

The Author Meets Critic Forum on J. Edward
Chamberlin's *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?*
Finding Common Ground

(Edited by Jill Didur and Susan Gingell)

This published version of an author meets critic forum springs from an event held during the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Language and Literature Studies (CACLALS) conference at the 2005 Congress of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The idea for the forum came from Jill Didur, an executive member of CACLALS, after she had attended such a panel during the 33rd Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Madison, Wisconsin. For the inaugural text in what the CACLALS executive hoped would in future be an annual event focusing on a major work published recently by one of our members, we sought a book with broad appeal that was likely to have a significant impact on postcolonial literary studies. The executive readily endorsed Susan Gingell's suggestion of J. Edward's Chamberlin's *If This Is Your Land, Where are Your Stories? Finding Common Ground* because of the socio-political importance of its subject matter, its engaging style, and its drawing on examples from multiple oral and written genres from cultures around the world and across time.

The event was envisaged as an opportunity to build intellectual community, and so we sought to partner with the Canadian Comparative Literature Association and invited them to suggest a panellist. Their choice of an anthropologist who specialized in the history of the discipline in North America and in First Nations linguistics, Dr. Regna Darnell, was the perfect complement to the CACLALS members we invited to participate: Dr. Cheryl Suzack, a materialist-feminist who studies Turtle Island/North American Aboriginal literatures, and Dr. Neil ten Kortenaar, a scholar of Canadian, South Asian, and African literatures. Ranjini Mendis, the then-president of the CACLALS executive, asked Susan Gingell to review Ted's book for the association's new-journal, *Chimo*, in order to get the conversation going, and that review appeared in the number that was published just prior to the 2005 Congress.

Each of the critics was allotted 15 minutes to speak before Ted responded to the published review and the panellists' comments. Then the audience was invited to join in the conversation. A number of people present at the event urged the publication of the forum, and so Jill and Susan secured the agreement of all the panellists to prepare a written

version of their papers. These augmented papers, with Ted's response, are presented below with the review that also formed part of the conversation.