

Mayor's Article
'We Are All One'
Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins

I'm a reader. I love everything about books, and just about any book, fiction or non-fiction, prose or poetry are like food for the soul to me. I voraciously consume at least two or three a week. The book I'm reading now is "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. I was introduced to this book by the "One Book, One Ursinus" project at our community's college.

Many of us are reading this book in recognition of our community's engagement of the Welcome Home emphasis throughout the county recognizing "that our community carries names derived from the Lenape language - names holding spiritual and cultural meaning while also bearing the remembrance of the systematic removal of the Lenape people over 250 years ago by European colonial powers, whose legacy still reinforces and benefits from the Lenape's disenfranchisement."

Ursinus College and the Borough of Collegetown have been engaged in conversations of collaboration, representation, and inclusion as we work together with the Lenape people to bring about healing and reconciliation between and among all our communities. Throughout April we are honored to help host events for our friends from the Delaware Tribe of Indians and their fellow Lenape Tribes: Delaware Nation, Eelūnaapèewii Lahkèewiit (Delaware Nation at Moraviantown), Stockbridge-Munsee Community, and Munsee-Delaware Nation (Ontario).

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a botanist, who has been trained to answer questions of nature with the tools of science. She is also a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation who embraces the

notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In “Braiding Sweetgrass” she articulates Indigenous wisdom, scientific inquiry and what plants have to teach us.

Diane Skorina, Co-Director of the teaching & Learning Institute at Ursinus reflected on this line from the book, **“Traditional harvesters recognize the individuality of each tree as a person, a nonhuman forest person.”** She says, *“That line above, from page 144, is one of my favorites. To think of a tree as a “nonhuman forest person,” with a language all its own, changes my entire way of looking at the world. There’s so much in this book that’s helping me to see the environment I walk through every day differently, to feel more a part of the living world, and to think in a new language about all of the life amidst which I live.”*

Reading “Braiding Sweetgrass” makes me feel much like Diane Skorina does. I rise from each session of my reading believing that everyone is holy. Everything is holy. Every day is holy now. All we need to do is live fully in the present and this will be clearly seen. I salute our college’s emphasis on One Book, One Ursinus. In this season, let us affirm the oneness of us all. One Collegeville. One country. One planet. And all of it holy.

