

CELEBRATING FIVE YEAR'S OF POETRY (2015 - 2020)

Strong Hands Stop Violence

POETRY BOOK
VOLUME V



1971-2021

Ontario Native Women's Association

Chi Múgwetch

Thank you to all the writers who generously shared such beautiful and honest words about an issue that has touched your lives or the lives of someone you know. Your expressions not only help us to continue raising awareness about violence against Indigenous women, but they also give us hope - as for many, the healing journey has begun.



#StrongHandsStopViolence

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)'s *Strong Hands Stop Violence* project raises awareness of violence against women and girls. It includes an annual [Poetry Night](#), an annual [Poetry Book](#), and an ongoing collective [Art Project](#).

Every *United Nations International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women* (November 25), ONWA hosts Poetry Nights across Ontario in support of the #orangetheworld campaign. This event features readings from both emerging and established poets, and live musical performances. It provides an opportunity to create a space where Indigenous women and families can gather and celebrate their shared strength and resiliency.

Submissions from Poetry Night and a community call out are considered for ONWA's annual Poetry Book, which highlights poetry written by Indigenous women. Poems submitted this year, will be published in a Poetry Book released at next year's Poetry Night.

The name *Strong Hands Stop Violence* comes from the Art Project. Participants of Poetry Night are invited to dip their hands in orange and blue paint and press on a canvas to signify standing together to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Art as healing trauma is a strong foundation of the work ONWA does, addressing violence from perspectives rooted in cultural teachings. ONWA is committed to supporting communities and providing hope to those on their healing journey.

onwa.ca/strong-hands-stop-violence

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WHAT IS WHITE?

by Trivena Andy

I used to want to be white

I lived with white families

I wanted to belong

Family pictures felt odd

I was the one brown girl surrounded by a white aura

School was no different

As a kid, I sat in class

Most times surrounded by white

Causing me to wonder

What Would I look like if I had that perfect beach blond hair?

oh...how I longed for that hair

If I were white

Would I go perfect family vacations?

Would I be wearing those nice name brand clothes?

Would I live in a big house with my own bedroom?

Isn't that what white does?

Why couldn't I be that white kid?

I wanted to be seen as equal

I hated my brown skin

Because that is what white sees first

What if my ancestors were white?

Would "Canada" Today be any different for me?

Would the women I love be treated with respect?

Would alcohol consume my people?

At last, could long forgotten promises be fulfilled?

Whiteness....could you stop the hurt of my people?

I need to stop!

I get scared of being brown

White, what do you see?

"Am I just another Indian"

I wish I could drink my water bottle without the stares on the bus

I wish I could walk down the street and feel safe

I want to go shopping without feeling like I am being followed

Could I end up being a statistic?

If I became white

How would I use my privilege?

How would I view my people?

Would I feel like in had the authority to judge?

Would I feel like have power?

Sadly, society strives for that power

That whiteness holds

And we get tricked

But I am learning...

To embrace my brownness

To take pride

Not to feel ashamed

be a role model

....eventually I will love my brownness



White Ribbon

by Bob Manson, *Mankind Warrior and a proud White Ribbon Wearer*

To you who have been abused and hurt at the hands of men
To all who wish it would never happen again

I **see** the results of what men have done
And I know this should never happen to no one

I **hear** your cries and even your silent voice
Because I know you never had a choice

I **feel** the Breaking hearts of sisters and mothers
But also from - sons - fathers - and brothers

For Such abuse hurts every single man too
For all men must live with what fallen men do

We all know that a man has never the right
To hurt and abuse women any day or night

For my the fallen brothers whom I criticize
And on behalf of all men I want to apologize

And please hear my pledge I say here tonight
To never hurt women and see my **Ribbon of White**

For I stand today in solidarity with men and women all
And pledge to help hurt sisters and brothers who fall

I hope my brothers will wear a **White Ribbon** for all to see
And they become the warriors that we all want them to be.

DANCERS IN THE DISTANCE

by Ardelle Sagutcheway

Shades of green tendrils streak across
Beyond the stars
Past the dust
There is dancing in the night sky
'that's all your choomish and kokums' my grandma tells me and
holds me closer
'don't whistle at them, they might reach down and grab you'
My feet are firmly planted but my spirit dances
The ancestors bust their moves across the sky
The truth? in my dreams, I join them
The truth? My long hair reaches for mother earth
'our hair connects us' they whisper
They keep me alive, well, honest, humble, strong
The fires consumed us all yet we remain peaceful
Woven into a braid-our long hair becomes strength
A form of active resistance-a piece of the ancestors never lost
A part of us never forgotten
There is a noozhis whose hair will never be braided again
A princess in a false kingdom with a fake crown
'sorry' is not enough anymore
they succeeded, the whispers faded
They did kill the indian in the indian child
Once upon a time and frozen forever
A young brown girl-aboriginal-native-indian-first nations-whatever
She whistles at the northern lights, pain leaking from her soul
The burden becomes too much for her to bear, too heavy
The princess stares at the night sky, enthralled
She longs to dance with the old people forever
'One last time' she tells no one

COLOURS

by Juhlyza Baldelomar

(published in TDSB's Urban Voices 2016 edition)

most days I am grey
and somewhere in between
I am a thick blanket of clouds draped over a big city
and the ghost of erased pencil lead after so many mistakes
neither dark, nor light
I am the middle ground
i am grey

but some days I am yellow
bright and spontaneous
I am the sun warming the ground
and the taxicab weaving through familiar streets
with unfamiliar people
cautious steps lead to impulsive leaps
I am yellow

occasionally I am red
I am sharp and angry
I am cruel words and smashed glass
a stone cold wall surrounds my thoughts and
empathy is left shivering out in the rain
selfish and unforgiving
I am red

more often than I would like to admit
I am blue
trapped in my head and alone
I am worn denim and sleeping pills
a night sky filled with holes and
blue crayola crayons
I am sky blue, navy, indigo and royal

but above all I am grey
I am smoke from the boy who gave up
and the taste of ash that lingers long after
his cigarette has burned out
I am infinite and complicated
an oasis in a wasteland
I am the middle ground
I am constant
I am grey



FOR MY SISTERS

by Edna King

Dedicated to Missing and Murdered First Nations Women

October/November 2014

Born of flesh and of fire, breathe of life, heartbeat of a Nation.
Beauty had surrounded you and your significance to mankind.
Born of innocence, sincerity and irony,
you managed to play a major role in the social order of time.

No one really knows why it happens,
Something dark lurked behind you, stalked you
or just snatched you from the streets.
The results are often devastating,
You fought, you prayed, you cried, and you called for help.
You were demoralized, victimized.

Mothers, fathers, aunties, uncles, sisters, brothers
cousins, neighbors and volunteers wanted to help you.
Someone searched for you, someone wanted to save you.
Someone cried for you, someone still cries for you.

And in the end you slipped away.

You may have felt alone
but sisters everywhere whisper your name.
Moccasins walked for you, vamped by loving hands.
Butterflies were flown for you, candles lit on cold and cool nights,
and songs were drummed and sang in your honour.

Your spirit was meant to be free
not captured, beaten down or left to die.
Your spirit has spoken to many
and we have heard.

We have heard.

UNTITLED

by Joceline Noblis

Our eyes sees so much
Our dreams says so much
Our hearts feels so much
Our souls know so much
Miigwetch for these messages

Untitled

by Annette Pateman

Oh Canada
That came from your air
And soil
My blood now in the ground
And drained and bled away
By yet an unknown hand

crazy making colonialism

by Jana Rae Yerxa

(first published: *The Root Zine- For Women of Colour by Women of Colour*)

Sometimes I feel like I'm dying
Not physically dying
Not suicidal, like I am going to
hurt myself dying
But dying nonetheless

I struggle here

In this place, stuck with YOU,
you make me feel crazy
The ultimate shape shifter with a
countless army
So demanding
Soul sucking
Exhausting

Carrying a burden of proof
Violence masked as questions
Violence masked as silence
So heavy

Moments getting the best of me
I become internally filled with
self-doubt
A constant replay of my
interactions with you

Lying to myself
Lying to survive

The colonial lies that we tell
ourselves
If only we have a positive attitude
An attitude of gratitude
An unending well of forgiveness
A multitude of thank yous
If we pray more and stop thinking
so much
All will be well

If only...

