

## STATELEW: The Gathering Place

*(a poem based on the Kwantlen village site  
in New Westminster)*

We are not going to the reserve, but past it  
down this road to a place that didn't exist  
one hundred years ago, and I wonder how many  
reserves there are in this, the farthest outpost.  
This idea is new to me, based on a black  
and white photograph of a man in a canoe  
between two places. The strands coming together  
from where they have been interned. All is built  
upon invention and what lies beneath becomes  
a question slowly unraveling in time, a forgotten word  
upon a tongue, a memory of remembering. I am not  
home, and it is not mine to remember, not my  
language nearly lost, yet the curious seed is planted,  
unfurls. There, the sign, the surface of the road, where  
the machine is taking its load to see sights from the other  
side, somehow not real, the sibilant tunnel walls hush,  
obscure, and in me yearns to know the name,  
the word of the place beyond and its meaning.  
I am invited, the wheels running between these two  
hemispheres over and over whispering I am ignorant,  
dumb, the tasteless shape of a colonized mind to eschew  
the remains of middens and longhouses, the name of this  
place, the single word and its meaning. For once, it knew  
a land not bandaged with foreign names, their language not  
so darkened, not so hidden. Mother England, you promised  
a city; all I see is loss. Don't say the means have  
justified the hiding of the buried song, the cleansing breath.

**Moss Whelan**

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Moss Whelan has worked as a papermaker, a printer, a writer, and a publisher. He grew up near the village site of *Statelew*, in New Westminster, BC, where much of his writing is set. Currently, he is creating awareness about the potential extinction of Downriver Halkomelem. You can reach him at: [tem1@sfu.ca](mailto:tem1@sfu.ca).

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