

Common Reading Series:

Reading by Terese Marie Mailhot

CAMERON MCGILL: My name is Cameron McGill. On behalf of WSU's Visiting Writer Series, we're excited that you're here. Thank you for joining us tonight for a reading, Q&A, and book signing with author Terese Marie Mailhot. I would ask that you please silence your cell phones. Thank you. To introduce Miss Mailhot, I'd like to invite Dr. Zi-Li Chang, our Visiting Writer Series intern and WSU graduate-- undergraduate, sorry. Zi-Li?

[APPLAUSE]

ZI-LI CHANG: Thank you. Hi, everyone. We'd like to begin with a land acknowledgment. Washington State University is located on the stated lands of Nez Perce Tribe and the traditional homeland of the Palouse band of Indians. We acknowledge their presence here since time immemorial and recognize their continuing connection to the land, to the water, and to their ancestors. Thank you again for joining us today in welcoming Terese Marie Mailhot. One logistical note before we begin-- if you need a Common Reading stamp, you can see Karen Weatherman after the reading and Q&A at those tables up there on the side.

I also want to take a moment to remind you of our next event hosted by WSU's Visiting Writer Series, which brings noted poets and writers of fiction and nonfiction to campus for creative readings, class visits, workshops, and collaborative exchanges across intellectual and artistic disciplines. We are close collaborators with the campus literary journal, Landscapes. On February 5th and 6th, we have the pleasure of welcoming Patrick Coleman, assistant director of the Arthur C. Clarke Center for Human Imagination at UC San Diego. Coleman writes short stories and poetry, and his first novel, *The Churchgoer*, was published by Harper Perennial in July. Coleman will lead a community workshop and conduct a reading. Both events are open to WSU students of all majors and to the larger community. We hope to see you there.

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson. And the US Congress passed the Removal Act bill that forced Native Americans to leave the United States and settle in the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River. This effectively turned them into asylum seekers in their own land. This history of being forced refugees continues to have repercussions and still challenges and disturbs tribal members in the US and beyond, including artists and writers.

Terese Mailhot is a writer from the Seabird Island Band. She is the New York Times best-selling author of *Heart Berries: A Memoir*. Among many other awards, her book was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for English Language Nonfiction and was selected by Emma Watson as the Hours Shared Book Club pick for March and April of 2018. In addition, she teaches creative writing at Purdue University. Mailhot's other work addresses many themes related to this year's common reading, including intergenerational trauma and forced migration. Please join me in welcoming Terese Marie Mailhot.

[APPLAUSE]

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Hi, everyone. I am really thankful to be here. And I'm always uncertain how to start, because I'm not sure what everyone's familiarity is with the history of First Nations people in Canada and also indigenous people in the United States. If you've heard of Indian boarding school or residential school, just raise your hand. That's good. That's better than most places.

My grandmother went to St. George's Residential School, where at first, she lived as a [? Na Gama ?] woman in Lytton, BC, and she was taken by Indian agents under the Canadian government to be civilized. And schools like this-- like St. George's-- they were meant to beat the language out of you and to make you a Christian. And you were let go and brought back to your own community upon turning 18, in some cases. And you were no longer kind of a part of your community in the way you used to be.

And that was my grandmother. And my uncles went to residential school. And my mother ran away from one, which I'm really thankful for. And so this opening chapter is an assertion. And I allude to-- in the chapter, I allude to bodies being buried in the walls of new schools, or being covered in the walls of new schools.

And my grandmother told me that story-- that they hid the bodies. And I always doubted her, because it sounded too horrific. It didn't sound true. But upon doing my own research, I realized that it was true, and they had put bodies in the floorboards of those schools. And I keep telling people, your grandmothers are primary sources for history, and always trust your grammies. All right?

Indian condition. My story was maltreated. The words were too wrong and ugly to speak. I tried to tell someone my story, but he thought it was a hustle. He marked it as solicitation. The man took me shopping with his pity.

I was silenced by charity, like so many Indians. I kept my hand out. My story became the hustle. Women asked me what my end game was, and I hadn't thought about it. I considered marrying one of the men and sitting with my winnings, but I was too smart to sit. I took their money and went to school. I was hungry and took more.

When I gained the faculty to speak my story, I realized I had given men too much. The thing about women from the river is that our currents are endless. We sometimes outrun ourselves. I stopped answering men's calls or their questions. Women, again, asked me for my story. Let me tell you.

