

## University of Victoria Special Collections

Amberstone, Celu, 1947-

SC622  
2020-029

### Title

Celu Amberstone fonds

### Dates

1970-2019

### Extent

6 cm of textual records  
1 illustration

### Biographical Sketch

Celu Amberstone is an indigenous Canadian writer of Cherokee and Celtic ancestry, born in 1947 in the United States. She is Metis. As one of the “measles babies” of the 1940s, she was born with congenital cataracts from complications of rubella and is legally blind. As a child she had access to books on tape and became a voracious reader. She also developed an interest in traditional Cherokee spiritual, medicinal, and cultural practices. Amberstone began to care for her family when she was 12 years old, after her mother contracted cancer.

Amberstone earned her B.A. in Cultural Anthropology and her M.A. in Health Education. However, because of her disability she initially struggled to find work, and worked for a time as a barmaid and go-go dancer. She moved to Canada after falling in love with a man from Manitoba, and to live among indigenous people who practiced their traditional way of life. She has been employed as health researcher and writer of educational materials for the Dene Nation in the Northwest Territories, a writer of cross-cultural awareness workshop material, a teacher and program coordinator of Native arts and crafts, a life skills coach and counsellor, and cook. She has avoided cities most of her life and has lived in “rain forests of the west coast, a tepee in the desert and a small village in Canada’s arctic.”[1]

After government cutbacks in the late 1980s, Amberstone turned to writing. Although without eyesight, her stories come to her in vivid dreams and visions. She was encouraged by her typing instructor to write, and used audio recordings of her dreams to learn typing skills, but it was not until her brother gave her a computer with text-to-speech technology that she was able to begin seriously. She writes primarily speculative fiction and is a member of SF Canada, through which she has co-edited and contributed to their newsletter *Communique*.

Under her Cherokee name Gua Gua La, Amberstone published a two-volume novel, *Renewal: Prophecy of Manu* and *Teoni's Giveaway* (Penticton, B.C. : Theytus Books, 1985-1986). She has published two books under the name Celu Amberston: *Blessings of the Blood: A Book of Menstrual*



*Lore and Rituals for Women* (Victoria, B.C. : Beach Holme, 1991), and *Deepening the Power: Community Ritual and Sacred Theatre* (Victoria, B.C. : Beach Holme, 1995). Under Celu Amberstone, her short story "Refugees" was published in anthologies *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction & Fantasy* (Vancouver : Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004), and *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (Tucson, Ariz. : University of Arizona Press, 2012). Her young adult novel *The Dreamer's Legacy* was published in 2011 (Warton, Ont. : Kecedonce Press).

Amberstone currently resides in Victoria, B.C. near her children and grandchildren.

[1]: <https://kegedonce.com/celu-amberstone.html>

## **Scope and Content**

Fonds documents Celu Amberstone's writing career. Records consist of poetry, playscripts, children's prose, notes for readings, publishing contracts, review clippings, correspondence, and acceptance and rejection letters from publishers and editors. The fonds also includes a proof copy of *The Dreamer's Legacy* by Celu Amberstone, and House of Commons Special Committee on the Disabled and Handicapped publication, "Native Population: Follow-up Report" (1981), which features a profile of Amberstone/Barbara Smith.

## **Source of Title Proper**

Title based on the contents of the fonds.

## **Restrictions**

File 1.13 is restricted for the life of Celu Amberstone.

## **Finding Aids**

Inventory available with series and file level control.

## **Associated Material**

The following bibliographic material has been catalogued in University of Victoria Library:

- Nishnaubaeg Noungom = The first people today (Ann Arbor, Mich. : Harry Macomber, 1975), including poem "Spring Again" by Celu Amberstone/Barb Smith;
- Communique: newsletter of SF Canada, no. 33-36 (Hamilton, Ont. : SF Canada, 2002-2004), co-edited and with contributions by Celu Amberstone.

## **Subject Access Points**

Arts and culture; Authors, Canadian (English); Cultural groups; First nations; Health and social services; Literature; Women



## **Series Level Descriptions and Structure**

### **Series I: Writing by Celu Amberstone – 1970-2011 – 3 cm of textual records / 1 illustration**

Subseries consists of loose or bound manuscripts of poetry, prose, and playscripts, including some pieces which have been published.

<b>File</b>	<b>Title</b>
1.2	Black Crow brothers : juvenile fiction / Barb Smith
1.3	Vera Teray : story idea
1.4	Potlatch of Siselah : play / Barbara Smith
1.5	Rose's spirit journey : play
1.6	Untitled poem – Prayers to life : poetry / Barbara Smith
1.8	Untitled map
1.11	The dreamer's legacy : proof

### **Series II: Publishing and promotional records – 1986-2019 – 1.5 cm of textual records**

Subseries consists of notes for readings, publishing contracts, review clippings, biographical statements, correspondence, and acceptance and rejection letters from publishers and editors.

<b>File</b>	<b>Title</b>
1.1	Correspondence – Reviews – Agreements – Promotional material
1.7	Reading selections from The Dreamer's Legacy
1.9	Story pitches
1.12	Publishing contracts – Receipt
1.13	Restricted

### **Miscellaneous**

<b>File</b>	<b>Title</b>
1.10	Native population: follow-up report



## Inventory

File	Description
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|------|--|
| 1.1  | Correspondence – Reviews – Agreements – Promotional material. -- 1986-2016, chiefly 1986-1995. -- 1 cm of textual records.   |
| 1.2  | Black crow brothers : juvenile fiction / Barb Smith. -- [between 1970 and 1989]. -- 6, 9, 6 p.   |
| 1.3  | Vera Teray : story idea. -- [between 1970 and 1989]. -- 13 p.  |
| 1.4  | Potlatch of Siselah : play / Barbara Smith. -- n.d. -- 42 p.   |
| 1.5  | Rose's spirit journey : play. -- n.d. -- 4, 7, 1, [14], 7 p.   |
| 1.6  | Untitled poem – Prayers to life : poetry / Barbara Smith. -- [between 1970 and 1989]. -- 17 p.   |
| 1.7  | Reading selections from The Dreamer's Legacy. -- [201-]. -- 9, 8 p.  |
| 1.8  | Untitled map. -- n.d. -- 1 illustration.   |
| 1.9  | Story pitches. -- n.d. -- 2 p.   |
| 1.10 | Native population: follow-up report / Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped. -- 1981. -- 69 p. -- ISBN 0662118146. |
| 1.11 | The dreamer's legacy : proof. -- 2011. -- 225 p. -- ISBN 9780978499891.  |
| 1.12 | Publishing contracts – Receipt. -- 1990-1992, 2019. -- 11, 10, 1 p.  |
| 1.13 | Restricted. -- 1990.   |