But if it isn't, the defect is with us,
with me
It's a constant tug of war
Stop being me - So others feel
comfortable with me
- Keep being me
So at least I can live in my own
skin
The energy it takes to just be...
ME

It's the spaces
Infested with the complacency
and comfort
That colonial mindsets breed
The isolation it breeds
For those who do not conform

I left here once
A last ditch effort
Most thought it was just part of
an educational journey
But it was so much more...
The stakes were high

I needed to know if I was off
track...
if I was crazy
Turns out I'm NOT
There are many more like me
There were many before me
And there will be many after me

I'm back here now
Still refusing to stop being me

You see, I was not me for so long
I'm NOT willing to go back to the
state of un-me-ness

So I continue to speak
To ask questions
To try to connect in a way that
brings me to the surface

- Despite the hostility

My Anishinaabe womanhood
Misunderstood and attacked
Shamed and labelled
Called cruel and unkind
"Angry Indian Woman!"
"Angry Indian Woman!"

Chip,
Chip,
Chipping
Away at the essence of who I am
That is what it's like
A slow, ever-patient death

YOU point at me to surrender
All that my ancestors fought,
died and prayed for
MY FIRE WILL NOT BURN OUT
MY FIRE WILL NOT BURN OUT
MY FIRE WILL NOT BURN OUT
MY FIRE WILL NOT BURN OUT

It's the spaces
Infested with the complacency
and comfort
That colonial mindsets breed
The isolation it breeds
For those who do not conform

AGAIN

by Kayla Hill

You tell me that it wont happen again
As you caress my face
Black and blue cheeks
Blood in my mouth is what taste

You tell me it wont happen again
Say harmful words and hurtful names
Putting me down
Making me the one to blame

You tell me it wont happen again
Spending all of our nickles and dimes
Satisfying your needs and ignoring our bills
Our heat is going to go out; Were running out of time

You tell me it wont happen again
Forcing your body against my will
Telling me to stop fighting
That you're doing it for pleasure, you're doing it for thrill

I tell you it wont happen again
The pain that you put me through
That I am shedding this life
And beginning a new

That I will no longer live in fear
I will no longer hide
I will speak my truth
This I have come to decide

I choose to end this path
This cycle of violence
So that another woman
Wont have to suffer in silence

That she will know that this is wrong
It is not okay
That theres light at the end of the tunnel
She doesn't have to stay

There is help
Freedom and life
Should she choose
To stop the pain tonight.



Ancestor Speaks

by Linda Lee Kroeker (Haida Gwaii)

ELDER SPEAKS.

There is a place I once knew,
I hold it where it belongs, in my soul.
There is a time I remember well.
I place it in all I do.
It was a time when people walked proud.
The dance was in their every step.
And the song, in all their being.
A friendship was not given lightly.
Nor were the words of praise.
In this time, no words for respect, just done.
It was a place of honesty, and hard work.
Family was sacred then, children a gift from the creator.
And in this place, as seasons changed, so did the people.
Ahhh what a place it was!
Where is it now?
Here... in my heart.
I will give it to you?

OH HOW I HATED PAYDAYS

by Roberta Wesley

As I stood there still, at the foot of the door, my eyes full of tears, my heart full of fear, water flowing everywhere , people slipping here and there, everyone was in another world , once again my father was beating my mother in front of my eyes, bent over on the kitchen counter , I felt helpless as I stood at the foot of the door frozen in my body , screaming for it too stop from the bottom of my lungs , I saw my mom feeling around on the counter on her back trying too reach for something too get the big monster of her chest, then suddenly she grabbed a knife and stabbed him in the chest , the room went silent as he fell too the floor , the fear in my mother's eye, but yet she was free from being brutally beaten, oh how I hated what they called paydaysall I recall is riding in the back seat of the truck watching my father gasping for air , praying we will make it too the hospital , and that I wouldn't lose my mom , for I was a true witness of violence against woman and often wondered what my mother did too deserve to be treated like this as she served my father like a king on a daily basis , oh how I hated paydays

HIGHWAY OF TEARS

by Sarah Brown-Dunkley (2015)

Following your footsteps
Down the highway of tears.
Watching them fade,
Slowly disappear.

What is your name?
Where are you from?
Who are your people?
What have you become?

A faceless name for some;
A nameless face for others.
A stat on the radio, notch on the belt,
According to some brothers.

But here I am
Looking down that road.
Hearing your story,
Watching it unfold

You are a daughter,
Mother, sister and friend.
A niece, a granddaughter,
And loved so much 'til the end

Snatched away before your time,
A future stolen away;
A beautiful young life,
Everyone wishing you could stay.

These are our women,
Our girls and our friends;
These are our future.
Let's start to make amends.

Too many gone;
Too many taken.
End the violence now,
Hearts keep on breakin'.

See all of the beauty
That once lived in their eyes.
Feel all of the pain,
That's left dying inside.

Not just in their family and friends,
But in a country and nation.
A world silencing the issues
Won't help with salvation

We will stand tall,
No longer hiding our face.
We will release all the pain
You left in our space.

Our women are strong,
Whether they are lost or found;
They are the foundation
That holds up our ground.

Stop looking down your nose,
Stop walking away.
Open your eyes
And help them to stay.

We are not here
To be stolen or broken;
We are not here
To be an Indian token.

I look at my girls
And put it in perspective;
Whether it's them or me
We are all subjective.

I will not follow your footsteps
Down the highway of tears.
I sadly watch you fade away,
But we will not disappear.

LIVING AFTER

by Naomi Abotossaway (2016)

I can go on, I am a survivor that is me,
Time will help to fix my heart, ultimately it will mend,
My journey on this day begins anew, you will see,
For I am strong, this I am told, beginning of the end.

I am moving forward in life and you cannot be in it,
I have begun working at removing you forever more,
It will take time, this I do know, much longer than a minute,
I vowed I would do this when I finally closed that door.

I will go on living after as I move forward and keep busy each day,
Looking forward to a brand beginning, life before me to unfold,
In this world, now my safe harbour, you cannot have your way,
I am now in control, as I learn to become more bold.

No more scenes of abuse, unkind words will I ever hear from you,
Go away from my world; I am working at caring no longer,
Time is reaching out to me, gladly accept in all that I do,
My withdrawal from your world is making me stronger.

YOU LEARNED TO HURT ME

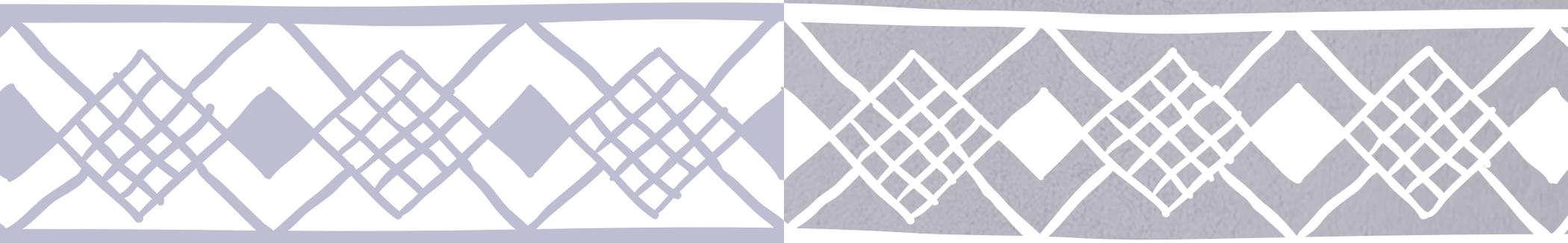
by Naomi Abotossaway (2016)

It is not right to play with someone's heart,
To give another hope that a future might be,
Promising beginnings right from the start,
Because in the end, one broken heart to see.

Having no doubt as the world continues to spin,
Turning a person's love which might have been,
That you can learn and really not win,
Letting others know, for the truth will be seen.

You took my heart and gave promises from you,
Then in a blink of an eye hurt me so bad,
That dreams I thought would come true,
Would never come to be seen or had.

Let us say Goodbye and we will not bother,
To remember you learned to hurt me,
Knowing we will find a new love, another,
To hold one's heart and true love to be.



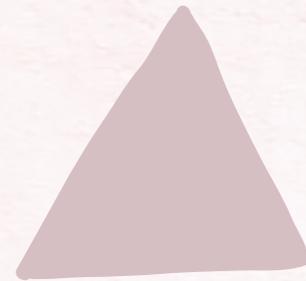
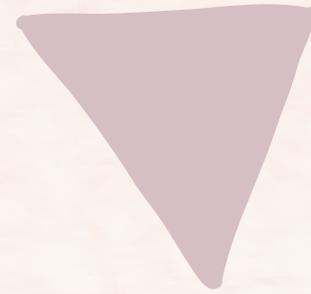
The Stolen Feminine

by Nikki Auten (July 5, 2015)

The stolen feminine
Generations
of women
lost upon years of enslavement.
The sacred womb
Mothers love
Protection
from the devastation,
damnation,
domination
of man.
Fear
instilled in the heart
of her,
mother, daughter, sister
hear me now
aunties and grandmothers
cry your tears
scream your pain
mourn
your stolen feminine.

