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## WELCOME ADDRESS

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Meegwetch, Elder Grafton Antone. Aaniin, Boozhoo, Sekoh, Tansi, Hello, Bonjour, and Welcome to the University of Toronto. Elder Grafton Antone reminded us that sometimes if we are lucky and we ask for something, it is provided to us. Last night as I was falling asleep I was a bit nervous about what I would say today. I got as far as “Aaniin, Boozhoo, Sekoh, Tansi.” When I woke up this morning, the first thing I thought of was Taddle Creek.

I owe part of this story to my cousin John Borrows. We are both from the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation, and we share the same great-grandfather, Charles Kegedonce Jones. John was a law professor here at the University of Toronto before me, and he got to know the history of this place and its landscape.

Before the University was here, and before the city of Toronto was here, there was a creek that ran from the high ground up north, all the way down to the lake. By pioneer times, this creek was known as Taddle Creek. When Hart House was first built, the southern part of Taddle Creek was dammed up, which resulted in quite a lovely pond. But the creek still flowed from the north, down through what is now Philosopher’s Walk. By the 1870s, people started to complain about the creek because it had become a sewer for the Victorian mansions built along it. The pond was starting to smell. The city’s solution was to bury the creek. So the creek went underground, and this facilitated the development of other buildings on the university grounds, including a rugby field at Hart House, our soccer pitch, and eventually the expansion of this law school. Now we are underground in a space that used to be shared by the creek, and from time to time the creek makes its

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\* B.A. (Queen’s University), LL.B. (University of Toronto), LL.M. (University of Toronto). After working as Assistant Professor at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, Professor Johnston resigned her academic position in order to coordinate land claims research and litigation for her community, the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation. Her advocacy contributed to the judicial recognition of her people’s treaty right to the commercial fishery and to the recovery and protection of burial grounds and other culturally significant sites within their traditional territory. She joined the University of Toronto in 2002 as an Assistant Professor and Aboriginal Student Advisor. Her teaching areas include Aboriginal Law and Property Law. Her current research focuses on the relationship between totemic identity, territoriality and governance. In 2006, Professor Johnston was featured in a special exhibit as one of the University of Toronto Law School’s Women Trailblazers.

reappearance, as anyone engaged in construction efforts in this vicinity knows. For those of us who are familiar with the vagaries of the elevator in this building, it is clear that Taddle Creek is still at work underground.

The reason I mention the creek is twofold: first, to situate us here in this particular landscape, and second, because it serves as an analogy to Indigenous legal traditions. Indigenous legal traditions have also been forced underground by the transformations that newcomers brought. We might think that things that are buried are lost, or gone, or dead. Thus, people sometimes speak of the work of some of our Aboriginal scholars as a type of archaeology; we are digging down into the past to find relics or artifacts of our traditions. But the underwater creek is still a creek; the water is still running. There is still a spirit. And insofar as our languages, our values and our ethics are still flowing in our communities, the legal traditions of our peoples are still alive. Our legal traditions have been overlaid with all kinds of other constructions, but they are still flowing. Given the work that I have been able to do here at the University of Toronto, I think of myself as a well-digger. I know that our jurisprudential river is underground, and I am determined to get down to the level where the waters still flow. And I think of the *Indigenous Law Journal* as the bucket in the well. As Aboriginal scholars, we are working within what appears to outsiders to be buried traditions. When our work is ready to be shared, it gets scooped up in the bucket, brought to the surface, and shared with those who have a thirst for the things we feared had been lost.

I want to thank the students for the wonderful work they have done in organizing this conference and the administration of the University of Toronto, and of the law faculty in particular, for their generous support of the scholarship, research and publications dedicated to restoring these waters. Meegwetch.