

LOUISE B. HALFE —
SKY DANCER



awâsis

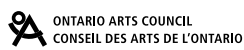
kinky and dishevelled

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Who is *awâsis*?

awâsis, *awâsis*. The settler is confused
about your shapeshifting. You can't decide
if you're an animal or a human,
of if you are a he or a she.

I am from the *iskonikan*, a *nehiyaw* who has seen

reservation, Cree

talking animals, the roadrunner, big bird, bugs
bunny, projections on television, and movies.

kayâs our people spoke with all Creation.

Old days

And all Creation understood each other.

The *âtayôhkêwina* say animals and humans shapeshifted.

Legends

Was the trickster, *wisahkêcâhk*, a coyote or a person?

Cree trickster

Seizing the mic, *wisahkêcâhk* urges the rolling-hips
to the blind-duck dance.

She'll smoke her cigar at the prayer lodge,
piss at the tail-end of a prized treadmill.

awâsis, I've heard you speak. My antennas
strain to listen. Your voice so raspy and soft.

You tell us how your *kôhkôm*

Grandmother

poured skunk oil into your swollen throat.

You fan the sweat rocks,

eagle wing scorching our flesh.

You bring Grandmother Skunk's medsin to bless us,
while Bear Child heals us with her lard.

awâsis, who am I without you?

You've blended into my sagging and wrinkled skin,

watched the owl wisdom of your face
in the skylight of my dreams.
You've hidden your laughter
under years of my travel-worn feet.

***papâmohtêwin* – Walk About**

awâsis belonged to the Universe,
but he didn't know that.
For centuries he looked for belly button.
He walked the forest where he tripped
on the tree's umbilical cord.
Still he did not see.

His moccasins had a tiny hole
in his sole
where he felt the soft earth.

The fire roared, yet he didn't know the sun rose
from the underground of his belly.
The river lived stone-ribbed throughout him.
The ancestral wind spoke.
He did not hear.

He wondered why his
heart ached when he looked
at the night heavens.
awâsis didn't know his name
always moved ahead of him.
And he was the shadow following.

Remember When

awâsis dreamt she married herself,
with full-moon breasts,
with a phallus and gonads.
When she woke, her body
was a full-grown woman,
her spirit entwined in a warrior's heart.
She gave birth like any other
bear, grunting, groaning, and pushing
forth a blood-river of land-filled brawls.

awâsis worked like a wolverine,
hefty muscles wearing tattoos.
Her feet a ballet dancer's desire,
fingers that traced a cello with the lightness
of a butterfly's wings.
When you see her today
she's the man on stage, her bulge
straining against her ballet tights.
She's the woman wearing work boots,
driving a transport loaded with fruit,
going cross-country.
Remember when the two-legged
had three, four, five, six, and
sometimes seven: he, she, he-she,
she-he, she-she, and he-he!!

In *nehiyaw* country, when people speak
of a man or woman, they refer to them
as he and she. They know that spirit
is neither and is all.

Cree

Name-Calling

awâsis might be a he or a she.

He had a long stone forehead that shone
under the moon dancer of the dark nights.
The old ones, the spirits of dawn to dust,
loved the sound of mourning bird that rose from
his useful heart. *awâsis* was a road walker,
gravel, cow path, pasture, dirt road,
walking with the winds along walker river.
He'd skipped on the wandering stones.

awâsis was standing backside to the fire
when he heard the approach of sounding voice.
He stumbled, fell on his bitter nose right into fire thunder.
His black war bonnet and blue horse hair
were covered in blowing dust from the blue whirlwinds
of coming thunder. His good furred coat
and grass leggings smouldered with
rain fire and patches of blistered skin.
He dusted his dirt catchers, smothered
the embers. His voice caught the
singing wind and they chanted up
the sun from the steel sound clouds.

He was also known as fire – *iskwêw*, woman
that opened doors for all who passed.
He wore a wolf necklace, bear claws, swung
a wolverine's tail around his backside.
He liked to strut his fancy wear.

awâsis the rabbit chaser
told this story while he chewed

on the flat-ass and shin bone,
tearing the fur and guts of his fresh kill.

I've never met *awâsis*
and thought he was *wisahkêcâhk's*
trillionth brother. They move with darksky,
daylight for they are the day walkers
of the fallen star. I gathered this is where
we are from, a sky hole. We fell unto
the turtle's back many winters,
many summers, many moons ago.

maskimot

awâsis, little gun hunter,
his play bow and arrow
hanging from his back,
lived on the reservation
with all the raisins.
One day he visited
Indian-with-a-Moustache
who lived by the creek.
He filled him with duck soup
and creamery bannock.
awâsis ate and ate
until he was a pot-bellied pig.
Holding his sides, he hobbled
to the outhouse to do his bizzness.