The stolen feminine
erased
from the stories
written for glory
of the dominant man.
Controlling
the future of her
mindless,
defenseless,
careless,
needing man
to protect her
as she fights
each day
to survive within
the grim
situation she lives
with him
holding on for dear life
to what little he's left
of her
stolen feminine.

The stolen feminine,
regaining power;
no longer blaming;
reclaiming power!
Finding
the truth within,
voice to speak.
Connecting
Body, mind and spirit.
Manifesting
the sacred space,
emotion,
putting life into motion.
Rewriting history
as she raises up
the next generation.
Forgiveness,
ready to fight.
Power of love,
words her weapon,
gun at the ready.
Commanding
respect,
standing
together with the one
who stole
her sacred feminine.



Shadow Man

by Edna H. King

It never should have happened.
She hadn't really wanted to work,
not at that hour, so late into the
evening.

It never should have happened.
Not during her mourning period.
Her best friend was buried just
weeks earlier, but still he insisted
on visiting her through dreams
and visions.

Sometimes a girl has to work,
even at fourteen years of age,
to help provide for her family
and for herself. Money's scarce
in northern communities, you
know.

It never should have happened
Big sister had been late picking
her up. It was dark, and scary
that night, and those visions
just wouldn't go away.

It never should have happened.
Out of the darkness he came,
Shadow man, in his expensive
clothing,
his rich cologne and the bitter
scent of
alcohol on his breath.

It never should have happened.

Shadow man,
Dark shadow man,
Scary shadow man,
Dangerous shadow man.
Slapping, pinching, punching,
hurting, pushing, pulling.

Shadow man, please don't hurt,
Shadow man, please stop!
Shadow man, stop!
STOP!

It never should have happened.
That's what her rescuer had said.
That's what her mother had said.
That's what her sister had said.

It never should have happened,
Who would believe a fourteen
year old girl?
The bruises and cuts on her face
and on her body didn't lie.
Her emotional scars didn't lie.
Her nightmares didn't lie.
Her shattered innocence didn't
lie, either.

Who would believe a fourteen
year old girl?
Not the Police, not the
Social Worker, not the Judge.
Even the community's doctor had
failed her,
But money's scarce in northern
communities.

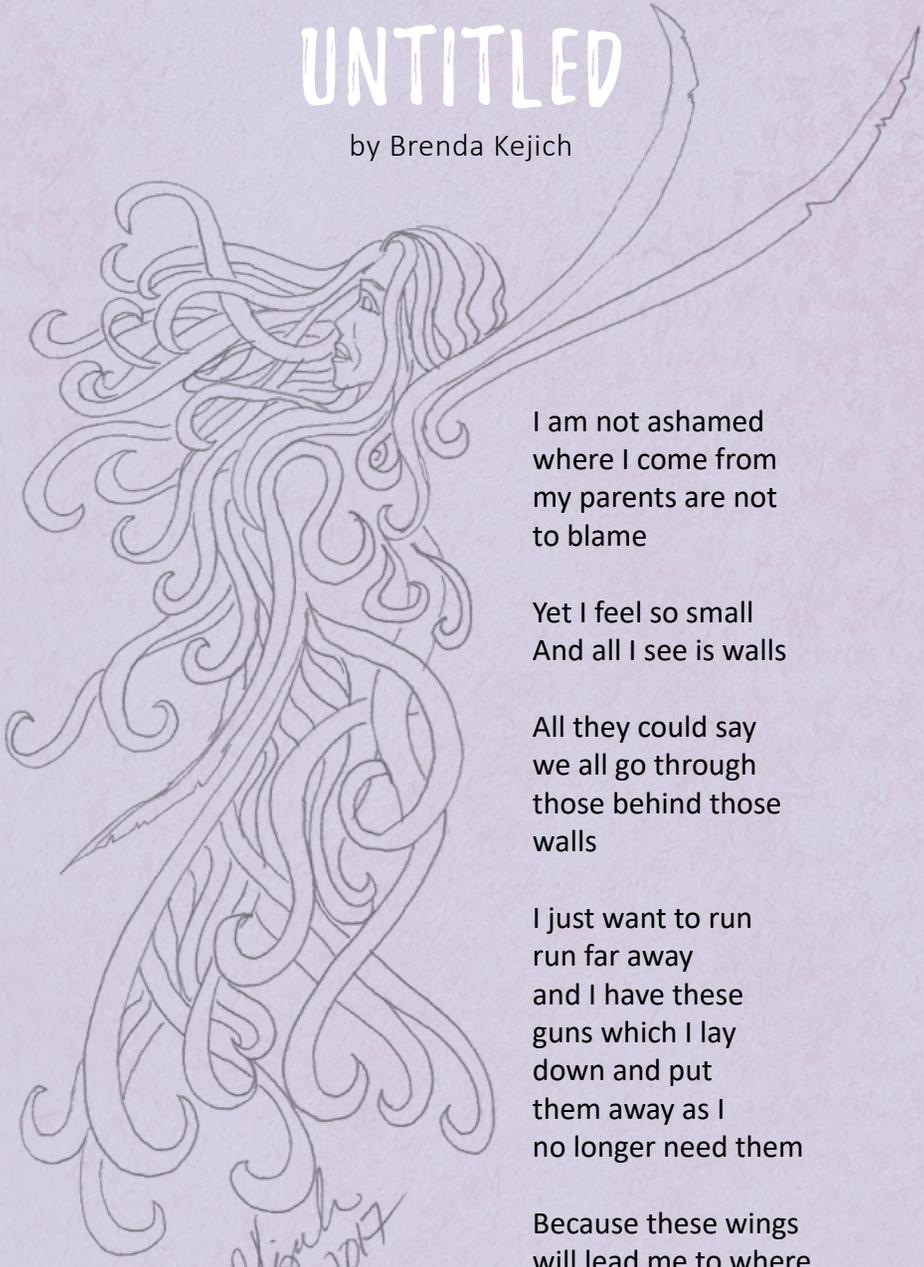
Despite her painful memories she
shone with a
strong spirit that probably kept
her from going insane.
A wise woman once said to me,
"Native women are strong
women,"
and she displayed that strength,
and resilience.

When I last saw her last someone
was taking her to the airport,
she carried the gifts her family
would treasure.
When I seen her last she smiled
bravely at me
clutching the tiny medicine bag
she wore around her neck.

She was going home, back to
school,
back to her part-time job,
because in northern communities
money's scarce.
Whatever you do, and wherever
you are, keep smiling.
It'll tell the world you're a
survivor and you're going to
be alright.

UNTITLED

by Brenda Kejich



I am not ashamed
where I come from
my parents are not
to blame

Yet I feel so small
And all I see is walls

All they could say
we all go through
those behind those
walls

I just want to run
run far away
and I have these
guns which I lay
down and put
them away as I
no longer need them

Because these wings
will lead me to where
I am able to fly

*Brenda Kejich
Nov. 2017*

DREAMS

by Jana Rae Yerxa

(first published: *Impact: Colonialism In Canada* (2016))

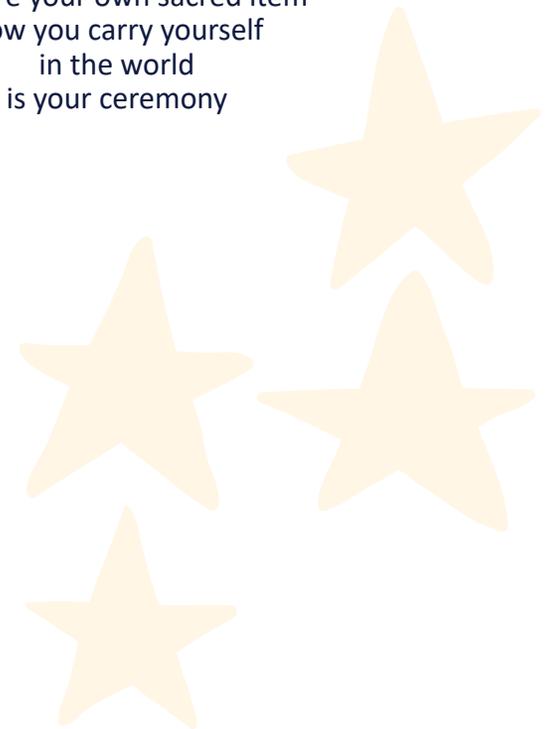
Imagine
if we saw one another
as sacred
treating each other this way

If we honoured our relationships
to one another and ourselves
as much as we are taught
to honour and respect protocols, items and ceremonies

Imagine

Allow yourself to remember
what many seem to forget

You are your own sacred item
how you carry yourself
in the world
is your ceremony



Redwood

music and lyrics by Audra Santa

Make me a tall tree
Like a redwood stretching to the sky
I'll dream impossible things
That will outlast
Outlast this time

How long, how long, how long

Make me a tall tree
With roots that grow way beyond the soil
I'll stand a thousand years
I will outlast
Outlast this time

How long, how long, how long

With branches holding up the heavens
Deep roots way beyond the soil
I'll keep holding it together, holding
Faith found amongst the toil
Time passes ring upon ring upon ring
Drink deep the well is full
Drought has broke with lashes of water pooling
Birds fly beyond their call

How long, how long, how long

Make me a tall tree
Like a Redwood



Audra Santa is a singer-songwriter and musician who desires to create “art beyond the music”, curating art and experiences to enable people to connect to the hidden parts of themselves. After spending 10 years in Australia, Audra has returned to Canada and is finally pursuing her art and music with abandon.