My grandmother told me about Jesus. We knelt to pray. She told me to close my eyes. It was the only thing she asked me to do properly. She had conviction, but she also taught me to be mindless. We started recipes and lost track. We forgot ingredients and our cakes never rose.

We started an apple head doll. The shrunken, carved head sat on a bookshelf years after she left. When she died, nobody noticed me. Indian girls can be forgotten so well they forget themselves. My mother brought healers to our home, and I thought she was trying to exorcise me, a little ghost. Psychics came. Our house was still ruptured.

I started to craft ideas. I wrapped myself in a Pendleton blanket and picked blueberries. I pretended I was ancient. A healer looked at me-- Isadore Tom. He's kind of from this area, so maybe somebody knows him.

He was tall, and his jeans were dirty. He knelt down, and I thought I was in trouble, so I told him I had been good. He said, you don't need to be nice. My mom said that's when I became trouble.

That's when my nightmares came. A spinning wheel, a white porcelain tooth, a snarling mouth, and lightning haunted me. My mother told me they were visions. Turn your shirt backwards to confuse the ghost, she said, and sent me to bed. My mother insisted I embrace my power.

On my first day of school, I bound myself a small book. My teacher complimented the vocabulary, and my mother told me, school's a choice. She fed me traditional food, and I went to bed early every night, but I never slept well. I fell ill with tuberculosis.

Mom brought back the healers. I told them my grandmother was speaking to me. Zohar, a white mystic, a tarot reader, told me she spoke to spirits, too. Your grandmother says she misses you. We could never make a cake, I said. She was just telling me that. What ingredients did you forget?

I knew this was a test, but a strange one, because she didn't speak to my grandmother, either. I remember my mother was watching us, holding her breath. Eggs, I said. My spiritual fraud distanced my grandmother's spirit for me. It became harder to stomach myself and harder to eat.

Does that ever happen to you? I asked Zohar. What? Did you ever want to stop eating? No, she said. Zohar asked my mother if she could sleep next to my bed on the floor. She listened to me all night, storytelling, lying, what potential there was in being awful. My mindlessness became a gift. I didn't feel compelled to tell any moral tales or ancient ones. I learned how a story was always meant to be for Indian women-- immediate and necessary and fearless, like all good lies.

My story was maltreated. I was a teenager when I got married. I wanted a safe home. Despair isn't a conduit for love. We ruined each other, and then my mother died. I had to leave my reservation. I had to get my GED. I left my home because welfare made me choose between necessities. I used a check and some cash I saved for a ticket away, and I knew I would arrive with a deficit.

That's when I started to illustrate my story and when it became a means of survival. The ugly truth is that I lost my son, Isadore, in court. The Hague Convention. The ugly of that truth is that I gave birth to my second son as I was losing my first. My court date and my delivery aligned.

In the hospital, they told me my first son would go with his father. What about this boy? I said, with Isaiah in my arms. They don't seem interested yet, my lawyer said.

I brought Isaiah home from the hospital and then I packed Isadore his bag. My ex-husband, Vito, took him, along with police escorts. Before they left, I asked Vito if he wanted to hold his new baby. I don't know why I asked. But he didn't kiss our baby or tell him goodbye. He didn't say he was sorry, or that it was unfortunate. He wants one boy and not another.

It's too ugly to speak this story. It sounds like a beggar. How could misfortune follow me so well, and why did I choose it every time? I learned how to make a honey reduction of ugly sentences. Still, my voice cracks.

I packed my baby and I left my rez. I came from the mountains to an infinite and flat brown to bury my grief. I left because I was hungry. In my first writing classes, my professor told me the human condition was misery. I'm a river widened by misery, and the poems in my language is more than human.

It's an Indian condition to be proud of survival, but reluctant to call it resilience. Resilience seems ascribed to human conditioning in white people. The Indian condition is my grandmother. She was a nursery teacher. There are stories, true or not, that she brought children to our kitchen and gave them laxatives, and then she put newspaper on the ground. She squatted before them and made faces to illustrate how hard they should push. She'd de-worm children this way, they say.

And she learned that in residential school, where parasites and nuns and priests contaminated generations of our people. Indians froze trying to run away and many starved. Nuns and priests ran out of places to put our bones, so they built us into new walls of new boarding schools.