It wasn't long before *awâsis* came
wobbling to the house,
pants at his knees,
his face snot covered.
He showed his *misi-maskimot*
to his mother,
where a wasp
still clung to his swollen flesh.
It was forever *awâsis* carried the name
misi-maskimot – Big Sack.

big sack

In his life,
he became Chief.
But, this secret
is safe with me!

Grasshoppers

awâsis made names

for all the grasshopper children

on *iskonikan*.

reservation

Sun Who Sits Down, Wet Pants, Rubber,
Dirty Poke, Raw Eating Child, Mud Hen,
Ugly Duckling, Chickadee, Cut-off Tail,
Stinking Man, Rolling Head, Sleeps Around,
Crazy Head, Bone-file Ass Woman,
Eyes Sticking Out, Big Moose Ears,
Ah Hot, Pissing Boy, Stick Man,
Big Belly, Your Having Affair,
That Lily, Mouse, Roll It, Bear Woman,
Turn Up Your Nose, Funny Boy,
Buffalo Head, Light Window Eyes,
Windy Boy, Four Feathers, Scratching Arse,
Three Legs, The Earth That Stands,
Fur Fluff Being, Babble Mouth, Night Dawn Walker,
Coming Of Dawn, Fast Running Bird,
Short Steps Runner.

She'd pluck them from the air,
from the lodge,
from a passing animal,
from a happening,
from a fart in the sky.

Her big heavens watched,
the ear tunnels listened, and
out came Name Maker.

***wâhkôhtowin* - Relationship**

awâsis and Prairie Hen were standing
around after running a marathon.
awâsis felt a warm trickle on his bare leg.
When he checked, a Dalmatian
had lifted its leg
and pissed.

awâsis knows that humans are animals.
He moves back and forth,
he is comfortable in his skin.
Fire hydrant or not, *awâsis* was a delight
to have as a *wicêwâkan*.
Craziness followed him.
Well, wait until you hear this one.

Partner/friend

awâsis loved to visit farms.
He'd walk along the garden, collecting ideas,
stooping to pull out a carrot,
yanking a few weeds
between the turnips and beets. He'd watch
the honeybees swarm the farmer
who lifted their dripping trays.

awâsis offered to fill the pig slop.
He was bending over,
stirring the good food, when Satan,
the resident donkey, mounted him.
There he was, stuck
under the baying animal.
awâsis hollered louder than Satan!

Another time, *awâsis* was out for a walk
with his little friend wiener dog.
There was a meowing in the tall cat-tails.
They stopped to listen, and out trucked
a spotted fawn. *awâsis* called him,
“Honey, how good to see you,”
like they were long lost friends.
But Honey wasn’t having any of it.
He charged the wiener,
almost running *awâsis* over.
Then Honey backed up into the slough
and charged again.
awâsis hugged him and cradled him.
They had a little smooch.
Honey bounced into the tall cat-tails.

Another time...

A full grown Honey kissed *awâsis*.
That night *awâsis* was filled with dancing deer.

And then...another time
awâsis ê-pimohtêt.
He didn’t have his *sîsikwan*,
so he filled his water bottle
with rocks
and shook his make-shift
sîsikwan and sang
to the land, water, winds, and sun.

was walking
rattle

I just loves him, that *awâsis*.

Sweat Rock

awâsis went rock-picking in the gravel pit.
He slipped and slipped down the backbones
of the Grandmothers. He was covered
with Blue Lightning, who shrieked and laughed
as he zigzagged down *awâsis*'s ass.
A football grew inside his pants. He laid there.
“Geezus, johnsup, and marries,’ he muttered
“it grew in the wrong place.”

awâsis came home from the bed-bug
second-hand store
with a bunch of used blue jeans.
He happily slipped a on pair
and entered a coffee-shop,
sat with his legs parted, unaware
that the crotch was ripped.
Often *awâsis* didn't wear underwear.
There he was, waving his *micakisis*
at the gawking strangers.

penis/little gut

A Thieving Story

awasis came out of the bathroom,
freshly shaved. Her face
had nicks on her jawbone,
still it was as smooth as her bare ass.
She looked like she was just
out of her diapers and not the washboard.
Old man that had her face down,
studiously studying her hand.
She was an owl that could swivel her head
and another face would reveal itself.

She once told an audience of *nehiyawak* the Cree
that her wife was a very jealous *iskwew*, woman
and when another *iskwew* came to talk to *awasis*,
her wife would cover her nose
and pretend to sneeze
and ask discreetly-like “whoseshe?”