Audra first performed the song, Redwood, at the ONWA's Poetry Night for the UN International Day to End Violence Against Women (Nov 25, 2017) where the Grandmother Earth Dress, a red jingle dress, was unveiled to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. She sang Redwood as a prayer that we all may leave a legacy beyond our time on this earth.

The album art (seen above), was created by Jordis Duke, artist, from a vision she saw during that first performance.

The end for both of us

by Rachel Seguin

I'm lying helpless in a puddle of blood, once again I've been beaten and bruised
My last tear trickles down the side of my face, for the last time I have taken this abuse

My eyes close with heaviness as I slowly slip away
Thinking to myself "no more to endure", for killing me finally freed me today

I watch from above as you lean over me, your tears flooding both my cheeks
Once a violent and frightful man, now you sit pathetic and weak

You scream out how you are sorry, realizing what you have done
My death wouldn't be before you, if this violence hadn't begun

You now regret putting your hands on me, trying to take back all of the wrong
Nothing will reverse this last moment, by singing the "I'm sorry" song

In the distance the sound of sirens, the neighbours have called on us once again
Feel your stomach tie up in knots, this to you is an unfamiliar pain

The fear that I had felt with every blow, either physical or from words
This fear you are feeling you bastard, it isn't half of what you deserve

As the racing cars round the corner, all of a sudden a pounding at the door
This is how I felt inside every time I begged and pleaded...no more!

Thrown to the floor, knee in your back – limbs twisted and pulled
Like something that's no longer good enough or remotely useful

They cover me up with my last protective shield
You will never again look in my eyes, your hands shake – you've sealed this deal

You're cuffed to be taken being strangled at your wrists
Feel that tightness, like you can't breathe - this is a feeling I won't miss

You'll stand to tell your side to 12 strangers known as a jury
You'll try to convince and justify, how I was the cause of your fury

These 12 strangers will listen to your words, be the ones to determine your fate
You will be made a prisoner in this world, like for years you did to me your wife and
soul mate

Grey etched walls and steel barred windows, cold cell blocks and a single sheet bed
By killing me this choice you made for yourself, your life too has come to an end.

HIT ME ... HIT YOU

by Rachel Seguin

You said "I'd never hit you", then the Jekyll and Hyde flip
Some things were said that you didn't like, so fattened both my lips

Flowers said you're sorry, and that to me you would be true
And then again anger sets you off and you beat me black and blue

The bruises on the outside can be covered with layered clothes
But the bruises on the inside are the ones that hurt the most

You thought you took all of me by lowering my self esteem
One thing you failed to take from me was the strength I found in between

I stand today as a women vowing to no longer be a punching bag
And strongly above my head I surrender my white flag

Not to surrender to you as your believe it is in your power
Powerless is what you are for hitting me makes you a coward

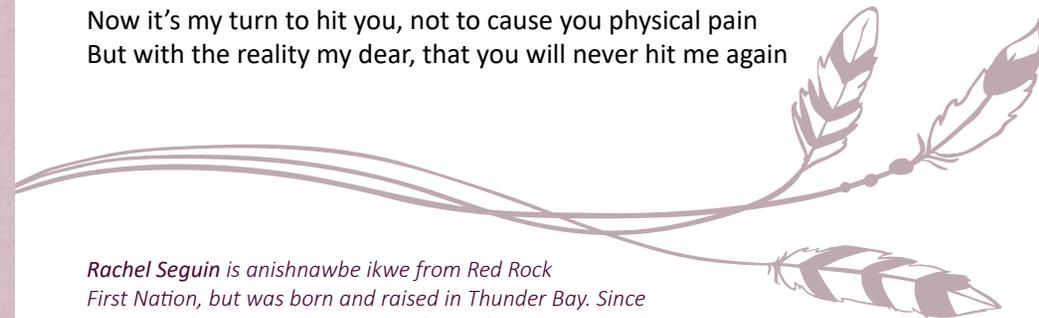
I am surrendering for all the women who didn't have the strength to get out
I surrender for all the children who wiped their mother's tears while she'd pout

No more keeping it behind closed doors, hiding all the abuse in silence
Hushed whispers can't be heard to break the cycle of violence

To my abuser I thank you for one thing and that's for giving me a choice
One thing that you beat out of me was the will to use my voice

Now it's my turn to hit you, not to cause you physical pain
But with the reality my dear, that you will never hit me again

*Rachel Seguin is anishnawbe ikwe from Red Rock
First Nation, but was born and raised in Thunder Bay. Since
her teens she has used poetry as a form of healing and to express
herself, but never shared them with anyone. In her adult years she was gifted
a journal to keep her poems in one place and to continue to write, she was told
"those are your words, own them and share them".*





From Understanding, Still Comes Pain

by Nichole Barkman-Lands (Langdon)

A wise woman once told me *“even though we understand these things intellectually, it doesn’t mean it still doesn’t hurt”*.

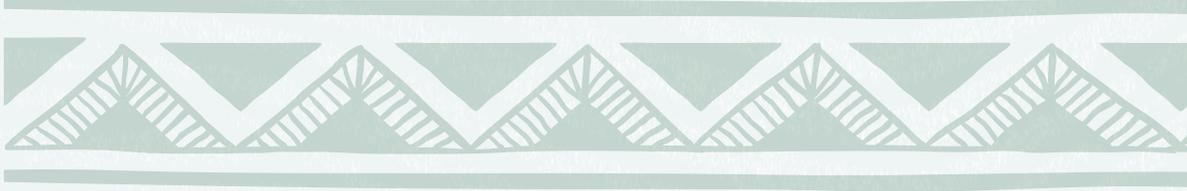
I thought to myself, “who decides what mental toughness and strength is? Who decides we must ALWAYS hold our head high when our hearts are in the dirt?”

Sometimes, as an Anishinaabekwe my mind spins and my body aches. Sometimes, I feel like there isn’t an out to this colonial violence. Sometimes, I feel like I’m constantly exposed to the violence of this colonial structure. I can’t help it but I introvert.

At times, I need to retreat for my own sanity. I need to protect and guard my spirit. I need to disengage from the violence that feels like is forever going on around me. I need to avert.

When you’re a woman of colour you deal with violence’s sometimes beyond your understanding. At times as, a woman of colour this could make you unsure of yourself. I do know for sure as a woman of colour living in this colonial world, I will not leave untainted and unhurt.

Today is one of those days for me, but I know these days they don’t last forever. These days of mental torment may sting and scar but I know we come from greatness, I know we come from resiliency, everyday our ancestors they prayed for me and for you.



I have to remind myself. I have to take time for my human self. I am my own idea of strength, resiliency, and toughness. I have to remind myself to cry, to pray, to gift my ancestors, to smudge, to do me, I’m constantly needing to renew.

Even though the pain from understanding oppression is there, and the pain it may always lie underneath, I know I have to push through. I know my kookum, my nimamaa they didn’t raise no quitter. So, I pick my heart up off that ground and I say “Kwe, you got dreams to pursue.”

I have to remind myself that colonial attacks on my nish-hood is going to be a never-ending battle in my lifetime. I need to remind myself that one day understanding and coping with this violence will get easier. One day I will come through, after all from the depths of this colonial violence, from the depths of this assimilative structure; here I stand still a proud Anishinaabekwe, and from the ash here my spirit fire grew

BREAKING THE SILENCE

by Timothy J. Boulanger

Stop!

