

# Mother Tree

Composed by T. Patrick Carrabré

Text from *Finding the Mother Tree*, by Suzanne Simard

## I - FOR GENERATIONS

*"For generations, my family has made its living cutting down forests. Our survival has depended on this humble trade. It is my legacy. I have cut down my fair share of trees as well. But nothing lives on our planet without death and decay. From this springs new life, and from this birth will come new death. This spiral of living taught me to become a sower of seeds too, a planter of seedlings, a keeper of saplings, a part of the cycle. The forest itself is part of much larger cycles, the building of soil and migration of species and circulation of oceans. The source of clean air and pure water and good food. There is a necessary wisdom in the give-and-take of nature—its quiet agreements and search for balance. There is an extraordinary generosity."*

## II - A COLOSSAL TREE

*"I reached a colossal tree, a rampart, her branches thick right to the ground and as big as trees themselves. Her large size and old age were magnificent compared to her neighbors. She looked like the mother of all Mother Trees. What foresters call a "wolf tree"—far older, bigger, and with a much wider crown than the others, a lone survivor of previous calamities. She had lived through centuries of ground fires that others had—at one time or another—succumbed to.*

*Her life had started when the Secwepemc people cared for this land, long before the Europeans came, when the Native people regularly lit fires to create habitat for game, or to stimulate growth of valuable... plants, or to clear routes for trading with neighboring nations..., I was struck by her endurance, her rhythm that spanned centuries. It was a matter of survival, not a choice, not an indulgence."*

## III - I WAS IN CHARGE



*"I was in charge of an experiment that required me to kill plants, creating yet another type of displacement. My task suddenly felt contrary to... my aims. The three-hundred-year-old forest had been clear-cut... the company foresters planned to spray herbicides to kill the overtopping shrubs."*

## IV - ROUNDUP

*"[Roundup] the companies could then meet their legal obligations for "free-to-grow" stocking. Free to grow... and get clear-cut again in a hundred years, far sooner than if left to grow naturally like the previous stand. Once free to grow, the plantation would be considered a well-managed forest."*

## V - THIS IS MY CREED

*"With the sun sinking behind the sprawling crown of the Mother Tree, a bald eagle landed on her highest branch, scattering her cones. He angled his white head to stare straight down at us. I exhaled sharply, my breath joining a rush of mountain air. I like to think it was carried up to the eagle, because right then he ruffled his prodigious wings. Now I know why. I know why these seedlings are healthy in spite of the damage and ravages... The seeds here had germinated in the vast network of this parent... The eagle suddenly lifted... and vanished past the peaks. There is no moment too small in the world. Nothing should be lost. Everything has a purpose, and everything is in need of care. This is my creed. Let us embrace it. We can watch it rise. Just like that, at any time... wealth and grace will soar."*

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The Chan Centre would like to thank the Chan Endowment Fund  
and the UBC Faculty of Arts for their continued support.