I can see my grandmother's face in front of those children. Her hands, like rose petals. It's a cliché, but it's so true. Her eyes, round. She liked carnations and canned milk. She transcended resilience and actualized what Indians weren't taught to know. We are immovable. Time seems measured by grief and anticipatory grief, but she didn't measure time.

And that's Indian condition. Let's see. I think I'll read-- jeez, I don't know. All of this stuff is hard to read, so might as well just read whatever, right? I'll read something I don't usually read. I'll read Thunder Being, Honey Bear. And-- oh, no. Maybe I won't. I'll read I know I'll go.

Sometimes I can't-- I'm staying in an old house right now. So if I read the wrong passage about my mom, she's going to haunt me. I can't do that tonight. And I forgot my smudge and stuff, so. OK. 81. All right.

My father died in the Thunderbird Hotel on Flood Hope Road. According to documents, he was beaten over a sex worker or a cigarette. I prefer the cigarette.

I considered an Indian death myself while walking along the country roads in my reserve before I really considered life. His death intruded, as I could not fathom being a good person when I came from such misery. I found newspaper clips about my father. Ken and four men abducted a girl. There aren't any details. There are documents about his murder and the transitional housing program he was in when he died. He was homeless, and social welfare gave him a hotel next to sex workers and younger, more violent men.

There was nothing easy about his memory or what he left behind. He was an anomaly, a drunk savant. He took his colors, brushes, and stool when he left my mom. It was harvest, and the corn stalks were gold and waving. I was waiting outside on the porch. I ate blueberries and spit out anything too ripe, the purple liquid. I remember staring at my spit on that porch.

His hair was black and coarse. He was wearing a baseball t-shirt and jeans covered in rust, acrylic. As an Indian woman, I resist the urge to bleed out on the page, to impart this story of my drunken father. It was dangerous to be alone with him, as it was dangerous to forgive, as it was dangerous to say he was a monster. If he were a monster, that would make me part monster, part Indian.

It is my politic to write the humanity in my characters and subvert stereotypes. Isn't that my duty as an Indian writer? But what part of him was subversion? Our basement smelled like river water and cedar bow. He carved and painted endlessly in the corners of the room.

While I sat in his lap, he taught me our icons. Eagle was mother, bolts were thunder being. In his circles were universes. It meant so much to draw a circle well. He practiced and let me watch. I remember when he left, my mother started painting again. I remember that while my father tried to draw a circle with his own eyes and hands, my mother used coffee cans.

I resisted the iconography and found myself interested in why Salish art isn't true to life. My therapist asked me to speak to my father and mother in a session. I told my father that a bird is just a bird. A mother is a tangible thing. Making Indian women inhuman is a problem for me. We'd become too symbolic and never real enough. My therapist asked me to speak to my mother and I couldn't.

My father was soft-looking sometimes. I liked to sleep in the crook of his neck. He smelled like Old Spice and bergamot. His hands shook when he was not drinking, at his worst. And when I held his hands, he seemed thankful.

My mother wanted to heal him. I remember several trips to visit him in rehab. She sent him to islands, and I remember wearing a jacket, crossing water somewhere in Tofino, British Columbia. I remember each hope given to me by my mother that our father would be OK and

that things would be different. In the past, I wanted to tell her that some things can't be loved away, but I think she knew that.

We left my father a few times. We stayed in my uncle's home. Mom took all four of us, along with my grandmother. We all slept in one room, and I had chicken pox.

I slept in a green upholstered chair and I had an accident. My brother, Ovi, was the only one awake. He told me to undress and took off his shirt for me to wear. I went back to sleep with a sour stomach and woke up as my father was forklifting me from the chair to his van. He always found us.

Once, I packed my bags, mimicking my mother. With a bag of dolls and wooden cars, I told him I was leaving. I told him I would not come back until he stopped drinking. Come here, he said. No, I said. He promised me he would quit, and then he left.

My brothers told me that he didn't really leave. I misremembered. My grandmother saved money and asked our cousin to kill my father. The man beat him well, and when my father came home, we were gone.

He ruined every artwork we possessed. He tossed every can of salmon and beets my grandmother had prepared for winter. He took jewelry. He took money. When we got home, everyone told me to wait on the porch. They went inside and cleaned while I stared at my spit.

For years they were happy to let me imagine he left on his own regard. After my mother died, I went to find him. He lived in a town called Hope. He had a new family in our van sat in his front lawn on bricks. When he answered the door, he told me he knew who I was.