Why Are You Hitting Me?
This Is Life, We Are All Free

I Am A Woman
I Am Proud

Stop!
Stop It Now
I'm Strong, I Don't Back Down

I'll Look You In The Eye
While The Police Drag Your Sorry Ass To Jail
"I Will Not Lie "

Bravery
Why I'm Stepping Up

My Eyes Are Sore
From Crying

My Eyes
Will Shine Again

Finally
I'm Stepping Free

Breaking The Silence

Untitled

by Anonymous

"Slap" ... the blow grazes my cheek
Bulging eyes burn into my fear
Hot breath propels menacing words

I crawl into a corner of my mind,
my windowless cell
which contains my dread

Breath ... Breathe.

Dry-eyed I weep tears
Which bathe the face within...
And turn a brave smile on the world.

HANDS

by Kyla Kokokopence

I do not understand how you still
call yourself a man,
even after you laid your hands on a
young girl who has your blood in her veins.
And I cannot comprehend the fact that my heart
Was left for you, because the first daddy I knew
Abandoned me due to the fact that he could
Not handle the truth. The truth showed
that he was not worthy,
but that did not make you any more better.
I was once a young girl, so pure,
But you entered my world and tore it to pieces.
You came in, and shattered my skies,
and crumbled my feeble walls.
You left me standing bare in the flames
that burned my childhood passions and dreams.
To this day, I still have to remind myself that
you can no longer interfere, but I was left
with these scars that trigger my many fears.

And among the mix, you are still very much here-
within the darkest corners of my mind.
Your hands can still sear my skin, and your breath
can still make me tremble in the worst ways.
The fact that you still haunt me leaves me feeling
so utterly hopeless, because you should
no longer matter. But here I am, drunk and
impure, and so terribly trapped by
the ghost of you.
And within your cold and cruel
hands, my heart still remains,
but it's in pieces that can no longer
be seen by the human eye.
And now I cannot fully trust any other man,
because I can still feel your touch,
but in his hands.



The Aftermath

by Kyla Kokokopence

She says to me,
“You are an abused woman”,
I don’t want to be. I didn’t ask for this.
I know that no woman ever does,
but why is it reality?
Why is it normal for women to be
used, abused, and abandoned?
Why are so many girls left without father figures?
Is it that hard to love a little being that
you created? Or, to just simply tell her
how she should be treated and loved in the future?
I never knew how it felt to be treated well,
and here I am- used, abused,
and left sitting here asking myself where I went wrong.
I can only imagine how every other woman feels.
The fear they felt, the tears they shed,
their pleas for mercy. The way their children sat
quietly in their bedrooms, wanting so badly to help her-

but fearing the outcome of a ferocious drunken
father on rampage.
And when her mother finally finds out, she’ll breakdown
as she sees the heartbreak in her birth-giver’s eyes.
Apology after apology, fearing that she fucked up,
although she was the abused one.
My mother held me as I wept,
she ran her fingers through my hair.
She never said “I told you so”,
she only said,
“I experienced that too, Boo.
You’re worth much more than you think.
One day, you’ll realize that,
and you’ll laugh because karma
will get each and every one of them.
You’ll rise above it all,
and love yourself more
than anyone else ever could.



DON'T PIMP MY LAND!

by Dan Ducker

I love our Land, She does so much.

With you, I have seen a different story

Did you love your land only for what she could do for
you?

You felt rewards when you dirtied your hands and sweat
over hoe

She made strong bountiful plants of corn, wheat, peas
and beans

She fed your cattle, hogs, chicken and lamb

While you commanded... and she demanded praise for
your work

And then you stripped her of her treasures and energy
Ordaining yourselves with jewels and Power

You were well, and felt rich and rewarded

You worked hard to make her what she is

You compartmentalized and classified her

You surrounded her in barbed shackles

She was good for - this here, and that there

You stole her

You sold her

You ditched her, drained her and injected stimulants in
her veins when she could no longer comply.

You applied ointments to kill her diseases as the cure
filtered through her skin and poisoned her blood.

Her body is blemished with you tumours.

When she was tired, you deserted her, buried her under
concrete, dissected her and transplanted her organs
to the back yards of suburbia.

You forced her, failed her and tried to rehabilitate her.
She looks tired and strung out.

You look perverse

In my land I am free, but bound to Her

We navigate life together, arm in arm

I do not know what She wants, but She speaks to me

I hear Her pulse and feel the flow of Her pure blood

Her blood gives me life, strength and spirit

I know when things are not right, She acts different

Vibrant with fire!

She changes, and then so must I.

We have lived this way since time immemorial

Working together in love and humility

My land is while, functioning as Herself and I find my
place in Her life.

This is how I respect Her

I see you coming, your eyes are wide

Opportunities abound!

Please don't pimp my land

UNTITLED

by Anonymous

Let the path you walk on
bring you happiness, joy, and peace.
This is a nice pen.



Remember Me

by Donna Simon

I'm so Scared there won't
be anything left for me to say
or to do to leave my MARK.

How will my children's, children's,
children's, children's, children's,
children's, children Know that
I was Even here.

Let me make this clear it is me
that I want them to know that came
before them & why.

I ask is it important that I tried.

7 Generations after me know who
I was so they can stand proud
and Tall & Humbled & filled
with Grace as I hope to
be while I love in this time
& place.



The journey

by Verlin Lloyd James

Daylight peaks through the trees this very dawn,
As night goes way, as the family wakes.
For the Manitou, maker of all greets
The boy as he leaves the bark covered home.
"Shomis, where did my father go just now?"
The bright eyed boy asks the grandfather there
As he too, exits the bark covered home.

To him, his Shomis replies with kindness;
"He is doing what is required of him,
As being born Anishnawbe is good
And Just...He is making an offering
To the maker of all, to the mother
Beneath our feet before our journey's walk"...

To this through, dark locks, through raven eyed sight
The boy, eyes abright, asks him, his Shomis
As he adds tinder to the fire began
By the boy's father that very dawn.
"What offering, and why to the mother?"

The grandfather thinks while the kettle boils...
"A long time ago, when the world was young,
When we traveled with our brother, the wolf...
All beings born were once, family then.
No matter how great and small, all were loved
By the mother below, she who gives us life."

"Now, at the time, Father Sky loved the earth;
She, who lives beneath our feet and gives us life...
And like a young man with a young woman.
There is a time, where they learn how to live.
Once, they marry and walk the trail as one."

"Father Sky in the early dawn one day,
As he covered the earth with his blanket,
As he kept her warm and their little ones.
He thought with joy as he heard their children
Below as they awoke and offered them.
They, their mother and their father above...
The honour that all should show to each other."

"Now, he, Father Sky saw in the deep
In the darkness, once the Grandfather sleeps.
A falling Manitou, one from the start
Of when the world began, he asked him then..
'Elder, from where do you travel this day?
Will you stop and rest and meet my beloved?'
Nothing was the reply from the elder."

"But, as he neared, Father Sky thought he was
A Bahgek, a spirit who roams the night..."

"Then, as he looked closer the journeyed one
Was a Windego, come to devour all."



