytelling, a practice within Indigenous cultures, places, epistemologies, individuals and their experiences are protected and validated (Iseke 2013). Smith (1999) cited in Iseke (2013) affirms that: “Elders are important in the process of recovery and resistance to colonial realities and in reinsertion of the importance of remembering our past and remaking our future(s). Elders mentor and provide support and have systematically gathered wisdom, histories, skills, and expertise in cultural knowledge” (p. 561). Moe speaks of an Elder who provided wisdom that furthered her healing process:

I want to speak about a very important elder, the late Bob Smoker, who helped me to reclaim my voice in this creative process. I first met Bob outside the Regina airport at the beginning of a *nêhiyawêwin* (Plains Cree language) songwriting process with my adopted auntie and uncle, Cheryl L’Hirondelle and Joseph Naytowhow. *mosom*, grandfather Bob was sent to pick me up when Cheryl and Joseph could not. There was an instant connection and only a few days later Bob adopted me into his family, gifting me a drum and old pow wow drum mallet he had used in his early years. From that moment, up until he passed, we kept in touch with weekly phone calls and in-person visits whenever possible. He became not only part of my kinship circle, but also an integral player in my creative and personal process

(Clark 2020b, p. 32)

Spiritual experiences, like the visit from *coyote* and the Northern relatives, help guide profound understandings that lead to finding a sense of purpose and value. “Sacred traditions and the elders who possess special teachings act as bridges to spiritual experiences and as facilitators for learning about spiritual matters” (Cajete 1994, p. 44). Moe affirms this as she writes:

I called up *mosom* Bob the morning after I met *coyote* and the northern lights. The imprint from this meeting stayed with me as we spoke on the phone. While he listened to me tell my story, Bob shared his vision of light green and soft pink enveloping my body as I spoke. The green brought up the colour of *wâwâhtêwa*, northern lights, and the smoky light pink he described was the colour of prayer: the colour when earth and sun cross over in the sky at dusk and dawn. I also knew this pink as the colour of wild prairie roses and for me, they’d become a symbol of resilience, reminding me how to remain open and vulnerable even while growing amidst harsh alpine climates and dry prairie dirt. If these vulnerable pink prairie roses could survive such harsh conditions, so could I. He told me to pray hard, to trust in my voice and to keep going. With his guidance, and *wahkohtowin*, kinship, I renewed my strength in the process

(Clark 2020b, p. 32)

These relationships, which were formed farther along on Moe’s path, hold a strong place for her, in the context of healing, creation and in her everyday life. In the same way, the relationship Moe had with her Métis grandfather as a child helped guide her appreciation of story, song, and land, which are foundational to her artistry today. Acknowledging these

kinships, both past and present, helps to construct Moe's understanding of the science or alchemy of belonging. Cajete (1994) writes about the notion that one's knowing is not merely subjective, the process of learning does not transpire in isolation of others and their knowing. Simon et al. (2000) argue that "[... knowing occurs ... ] in relations within the process of 'a communicative act' they call 'pedagogical witnessing'" (Simon et al. 2000, p. 294). Accordingly, these interactions with Knowledge Keepers and Elders are essential for Moe's interpretation of healing and place. Further, Cajete holds that these relationships teach of respect and reciprocity through the passing of knowledge: "... So it goes, giving and receiving, giving and receiving stories—helping children remember to remember that the story of their community is really the story of themselves!" (p. 168). Moe states:

The teachings I've received from both Bob Smoker and Grandpa Ron, among others, make up my medicine bundle, my creative toolkit, and continually inform my approach as an artist. I know through experience that I can seek out guidance when necessary, and I also know when to look inside for further support when challenges present themselves. Bob's unconditional love, his gentle words and continual kindness, were all gifts he proudly reiterated anytime we spoke, and they came through strong in these difficult moments. His words: "I'm gonna need you as much as you're gonna need me," will always resonate for me. This reciprocity is a return to helping oneself by helping others, and feeding the circle. In this way, our fires can stay lit and so can our connection to one another

(Clark 2020b, p. 33)

The teachings from Elders and Knowledge Keepers have helped Moe reinforce the importance of reciprocity in her relationships to land, human-kin, and other-than-human kin. Moe acknowledges her relationality and connection to these relationships in her creative practice and in her daily interaction with the animacies around. She explains that her body is not simply on the land, it is nested within the land: "... even when we are on the land there is a layer of witnessing and being witnessed" (Clark 2020a, p. 3)

Healing that comes through relationality can be understood through the medicine wheel framework. From a *nêhiyawak* (Plains Cree) perspective, the medicine wheel centres the understanding that we are four-bodied people (mental, emotional, spiritual and physical bodied), and all our relationships are imbedded in this cycle of four: the four cardinal directions, four elements, four seasons, four stages of life, etc. (Naytowhow 2013). Moe relates to this framework as a guide for how to find wholeness and maintain balance within herself through her four bodies: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. These reiterated number four is interwoven with all existence and cannot be separated. In the same way, all that is alive exists in tandem with one another. Articulating this belief, Regnier (1994) notes: "Nothing exists in isolation of the whole. Although parts are differentiated from one another, they are also interconnected with one another the way seasons are joined through the natural passage of time. Transition through the phases of life interconnects birth with death and infancy with adolescence. All creatures—the winged, the two-legged, the four-legged, and the swimmers—have their place and belong in the scheme of the whole. Through their interconnection, they establish balance in the universe" (p. 133). From this place of balance, Moe tends to her place in the circle and heeds the call of the Grandmothers. It is here that she stays connected to kinships, past, present and future:

*Grandmothers, ancient and alive  
arrived to light their messenger fires  
carriers of creation  
seeping through the cosmic cracks  
their circle feast called me back*

## 5. Conceptualizing 'Feast'

The meaning of nourishment is personal, it can refer simply to food as nutrition, or, depending how it is conceptualized it can mean more; leading one to question: What nurtures and sustains our being? What fills our bodies, minds, and hearts with the required

fuel to keep going: to discover more, to share, move, grow and dance? Do we become stronger with every feast? The answers can be reinvented countless times depending on one's interpretation. For many Indigenous Nations, feast transcends food. One legacy of colonial violence is the continued attempt to disconnect Indigenous peoples from their cultural practices. Moe speaks of feasting as an act of celebration and resistance. Not only does it represent strength through a "... cultural practice of honouring, remembering and reaffirming relationships with our ancestors, with one another and with the land" (Clark 2020b, p. 35), it extends beyond this to the feasting and nurturing of spirit:

During the Idle No More movement, round dances swept across Turtle Island (Canada) as a tool for bringing people together to celebrate, connect and reinforce our communities through the act of song and circle dancing. These feasts were not necessarily tied to food but to the feasting of spirit and body. We assembled in mass groups to the beat of the drum and to our collective heart beats, dancing and calling out our place in communion with the land and with one another, as we held our hands together in a feast of spirit and body

(Clark 2020b, p. 35)

Feasting, in this way, is an embodied practice Moe creatively employs to resist the perpetual colonial violence that she and her ancestors, community and kin have experienced. Through her deliberately crafted expressions of song, story and music that embody a land-based and animate perspective, Moe creates provocative pieces of resistance (Clark 2020b). This practice, she explains, generates a sense of "affirmative action and participatory embodiment" (Clark 2020b, p. 35). The manifestation of this feasting, as embodied resistance, connects to Moe's experience with the northern lights (the Ancestors)—she adds:

By acknowledging these animate relationships with sky world and our dancing Northern relatives, I was reaffirming connections to the relationships I cannot see, to my ancestors and to the teachings of the elders. My body merged with the darkness of night, I emptied my physical self out into the natural landscape, made an offering, and from this place I opened to receiving a vision. In this case, the vision came in the form of dancing grandmothers (Clark 2020b, p. 35) Their message was:

*Break your stillness, my child  
Be true to your spirit, be wild  
and take the beads*

*Beads so red,  
red like blood pulsing through me  
beads so blue,  
blue like rivers renewing memory*

*so with courage as my guide  
I took the beads from coyote's tongue  
stories left unspoken sear the root  
until they're sung*

These blue and red beads are illustrative of the Métis people's infinity flag, a resistance flag which features a white infinity symbol amidst a blue or red background: "... representative of our continued relationships to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous lineage" (Clark 2020b, p. 36). Now, holding the beads of her Métis identity, Moe is reminded of her belonging. To continue feeding the circle, she must nurture these beads through her connections. By taking the beads from *coyote's* tongue, Moe breaks her stillness and silence. The poem continues:

*Coyote circled round me  
his howling sounds resounding  
like all that came before  
my body opened like a doorway  
to the night*

*I began to rise up  
in spirit and in choice  
suspended anti-gravity  
with roots reaching from my voice  
to where the silence dwells deep beneath me  
seeds quivered as they listened  
and rising, a wild rose glistened  
pale pink in prairie grasses  
medicines mends the inside  
so the violence can pass us by*

*may we be bigger than the shadow  
for we are all constellations  
not just some consolation prize  
and in the gifts of kinship  
we thrive, we survive  
we're alive*

Rooted firmly in the presence of her kinship guides; *coyote*, the Grandmothers, her ancestors, Moe describes breaking through the silence to a place where her spirit is strengthened through voice.

With the rope loosened from *coyote's* throat, he howls and as his voice breaks the silence, and he becomes the bridge: to the voices of the past, to the silence in between and to a future that is open and alive. Through these openings, Moe imagines seeds (Clark 2020b) when embodied and voiced, these seeds become planted, rooted in the ground. "... [They become] embodied memory, maps to our creation stories that intrinsically connect us to all of creation. These seeded stories return to the land and people as offerings, in a feast of song and poetry, where they continue to grow and heal" (Clark 2020b, p. 37). The arrival of *coyote* conveys a reminder of resistance and growth. Through this metaphoric story, we learn about Moe reaffirming and healing her Métis identity.

*May the fire from my lips  
burn away the iron wire  
may the water from my eyes  
wash away the scars*

*may the wind in my belly  
clear away the ash  
and may the earth in my heart  
wake up the spirit path*

*Coyote came upon the turtles back  
in a dream I was sleeping  
so deeply like my people  
and now we're waking up*

## 6. Conclusions

Moe's healing process is the sum of many parts, a circular collective envisioning, at the heart of which lives the sacred teaching of *miskâsowin*: finding one's sense of belonging; finding one's place within the circle. Through embodiment practices that weave a tapestry of relationality, creations unfold—in this case, the poetic story of *coyote* and the northern lights. Moe's healing is circular and influx, made possible through "returning to breath and body" (Clark 2020b), and involves a process of remembering, embracing, and re-embracing relationships to kin—past, present and future. In this honouring of connection to the dynamic animacies that exist all around, Moe feasts relationships that help her grow.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

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