He had a thin, dirty white shirt on. He looked ill and his face was gone. His hair was still black in some parts. His wife, Winnie, was my older sister's childhood friend. My father had met her when she was a girl, visiting my sister. After years with Ken, her front teeth were gone.

She smiled at me and said my father had old videotapes of theater work I had done in the community. I had five new brothers. So young. They look like the archetypes my own family had formed in the presence of my father. I found myself in the youngest child, who formed bonds too quickly and needed holding.

My father and I sat across from each other in lawn chairs in his basement. I resisted the urge to sit poised like him. Instead, I held bad posture. You have my nose, he said. I said I missed him, feeling awful that it was true. The best thing I could do was leave. I know, I said. Your mother was a good woman. I told her I was an asshole and she took me in like a wounded bear. I know, I said.

A month after this, he showed up at my house with a white documentary filmmaker. I answered the door, but could not let him in the house. My brother, Ovi, was still scared of him, still angry and confused. They're doing a documentary about me, he said. About my art.

I was anxious standing there with him at my door. I know, he said. I'll go. I hugged him in the driveway. And I know that the whole rez was watching, even my sister, who knocked on my door after he left to look me in the eyes so that I could see the betrayal. Even she, who was as tall as him and bigger, had come to my door with backup. Even she was scared of him, and I didn't know any better back then.

The National Film Board of Canada debuted the documentary as a piece with immediacy and no external narrative. I'm a woman wielding narrative now, weaving the parts of my father's life with my own. I consider his work a testimony to his being. I have one of his paintings in my living room. Man Emerging. It is the depiction of a man riding a whale.

The work is traditional and simplistic. Salish work calls for simplicity, because an animal or a man should not be convoluted. My father was not a monster, although it was in his monstrous nature to leave my brother and I alone in his van while he drank in the [? tent ?]. Our breath became visible in the cold. Ken came back to bring us fried mushrooms and we took to the bar fair like puppies to slot.

His smell was not monstrous, nor the crooks of his body. The invasive thought that he died alone in a hotel room is too much. It is dangerous to think about him, as it was dangerous to have him as my father, as it is dangerous to mourn someone I fear becoming. I don't write this to put him to rest, but to resurrect him as a man when public record portrays him as a drunk, a monster, a transient.

I wish I could have known him as a child, in his newness. I want to see him with a sheen of perfection, with skin unscathed by his mistakes or his father's. It's in my nature to love him, and I can't love who he was, but I can see him as a child.

Before my mother died, I asked her if he had ever hurt me. I put you in double diapers, she said. There is no way he hurt you. Did he hurt you? No, I said.

If rock is permeable in water, I wonder what that makes me in all of this. There is a picture of my brother, Ovi, and me next to dad's van. My chin is turned up, and at the bottom of my iris, there is a brightness. My brother has his hand on his hip, and he looks protective standing over me. I know without remembering clearly that my father took this picture and that we loved each other. And I don't think I can forgive myself for that compassion. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. So this is the Q&A, right? And if you have Qs for me to A, I am here. And I guess because it's being Livestreamed, we talk into the microphone with our Qs, which is no pressure for you, right? Yeah. Does anyone have a question?

Sure.

CAMERON MCGILL: Hello. I think it works.

AUDIENCE: Hi

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Hi.

AUDIENCE: So I was just wondering. There is a lot of very deep and difficult stuff that you do talk about in your book. And personally for me, if I had to write about stuff like that, I get to points where I had to stop. It- did you ever find points where it's-- ooh, sorry-- difficult to write about or that you left out for the reason that you couldn't?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah. I mean, I don't think I left anything out for this book in particular. But I didn't show anyone the trajectory of what it looked like when I was 12, for example. I didn't illustrate it in detail.

But as far as hardness, it took me six years to write that story or that essay about my dad. So the line my father died in the Thunderbird Hotel in Flood Hope Road, that took six years to write because at first it started as a bad story where it was raining outside. And there was bad metaphors. And it was just a bad story.

But as I started to rove into the truth, it was so much plainer to just start where he died. Because the Thunderbird Hotel on Flood Hope Road, it's tragic, and it's true, and it sounds right. But emotionally I think it took six years of lying to myself and doing poor versions of the truth.

And I think that's how a lot of testimony works. Like when something bad happens, at first we're really bad at talking about it. And as we gain faculty, as we gain agency and we talk about it more, we become better at articulating that somebody did something wrong, right? So it gets easier with the practice of language. Yeah, thank you.