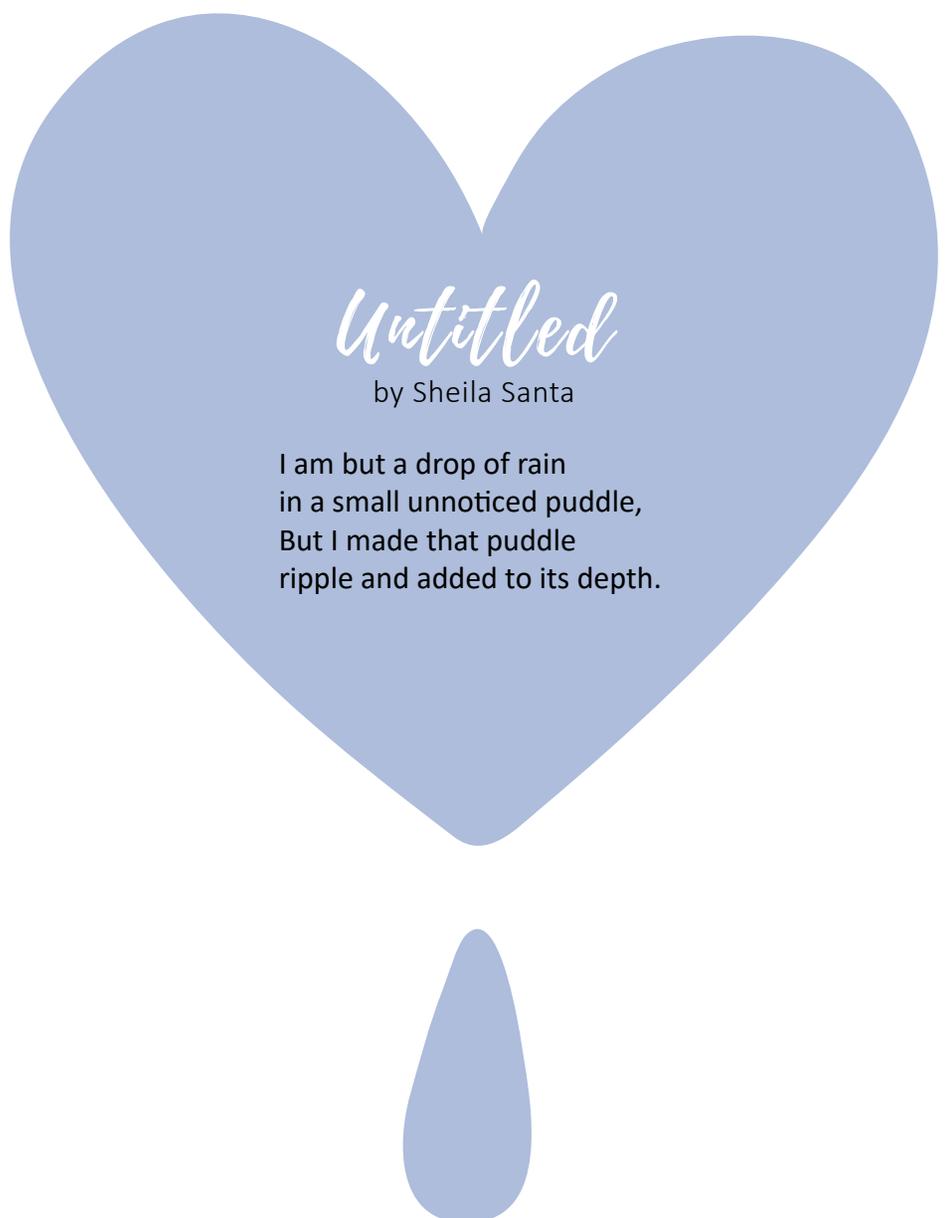
The kettle boiled as the little boy
Sat amidst the spruce branches as his heart
Thumped and thumped in the early winter dawn...
While his hand reached for his wooden rifle...

“Shomis, what did Father Sky do to him,
The Windego so near his family?”

His grandfather then said as tea was placed
In the kettle...”Being Anishnawbe
Is a privilege and an Honour born.
You carry the duties given you by birth
And the dodem, which I’ve given your father.
Is yours to uphold, you are to live life
As Father Sky, for that dawn he loved her
His wife, the mother who grants us life...
And he protected her, and did battle
With the Windego come to devour all.”

“That is what your father is doing now...
He is Father Sky, and his role is nigh.”

Verlin Lloyd James is a poet from Mishi Sakahiganing (McDowell Lake First Nation) and is from the clan of the Little Cranes. He is a former US Marine, and was raised in the traditional manner of his people the Anishnawbe.



Untitled

by Sheila Santa

I am but a drop of rain
in a small unnoticed puddle,
But I made that puddle
ripple and added to its depth.



Blueberry

Collective Mindfulness Poem
from Poetry Night 2018 - Thunder Bay

Close your eyes
Put a berry in your mouth
One word

Tattoo
Awaken
Explosive
Jubilant
Sour
Sweet
Fresh
Bittersweet
Tart

Take a moment
Appreciate the little things
Even blueberries

Dear self

by Brooke Statton

Dear self,

Here is a gentle reminder...

You are a warrior. There is nothing you can not handle. You are deserving. You are worth it. Your scars have healed beautifully. You are not done yet. You are still becoming and who you have already become.... she is sacred.

Worship her, water her.

Bloom. Let go. Replant and bloom again.

There is so much love and understanding in the spaces of change.

Remain soft.

Remain open.

Grow!



The Calling

by Jan B Waboose

I am Woman
I am Anishinaabe
But.....
I am sad
I am lonely
I am broken
I am lost
I cry

At the river's edge I sit
Where the river's mist is like my
tears
I run my fingers over hard pebbles
My hand clenches in a fist
Holding tight, squeezing at
Mother Earth
Not wanting to let her go.
I cry

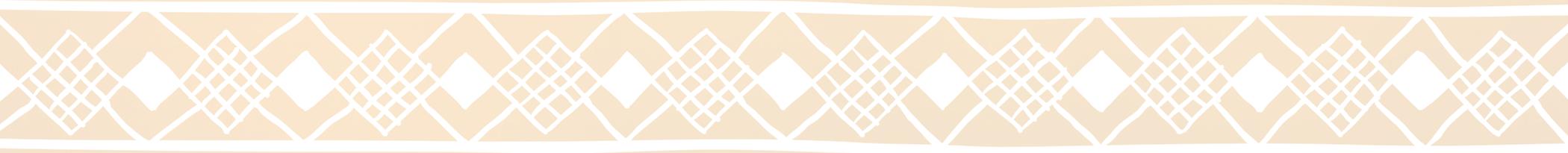
"Who is there?"
"Who is there to help me?"
"Can anyone hear me?"
"Can anything see me?"
Help ease my sadness
Help ease my pain
Help find my way again
"Is anyone listening?"

As I sit at the river's edge
I smell the damp of the water
I watch the fingers of the currents
pull at the sand
Like clearing the way for my
thoughts, cleaning my
emotions
I feel the hands of the sun
blanketing my cold body with
warmth
It is good

I close my eyes
I hear the fanning of Eagles arms
moving in circles around me
On the wind is the smell of sweet
grass
Filling my mind with gentle
memories
In the still distance I hear Birds'
song
The faint laughter of children

The Calling, of strong voices of
women
All calling my name
Strong Anishinaabe women
Stand in a Circle
Hands outstretched
Beckoning for me to join
The Circle of Strength
Circle of Life
Circle of Love

The wind dries my tears
The sun warms my heart
The Eagles arms hold me
Show me the way to the Healing
Circle
The open arms of my sisters
I will find my way again
I am loved.



BROKEN PENCIL

by Linda Lee Kroeker (Haida Gwaii)

Its broken.
Cant be fixed.
Must make do with the change.
Take the best part,
mould it into a illusion of whole.
A little more time,
whole lot more effort.
In the end, worth the strain.
But, what if I take all the pieces?
After all, it once was whole.
Hold it together with bridges,
of hope, strength, and love.
It would be whole, again.
With an individuality of its own.
No illusions, no missed pieces.
Maybe, it wasn't broken to begin with

Super Woman

by Linda Lee Kroeker (Haida Gwaii)

I had a dream once,
that I could soar over despair
that it would be I who would show the way.

But then dishes got dirty.
And the rigours of my life took over.

I had a thought once.
That I would be able to defeat injustice,
that it would be I who would put the on the tights and cape
and save the deprived.

But then the children got to squabbling
and the responsibility of my existence took over.

I had a vision once.
I saw content and happiness throughout the universe,
that it would be I who would begin the process.

But then my man came in the door,
and the duties of my life took over.

Where is that child who dreamed big dreams?
Where is that teenager who thought anything is possible?
Where is that woman whose aged visions kept the fire burning?

They are still in me.
Quiet though they may be.
But in the right time and place they will appear again.

I have a hope now,
that I will conquer fear.
That it will be I who steps over that last hurdle
to show me the way.

Dark Forest

by Kenneth Rubangakene (Native Acoli)

Ojone kaka-na
What a darkest blow?

I'm a woman
You are a man

Firewood find its rest
On my back

Babies find their rest
On my back

You feel loved
When I carry you
On my warm chest

But still you say
I don't care.

Ojone awobe twa

Come
Let's cry together

Come
And let us mourn together
The death of *cwara me amara*

The death of my prince
And King of *Painata*

The ash that was spilt
By great *Mac*.

Ojone lutwa

Gang ini dong
Is utterly dead

Close the door
With "*oryang*" thorns,

For my prince
The heir of *Kom ker*
Me Painata
Is lost.

For all the young *coo*
Me kaka-wa
Have perished
In the wilderness

And the fame *me gang wa*
That once blazed
Like *leb mac*
In moonlight
Is gone.

Ojowa

It's now like *yweyo me agiki*
Of a dying old

There is no even
One single *woda*
Left.

The entire *Painata*
Have fallen into
li cing
War captives
And slaves

Ento twero bedo ni
One of our boys
Escaped with his life

Twero bene bedo ni
He is hiding in the bush
Waiting for *ceng* to set.

Ojone
I'm a woman

But
Will he come
Before the next morning?

Will he arrive in time?

Bile burns my inside
And I feel like *nyok*

Pien all our youngs
Were finished
Idye bunga ongee

And,
Kero gi ducu
Were finished
li ot mac.

Ojone

Let us stop
Tim gero

I'm a woman.

