

The Goose

Volume 18
Number 2 *Miscellany (An Extra-Open Issue) /*
méli-mélo (numéro très ouvert)

Article 32

10-15-2020

"Circulation of officialdom (or) a letter arrives on my gov't employee desk"

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Recommended Citation / Citation recommandée

Halas, Gabriela. "'Circulation of officialdom (or) a letter arrives on my gov't employee desk.'" *The Goose*, vol. 18, no. 2, article 32, 2020,

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose/vol18/iss2/32>.

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***Circulation of officialdom (or)
a letter arrives on my gov't employee desk***

Wherein they apologized for acts of design:

Regulations that failed to recognize . . .

The way *extreme hardship for many becomes negative impacts* _____

Our predecessors were short-sighted . . .

The way *an unhappy period of history makes families still resent the past*

Long-term suffering and unnecessary pain . . .

The way *to reconcile the past of unintended consequences* _____

To Indigenous Peoples of Alaska,

I read this letter at work. In a job secured by the State (good benefits, after all). I travel to ask how many, how much; do you have a permit for that? We might have crossed paths. The codified expression (1000 pgs+) of what used to be free. I quantify, attribute use—the long chain of gov't claim—without the numbers to make official, would anyone believe you have (had) a voice?

& in this official Apology—

does regret fill the bones like marrow to provide immunity to the past?

does it change policies that might unravel the tight coil of histories' reach?

—names sign the line, stamp the seals, but what

(I'm asking)

does it mean?

& the 3-sided mirror of History—

flat face of truth stares // harsh enough to look away

Detection: memories serve greater than words that came before—

right-side cuts a shadow down the temple's shallow floor // disbelief in familiar angles

Definition: three words dissected in colonizing throats—

left-side floods the ear with light // rupture of silence to a roar

—nutrition—culture—spirit—

(If simply called life, how would this letter read?)

we failed to recognize the importance of life for Indigenous Peoples

—fields shackled to the law. *forced to unlawfully hunt* . . .

—walk the same land. led to *unlawful* places . . .

—tiny bones in a hand. signal *unlawful* motion . . .

—the *unlawful* infinite mind . . .

(—The commercial hunt of migratory birds decimated populations in the 1900s. In 1918 the Migratory Bird Treaty Act made unlawful the use of migratory birds across North America. *These regulations failed to recognize the importance of migratory birds for indigenous peoples.* It took 80 years to amend the books—)

. . . that which the sea breaks against
—goose
—loon
—black duck
—tundra flats
loosened come spring . . .

The birds wondered where you went

GABRIELA HALAS immigrated to Canada during the early 1980s with her parents and sister. She grew up in northern Alberta, lived in Alaska for seven years, and currently resides in BC. She has published poetry in a variety of literary journals including *The Louisville Review*, *The Hopper*, and *Gingerbread House Literary Magazine*, and forthcoming in *Rock & Sling*, *december magazine*, and *Prairie Fire*; fiction in *subTerrain* and *Broken Pencil*; nonfiction in *Grain*, *Pilgrimage*, and *High Country News*. She lives and writes on traditional Ktunaxa Nation land.