



Handout 4 - *Nationhood*, Laura Da' (Eastern Shawnee)

Laura Da' (1979-) is a writer and teacher living in the Pacific Northwest. She is the author of Instruments of the True Measure and Tributaries, which won an American Book Award.

I am a citizen of two nations: Shawnee and American. I have one son who is a citizen of three. Before he was born, I learned that, like all infants, he would need to experience a change of heart at birth in order to survive. When a baby successfully breathes in through the lungs, the heart changes from parallel flow to serial flow and the shunt between the right and left atriums closes. Our new bodies obliterate old frontiers.

North America is mistakenly called nascent. The Shawnee nation is mistakenly called moribund. America established a mathematical beginning point in 1785 in what was then called the Northwest Territory. Before that, it was known in many languages as the eastern range of the Shawnee, Miami, and Huron homelands. I do not have the Shawnee words to describe this place; the notation that is available to me is 40°38'32.61' N 80°31'9.76' W.