CAMERON MCGILL: Other questions?

AUDIENCE: Do you currently live in the United States or have you- or do you still live in Canada?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah. I'm a professor. I'm a tenure track professor at Purdue now.

But it's really weird to think about where I came from and where I'm at now. But yeah, I'm living an academic life. And it's different. There's a lot of corn in Indiana. It's not as pretty, yeah.

But yeah, yeah, I'm here. But I go back home a lot. Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Thank you for such a great reading. It was wonderful. And in my graduate seminar we talked about your book. And we were really interested in your using the letter form, the form of the letter, which kind of most of the chapters-- not all- is that right, am I getting that right- are the form of the letter. How did that writing some of the chapters as a letter form help your voice that you have in a lot of the book?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: I think epistolary form or letter form works really well because it cuts through the contrivance of having to exposit backstory. So if you're writing to your best friend, you don't need to say I've been married for five years, and he's a nice guy, and he's a professor. And you can just jump in to why wouldn't he take out the trash. You can just jump in to the thing.

And in context throughout the letter you get that he's a professor because I talk about him grading papers or something. I'm always- but talking to your best friend or your lover, it creates a sense of intimacy that I think the reader appreciates because they want some credit. They don't want to be spoon-fed anything. Yeah, thank you.

CAMERON MCGILL: Anyone else?

AUDIENCE: Do you feel that writing is a healing process for you? Does your heart spill to talk about the memories?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah, I think it was harder to live with pretending I was OK. It was harder to live with the lie of- if somebody asked- it's harder to live with not telling people how you feel. I mean, granted it's important to tell the right people how you feel and not be too vulnerable around the wrong people.

But telling the truth is really liberating. Because after readings I usually meet people who can empathize or who have had similar experiences. And I think making people feel less alone is really important in the world, right? Like communicating some hard truths I think gives room for people to admit that me too. Yeah.

It's really hard to do, though, to talk about bad things that happened to you. But I've seen the reward of a deeper love between my husband and I or a better relationship with my friends who never knew what was going on. Yeah, thank you.

SPEAKER 4: We have an online question from Gina. Do you mentor other girls who have been through the same life experiences?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah, I do. You know, Gina, my email is tmailhot@purdue.edu.

And I do mentor. I like mentorship. It's really hard to negotiate how much time to dedicate to helping others out while you're still trying to be a professor, and grade, and do all of that stuff. But I think I really enjoy seeing other people write their own stories. I really enjoy seeing other people get weird on the page too. And I encourage all of that. Yeah, thank you.

AUDIENCE: Is this working?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: So your book is, of course, about you. But you do talk about your siblings and your friends and family. And I'm curious when you talk about such emotional and difficult topics what reception you receive from these people that you're writing about.

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah. OK, so my brother [? Guyweo ?] was- he studied history and English literature. And my brother [? Ovella ?] worked a lot of labor jobs. And he is also an artist. So he does Salish work.

So I had to show them the book before it went to print. Because admitting that my father hurt me was also an admission that he hurt them too. And I think for them- my brother [? Guyweo ?] was like, oh, I like page 12. This is a good metaphor. And then he was like, it looks good.

And- but that said, when I read at Seattle Arts and Lectures, he cried when I came offstage. So I know he feels it a little.

And my brother Ovi was like, I didn't know you remembered so much as if it was a failure on his part. And that really hurt me. But also I really love him. He's such a protector.

But I kept my sister out of the book because we get along but I just- I didn't want to subject her to that. So I kept her out of the book.

And as far as my mother, I really paid memorial to her. So I hope in the spirit world that she really likes it. She'd be haunting me if she didn't. I'm serious. And she does occasionally, so whatever.

But yeah, so- and my father was the culprit of a lot of grief in my family's life. So I didn't feel any obligation to him. But I think I tried to do justice to him a little. I tried to see in the way that we're supposed to as writers-- the humanity in somebody. Thank you.

I will run away if nobody has any more questions. OK.

AUDIENCE: Is there anything you're most appreciative of, having lived a hard story?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: I love paying my bills now. That's the thing, is experiencing abject poverty and being on the other side of a welfare desk was really humiliating in a way that with

all the richness of our culture and all of our- the legacy I inherited, it was hard to keep morale. But I always believed and had a big heart and a lot of hope for my future in spite of other people telling me different. So experiencing success in this measure, I'm just really thankful and grateful. And I'm helping out a lot of people back home. I don't know.