Untitled

by Timothy J Boulanger

Deadly Not Silent
Woman Are Strong Join Together

Were Strong
We'll Last Forever

Deadly Not Silent
Strong Homes Stop Violence

We are
Braking The Silence

Ending The Game
You Should Be Ashamed

Hit Woman
Were Real Thickened

Brought Forth
Carried Through

The Sound
Of Love Pain

True



ALIVE NOT VIOLENT

by Timothy J Boulanger

Woman

Dignity and Honor
Everything
From A Daughter

When Woman Cry
They Cry

Their Tears
Are From Deep Inside

Who Are You, Who Are We
Who Said I Bleed

Woman
Are The Ones

Love
Is Not A Lie

Love
Doesn't Make You Cry

Brought Back To Square One
I'm Smiling, I'm A Lot Of Fun

See My Smile, See Me Shine Bright
"Woman"

Incredible Delight

BEADWORK

by Jessa Bear

Lost in thought, not sure where to begin.
One thought, then two, stressful memories of the day.
In search of grounding, medicine for my being.
Small and round rolling between my fingers.
Thread, needle, beads, leather spread out before me.
No plan, letting my hand and heart take the lead.
Bead after bead the pattern emerges.
Connected to those before me by thread.
Medicine grounding me through pattern.
Ceremony of movement and creation.

Coming Home to Self

by Joy Rogers

Coming home to Self
The elements welcome me
My heart is at peace.

Dear Ákhso

by Joy Rogers

Chi miigwech ákhso
You survived so I can thrive
Each breath honours you

UNTITLED

by Anonymous

Made from the flesh of mtigook
Stripped, still and naked
Lined upon them are faces.
Faces strangers
Faces of masters
Masters of the house.
White empty eyes staring back at
her
A stranger in her own home
Tolerated, appeased.
An outsider
She never agreed to this.

The animals have been thrown
out the door
They don't belong in the house
They are no longer family
They can stay outside
For now.
Until he decides he wants that
space.
A white fence would look nice
there
Why not a surburban garden?
Perhaps a garage?
Silly nintigok why would you
grow there?
Crazy bineshin why would you
build your nest there?
Clear the way
Clear the land
Stamp his dirty boots across
Mother Earth.
Dragging his foot
Tearing up the earth, our
mothers' floor
Ripping our homes apart, forcing
our families to flee
Washing his boots in niibi
Poisoning our waters with the
stench
She never agreed to this
It is not his land
It is not his home
It has never been his
It will never be.
He was a guest
The time is up.

Take those boots
Retrace your steps
If you do not know the way
The follow the destruction, the
pain
Follow the scars in the earth.
The ripples of sadness in the
water,
The refugee camps of the animals
Follow the tears, The anger
Follow the loss
They will lead the way

Pick up those boots
Take this pain
Tear down these walls
Rip up the marble floor
Let Mother Earth breathe again.
Open the gates
There is no space for him here
She never agreed to this.
Zhaaganaash, you have been a
bad tenant
It is time to evict.

Hi-Bye

by Tammy Bobyk

When you wish upon a star
Does the star sigh heavy from afar

When you blow a kiss through air
Does the air float by never there

When you whisper in a prayer
Does the prayer repent without care

When you love deep in the night
Does the love stay dark during light

When I say I miss you so
Does the time stand still or ebb and flow

There will be sunlight

by Jordis Duke

Bright lightning.
Violent thunder.
Flash. Crack. Boom.
Cleansing rain,
and Tears.

Healing doesn't mean forgetting.

Pain fades.
Anger clears.
Clouds move on.
Yet ...Thunder echoes,
in memories.

A new day.

Winds change.
Storms pass.
Do horizons hide another?
In the end,
There will be sunlight.

UNTITLED

by Fallan Bain

My heart aches for the women
being sold on the great lakes

It takes 4 abduction attempts to
catch the attention of police
but they always forget about
those who have already
deceased with no justice
lease,
no family peace

They just become an
uncomfortably short lived
conversation piece

How can you forget that She is
someones niece

Someones sister

Someones daughter

More worthy than water

They dont even call it man
slaughter

Justice for ALL

There should be no close calls

The police should not be short fall

No - it was not death by alcohol
your stigma is not welcome
here

Not when young girls
continuously disappear

These are the issues that tear us
apart

We impart instead of trying to
restart

We need to invite the hearts and
unite the cite that we delight
Lets ignite and invite everyone
who comes to our city called
thunder bay

And no longer have to continue to
lay out the graves of the girls
who dont get to have a say

Silence is an option too. I will no
longer let our ancestors be
greeted with violence. We
are lions who sometimes
need guidance, its not rocket
science its called a national
alliance.

So, What will you do to keep
her safe in a place she is not
warmly embraced?

Soul to Soul

by Cecile Hardy

Yes exactly where I want to be
To feel your love
Each and every day
Is something I look forward to
Your laughter, your teasing
Lifts me up!!
I feel safe and secure
When I'm in your arm
Is where I want to be
It lifts me up
Where I could bed
Without judgement and fear
A love so spiritual
For us to enjoy
I love you so damn much
It scares me
A touch was too much
When our lips meet
You fall apart
The love we feel
Is enough to be
Soul to Soul

Eviction Notice

by Karli Robertson

He intruded into her home
Wiped his dirty boots on her
earth floor
She never invited him in
She never agreed to this
He sprawled across her couch
Made himself at home
He never asked to stay
He just assumed his place
No respect for her being
Her family, her life
Her home.
Demanded she provide him with
food, with shelter,
Care for him,
Entertain him, a slave to his
desires
Then he brought his friends
Ignored her, pushed her aside
In return she got nothing.
He acted like he belonged
These were owed to him
Even her home was claimed as his
own
Wrote in his name
Documented. Remembered.
Forget hers.
She doesn't matter,
The walls have been painted
white
By men who are remembered
Our Women are painted with
clear paint
Invisible. Ignorable.
Missing. Vanishing.

Walls were put up
Our peoples pushed out
Divided into rooms
Soundproofed.
Silencing our voices.
Kwe was pushed into the garage
The door was shut
He held the key.
Ki was paved over
Glistening white tiles silenced her
voice
Her songs, her vibrations
The flowers ceased to grow,
the grasses flattened and left to
die
Warm earth, cold floors
She never agreed to this.
Long corridors spanned across her
home
Made from the flesh of mtigook
Stripped, still and naked
Lined upon them are faces.
Faces of strangers
Faces of masters
Masters of the house.
White empty eyes staring back at
her
A stranger in her own home
Tolerated, appeased,
An outsider
She never agreed to this.

The animals have been thrown
out the door
They don't belong in the house
They are no longer family
They can stay outside
For now.
Until he decides he wants that
space.
A white fence would look nice
there
Why not a suburban garden?
Perhaps a garage?
Silly ninatiigok why would you
grow there?
Crazy bineshiin why would you
build your nest there?
Clear the way
Clear the land.
Stamp his dirty boots across
Mother Earth
Dragging his foot
Tearing up the earth, our mothers
floor
Ripping our homes apart, forcing
our families to flee
Washing his boots in niibi
Poisoning our waters with his
soot
Suffocating the animals with the
stench
She never agreed to this.

It is not his land
It is not his home
It has never been his
It never will be.
He was a guest
The time is up.

Take those boots
Retrace your steps
If you do not know the way
Then follow the destruction, the
pain
Follow the scars in the earth,
The ripples of sadness in the
water,
The refugee camps of the animals
Follow the tears, The anger
Follow the loss.
They will lead the way

Pick up those boots.
Take this pain.
Tear down the walls.
Rip up the marble floor
Let Mother Earth breathe again.
Open the gates
There is no space for him here
She never agreed to this.
Zhaaganaash, you have been a
bad tenant.
The rent is due.
It is time to evict.

EMPTY SPACES

by Siobhan Farrell

Opening our eyes, tears stream down faces, pain spilling between gulps of air from the new arrival still smelling of booze, bruised interlaced cuts streaked across her face and hands, clenched eyes, perched on her plastic chair rocking back and forth.

Her story gets patched into the collection of tragedies that bind these repeat visitors of every program, every cell, courtroom and dark alley where poisons are horse traded to numb the mind, to maim and kill what remains of their hearts after blow after savage blow.

Now we simply sit, the rhythm and wisdom of our bodies and minds is this act of love, of rebellion, tearing apart any pretense, any last piece of bullshit a brave circle of women breathing in breathing out together in this grey hushed basement room.

NOT ME

by Anonymous

Child sees what a child wants to see.

