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3 Poems by Chief Lindsay Marshall

Visitors A white cloud appears on the blue horizon off the shore of Unama'ki. Strangers are coming in strange vessels. The vessels come nearer and stop. A splash is heard as the strangers throw something from the front of the ship, looks like a tree trunk with a long gnarly root. The strangers speak in a foreign tongue. Their skin is pale as the ghosts that haunt our camps at night. Faces hairy like dogs, yet they stand upright like us, the People of the Dawn, the first people to greet and get blessings from the sun as it rises each morn to bless the rest who live to the west. How the strangers cower on the shore. Surely they must think there is no one here. Come my brothers, let's go away and tonight we will return. They have not ventured inland or moved from the shore since morn. Perhaps they have heard of the spirits who guard our sleep, protecting us. It is time we made them welcome. Let's build a great fire that overlooks their camp. It is a good fire, the flames are the first to dance. See how high they jump and kick. Now the drumming starts, how we dance and sing. But wait, something is wrong. They're leaving. Wait! We welcome you. Stop! We mean no harm. They leave. We wonder if they'll be back. They have left strange markings on a piece of wood. IVlankewin? (Are You Going to IVlaine?) Do you remember Maine? Do you remember telling everyone who would listen that you were going to Vacation Land picking blueberries? Do you remember the taste of your first submarine washed down with a cool Bud from the first store you saw after you crossed the border? Do you remember the cool mornings that enabled you to get fifty plus m' JJ. BARRINGTON Ltd ""fe 137 Kings Rd. SYDNEY, NS B1S2Z5 (AT THE TRACKS) WHEEL AUeNMENT & AUTO BODY LTD. S] Collision Repairs & Painting rT| Frame straightening H] Computer Wheel Balancing & Alignment [t We stock Brakes & Shocks for most cars m We now carry a Full Line of Tires FREE E/TIMAI0 564-8150 FAX 539-4501 boxes that first day at work there in the barrens? Do you remember where you went swimming to cool off in afternoons? Was it Scoodic Lake or Columbia Falls? Do you remember going back to the camp after picking blueberries and seeing the filth on your body? Do you remember wak? ing up the next day and being unable to move without pain? Do you remember work? ing in the hot August sun not worrying about the UV index? Do you remember being | up half the night treating iS- your badly burned red back and asking yourself, "What am I doing here?" Do you remember the excitement of getting your first pay and spend? ing it in Cherryfield, Millbridge or Ellsworth? Do you remember the Bay Rum Pirates, Canned Heat Gang behind Grant's General Store? Do you remember staying until the frost killed the best berries of the season, the ones that were promised to you by the leaseholder? Do you remember hurrying to get home so the kids could go to school? Do you remember the trip home and someone asking at the border, "All Indians?" Lindsay Marshall, Chief of Chapel Island First Nation, with his niece Brla Francis Progress Handshakes, smiles all around. The suits come into the band office carrying their pens. Fast polite chatter, wet palms hiding papers piled like a pyre inside leather boxes with brass locks. Minions of the queen mentioning her



thorny hat, this and that and the Act. Words spoken with no 'ahs' or 'ays'. The counselled Council listens to the Concord pitch, its pros and cons, weighing each grain against each rock. Four plaque-like walls holding their eyes, seeing nothing new or different since the last time. Mouthpiece spinning spiels, nods of non-comprehension, feathers combed not ruffled, patted not struck. Sign here, initial there, witness here. More handshakes, dry palms wet again. Saunter out of the old Indian Day School, now band office, boxes go out with white blisterless hands, clutching pens like Cornwallis trophies. Black ink slowly drying with red splatters here, there... Thanks to Pat O'Neill of Solus Publishing for permission to offer these poems from Clay Pots and Bones/Pka'wo'qq aq Wagntal, a new 92-page book available for \$11.95 in stores, or direct from Solus Publishing, 14 Beacon St., Sydney, Nova Scotia B1P 4S9.