

The songs on [MANY ROADS HOME](#) say things that are very important to me. But it can be a little misleading to start talking about “where a project came from” or what we are “trying to say”. Like we always know. Like it was all carefully thought out and planned. What usually happens for me is that some day along the way, if I’ve had enough time and quiet to be attentive to what is going on around and inside me, songs will start to arrive in one form or another. A welcome, if sometimes strange, gift from Great Mystery.

Often the songs get re-shaped, re-imagined, re-sorted over and over again until they begin to take on a recognizable shape. Sometimes they jump out fully formed. Eventually I might begin to hear larger patterns emerge and know which of these songs all belong together on an album. But that can change at any time. In any case, there are a few things I know have been kicking around in me for quite a while and at least some of them popped out on this project.

Most folks are familiar with the terms “African Diaspora” and “Jewish Diaspora”. Many American Indian People’s have also experienced this kind of traumatic scattering of the People. My own Cherokee People were removed at gunpoint from their historical homelands and sent to Oklahoma. Many of us hid out or scattered to the four winds to avoid this. So we now have Federally recognized communities in Oklahoma and North Carolina, my own state recognized Echota band in Alabama plus small communities and individuals scattered all over the place without any formal recognition at all. Many went into hiding and even denied their true identity out of fear and fatigue. Many of Janice’s Taino People have been hiding in the mountains of Puerto Rico for generations. Others left to escape poverty and/or oppression and ended up in New York, Philadelphia and other cities. Some were brought into the U.S. as “legal” but cheap farm workers. Others were rounded up and shipped off to Hawaii to grow pineapples.

All over the Americas, even those living in native communities and reservations often forgot who they were and gave up their traditions in an attempt to survive and preserve their families. But over the past forty years or so, with help and inspiration from courageous and often persecuted leaders, more and more of us are remembering who we are and are finding our way home.

At a powwow a couple years ago, I had an interesting conversation with a Yuchi tribal member. For thousands of years, his People have lived on both sides of the Rio Grande River. Recently (by tribal standards) somebody decided (again at gunpoint) that the Rio Grande had become a national boundary. Suddenly, it became very difficult for these people to visit their relatives, keep trade routes open, etc. I was reminded of a passage from one of my favorite poems, “Just Try” From *Splitting the Heart* by Janet Marie Rogers (Mohawk).

“I am North American

Yes, we say *No* to the border

dotted lines separating

pushing us up and over

distance and time.”

Wado & Aho, Janet!