But the one thing I always want to say when I'm talking to people is nobody asked me how I- they asked me what my goals were occasionally in grad school, when- in undergrad too. But they never asked me, do you foresee happiness and what does that look like? So I'm only figuring out now that I'm not struggling what happiness is. And it's really freaky to think about, right?

So I would ask a lot of people to consider-- it's good to reach your goals, it's good to have success, but how do you foresee happiness in your future and you really deserve it? Yeah, thank you.

CAMERON MCGILL: Another One online. That OK?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: All right. If it's Gina, tell her to email me.

SPEAKER 4: It is Gina. Gina wants to know were you a natural writer.

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: I don't even know what that means, right. Because it takes so much practice-- like anything, like playing an instrument.

But you do have to have a love of story. You do have to really love to hear somebody tell a story in an airport. Or you have to appreciate the form to really want to do it yourself.

And I think I was- I had a natural love for poetry, and a natural love for essay, and a natural love for my grandmother's stories. And I think that that was a great base for me to pursue it.

But I didn't know that I would be a writer until I had got my GED at 24 and then at 25 took my first creative writing course at a college level. And I just realized it's really cool that you can make a living writing. Yeah.

And I wasn't good at like working at Subway or the Bureau of Indian Affairs- I worked there. I was really lousy at it. So this is what I have to do, yeah. Thank you. It's a lot of running around for Cameron today.

AUDIENCE: Thank you very much for your reading tonight. Could you tell us a little bit about what you're working on now and maybe a project you're thinking about or excited about doing in the future?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah. I'm writing a book about- my best friend [? Rhonda ?] passed away September 30th last year. And she was there when I went on The Daily Show. And she was there for my first reading in Brooklyn. And she came when my baby was born.

She was the thing that marked all of the good occasions in my life. And she's been gone for a year now. So I've been trying to exact what it's like to be an Indian woman with a white girl best friend.

And she taught me a lot about how to relate to the world and forgive. And I know forgiveness is a weird word because I advocate that it's not necessary to forgive the culprit of your pain. But I think in terms of bringing people closer to you that should be closer to you, operating out of a sense of love is like really beneficial. So writing about that has been kind of the challenge of my life.

And- but also, living life as she left it was a challenge of my life. It is the challenge of my life. And she left it really colorful. She was so much fun. So I'm writing that. But I'm also giving myself a lot of time, even though my agent doesn't like that.

Agents, right? I mean, they're great. But there's a lot of pressure about the business of writing. And I never knew any of that stuff existed when I was working on a book nobody cared I was making. Yeah. Thank you.

CAMERON MCGILL: Maybe time for one more. Is that all right, Terese?

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah, sure.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. Thank you for sharing your story. And I actually have two questions. One is- and I apologize if I missed it, but were any of your counselors that you saw a Native? And then my other question is when I finished your book there was more I wanted. I wanted to know more about your life. And I'm just curious if you see writing in the future a sequel or just going further with your life.

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Yeah. I think- I never had an indigenous counselor even when I was getting therapy on my reserve. They had a white woman coming in who was really great but she didn't really know about intergenerational trauma and really didn't know about things like that.

But as far as the book, I think it was really intentional to skip over large chunks of my life to show the fragmentation of memory when you experience trauma. But that said, in my work to [? Rhonda ?] and to memorialize my best friend, I find myself talking about what it was like to even try to have friends in grade school. The white friends in town, couldn't- they weren't allowed to come to my house. And our house looked different than most. It had an AC/DC poster in it and things like that.

So articulating that is a slowdown of what Heart Berries was. Because I don't really paint pictures in the book but that's intentional. So yeah, I'm doing that, slowing myself down, which is weird.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Thank you.

OK, I'm going to run away.

CAMERON MCGILL: Have a round of applause.

TERESE MARIE MAILHOT: Or wait, I've got to sign books, yeah.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

CAMERON MCGILL: Thank you so much, Terese. There are so many books in the back here. And the bookies, they are ready to help sell you. So get a copy of the book. Terese will be signing some copies. Try to- let's see- maybe make a line going this way so we can get people going one way or the other.

So thank you so much for joining us. And we'll see you at the next the visiting writers series event. Thank you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]