

## Tracey Lindberg, DCL '16

*Domine Cancellari; praesento vobis Thraciam Lindberg, ut admittatur ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili (honoris causa).*

Dr. Tracey Lindberg's life and career could be seen as a continuing narrative of border crossing and boundary definition. A Cree citizen of the As'in'i'wa'chi Ni'yaw Nation, whose traditional lands are traversed by the Alberta-British Columbia provincial border, she gained her first degree in Law from the University of Saskatchewan. She then passed over the international line to Massachusetts, where she is thought to be the first indigenous woman from Canada to have earned a masters degree from the Harvard University Law School. A like accomplishment followed when she received a doctorate from the University of Ottawa, a degree honoured with the Governor General's Gold medal. Her doctoral dissertation was furthermore named nation-wide best by the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies in fine arts, humanities, and social sciences. Indeed, that cross-disciplinary celebration of Tracey Lindberg's talents was a harbinger of her subsequent career in writing and teaching. For while she is currently a professor in the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, her work on indigenous identity and indigenous law, especially as they relate to concepts of personhood, sovereignty, and legal rights in contemporary Canada, has been no means confined to the quadrangle. She has worked with indigenous spiritual leaders, elders, and community members to record and translate laws as well as in other areas of advocacy, and recently her voice has gained even more widespread recognition— in indigenous and non-indigenous communities alike— through her fiction. Her best-selling and critically acclaimed novel *Birdie*, about the quest of a young Cree woman for recognition in dreamscape and landscape, was a shortlisted contender for CBC's Canada Reads 2016.

Just last week, students in our own Foundation Year Programme studied the poet Virgil's account of the Roman empire's beginning in the tragic collision of two peoples: the Trojans, warlike colonists from another continent, and the Latins of Italy, called *indigenae*:<sup>1</sup> an indigenous people "righteous not because of laws and restraints, but holding of [their] own free will to the way of life of [their] ancient god."<sup>2</sup> From one point of view, the subsequent history of the Roman, and of every other empire, could be seen as the struggle of imperialized peoples to retrieve the righteousness of unwritten law and make it visible to those who would give laws to the world, but who cannot see past the unforgiving clarity of their own legislation. Tracey Lindberg's academic work helps to dispel the "Myth of Discovery" and expose the barren fault lines between indigenous and colonialist concepts of law. Her creative work uses a new poetics that carries indigenous story tradition and language patterns to the novelistic form, a fusion that brings all of her readers closer to indigenous experience in Canada today. For her achievements in the letter and spirit of the law, Mr. Chancellor, no less than in revelatory story, I ask you, in the name of King's College, to bestow upon Dr. Tracey Lindberg the degree of Doctor of Civil Laws (*honoris causa*).

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<sup>1</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 12.823.

<sup>2</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 7.202-204, tr. West.