The woman lying down the road hooded with clothes not her own.
What... she is not me.
Child walking the streets in shoes too tall for her.
So....she is not of my kin.
There in the schools for the young to expand their minds, a adolescent sticking poison in the soul.
Yes..... but that is not me.
In the room next to the corner store she sits on a stool, the blood runs from her body as he expresses his rage.
Ha yes..... but she can leave.
The room is dark only one candle, the razor shiny and new waiting for the first and the last action.
Ahuh I do not know that person.
Four wheels scream in tune with shots, she was only 4, got in the way.
I know..... it is sad, a crying shame.
Rows of infants sit in quiet terror , with dry tears they cry, hopeful for a small grain of love.
Sigh... not my family.

The adult sees what an adult wants to see.

The child of the creator dies on the street drugged up, emaciated, wearing clothes not her own, shoes too tall, colours on her skin that would look better on a painting.

No longer the short lines to say.

Not me.... anymore.

Sudden realization that it was theirs all along.

So they sit in quiet horror and with dry tears, cry, hopeful for a small ounce of forgiveness to come their way.

Never give up Keep your head up

by Valerie Thivierge

“Gardé la tête haute, S’il vous plaît Ne lâche Jamais!

Keep you head up Never give up
with forgiveness, you’re strong, here is the success
I will survive my 1st degree of University through tenacity
finish what you start, you’ll be rewarded. I tell myself
stars sparkles in Pink, orange and Purple
You are not alone lookup and find your mom
Your daughter is looking at you and says, I love you Mom,
your little one is doing great she looks at you and says

Never give up, Keep your head up

Ne lâche jamais garde la tête haute
S’il vous plaît

A SIMPLE NO

by Jamie Labrador

A thousand pieces of one bottle
Scattered along the street

Keeping a safe distance
From everyone I meet

Afraid that my shirt
Will show just enough skin,
That the man slowing down his car
Will think I want to come in

It shouldn’t have to be this way -
Telling men that I’m sick, married, or gay

Because a simple no never does the trick,
Even if it’s my thousandth time saying it.

MY PRAYER

by Desiree Mathews
Musko Gabo Chigashtao Eskwao
Strong Standing in Bright Light Woman

Thank you Great Spirit
Mee kwaych keeshay maaneeto

I thank you for this life you give me
Neen naa s komon ohma pimatisowin

Protect my children
Gahnowaymik joshomishuk agah waysh chishtitik

Protect me
Gahnowaynimin nesta nena agah waysh chitian

I pray for all the people who are sick
Nahmahastamowuk misiway Guyacgoschik

Help me to walk in a good way
Wee cha hin gwa yesk che bi mo ta yan omah mes ka now

I pray for Mother Earth, Water Spirit, the Flyers, the
Swimmers, Crawlers and the 4 legged animals

Nah ma hes ta mow Negowi Aski

Neepee Manitou

Gah mi na jic

Gah pah ma ti gan jic

Gah pi mo ta chi mo chic

Gah na ow ga tah chic

Meegwetch!

UNTITLED

by Siobhan Farrell

Who are Indigenous women?
What does strength look like?

Endurance
Willing to face challenges
Overcoming fear/embracing fear
The heart and the head linked together
Seeing everything that needs to be seen
Willing to admit doubt, mistakes
Never giving up
Feeling beauty even on the dark days
Making things beautiful
In synch with nature
Looking backward and forward
Seeing the truth – but be willing to change it



Ring

by Annette Pateman

Your ring.
A brand on my hand
strangling my heart.
A chokehold
That tears me apart.

Sweet looks and touches
hides and covers
the thoughts beneath.
The need to hurt me
like a crave to eat.

The sun shone brighter
in the sky below,
a beautiful blue.
You smiled, you coaxed,
you gentled me.

But then hard look
hard voice, hard mind.
It was as though I was blind.
Not seeing the real you.
The blade heart that
Would cut me in two.

Now I wish to run and hide.
To wonder why I am still alive.
To endure this endless pain.
What do you have to gain?

Tomorrow is the day I leave,
this relationship that makes me bleed.
But then you smile and it seems like love,
you grip on me a skin tight gloves.

The blow comes out of the blue.
What did I do to hurt you?
You fell me like a fresh cut tree,
I am down and out at your mercy.

I gather thought from the mess.
Pack a bag and leave the rest.
Today is the day I go,
reclaim my life and strike a bow.

TRUTH

by Michelle Thomas

The weight of my brown skin lies heavy with me tonight.
Wishing I could shuck it off,
and wash it in the rain....
Hang it on the line;
letting cool floral breezes revive it.

Walking about like nothingness without a care in the world;
Weightless---free!
Unattached & unadorned
Unidentified, indiscernible
To the naked eye.

My cool brown skin, instead,
lies with me.
Pulling up my frame,
does roll call to all those who came before it,
and those yet to come.
It leads me to my place in the circle...
and helps me remember all that I am;
all that I am yet to be.

My beautiful brown skin, shorn from the depths of Earth Mother,
reminds me I am but transient.
Making my journey here for awhile;
in hopes of an easier path for those who may follow.

Author's note: This poem was written in response to the acquittal of Tina Fontaine's murderer. It helped me express the feeling of exposure to such raw injustices and invisibility within the context of a country that glorifies its track record of human rights.

Where Will They Go?

by Michelle Thomas

Where will they go to find justice when everything on Earth has
failed them?
Who will they turn to?
Who will hear their story?

I pray~
their spirits are received by Grandmothers; whose beauty and
gentleness grace their presence like long fringe, swaying over
medicines on the open prairie. They take them under their shawls
and hold them tight, keeping them close to their hearts. Their
heartbeats beat as one.

I pray~
they are greeted by Grandfathers carrying bundles, staffs and
drums. Their medicines and songs rise up to the Heavens to soothe
their burdens. As their truths tumble out, their cries and sorrows
are transformed by the gentle radiance of our Eldest Brother the
Sun. Their spirits are cleansed by the wings of a beautiful white
eagle, bringing eternal balance.

They will turn to us; those that are left behind, and say
It is up to you;
to RAGE, to feel, to let go, to pray, to remember, to educate and fight.
Our journeys there are done;
Now it's YOUR turn.
It's your turn to continue to fight for our truths. We are more than
what Canada believes us to be!
So much more...

Author's note: This was written in response to the acquittal of the murderer of another "useless Indian". I have never met Gerald Stanley or Tina Fontaine, but the impact of their lives & deaths impacted me tremendously. I felt the echo of this pain run through the heart of Indian Country as we grieved these losses together. In their memory...

Missing Woman

by Annette Pateman

The grey and the blue and the white
of the giant looking out across the lake on a
Thunder Bay day.

The grey and the blue and the white
looking out across the lake on a
Thunder Bay day,
Oh the sky so bright.

Then I hear your voice
missing woman,
a sister calling out to
me your voice a whisper
in my ear.

A grin, a leer a flash of
colour in the eyesight,
the rough pull and push
and tug and then I am gone.
One of the disappeared.

Don't forget me.
Don't forget me,
In memoriam,
remember me.
My nation, my family,
my face, my smile.

He, they took me and
removed me from my right to live
under the sun,
the moon and stars,
and to feel,
the snow fall like tears
on my face and hands.

Oh sister rise up and fight
the tyranny of bad people.
Of man.
Oh sister rise up and
fight and unite,
for the right to live like a
good human being in this land
now called Canada.

Oh Canada, don't forget
that I came from you air
and soil.
My blood now in the ground
and drained and bled away
by a yet unknown hand.

ANGER / VIOLENCE

by Keirsten Eliz Sagutch

when thoughts become words
and words become actions; it hurts
when it hurts; you wanna use revenge to get back
to what extent do you choose to attack
why has violence become a resort
only to be takin' into court
sitting up in the cells waiting to plea
so full of regret; your wish is to flee
choices have been made
its too late with the hand you played
violence seems to be the only answer
reacting out of anger careful are what the voices in your head say
but silently you began to betray
the way you once dealt with these matters
you lost it and didn't care about the factors
or the consequences you were faced
because violence has that replaced
you call it rage; you call it anger
i see danger
its taken control clearly
the ones in your presence become
uneasy
around you,
do you know what you put them through
or how you made them feel
nobody is sure how to even deal
with you
scared, afraid; i'm just naming a few

But I do

by Aileen Joseph

I have been pushed into this place I don't want to be ...and yet I do
In a perfect world I would not be here.
I don't want to walk this path ...and yet I do.
Nobody asked "who is your daughter?" "what is her story?"
Am I the only onw who cares? ...I don't want to tell her story and
yet I do
I want you to know she lived, she loved, she laughed, she cried and
she died...
I see the blood across the floor ...the hand prints on the wall
I don't want you to know my pain ...and yet I do.
My words don't come easy ...my brain swirls with brilliant thoughts
that my mouth forgets too soon.
I want to tell you ...but I don't.
I still hear her calls in the middle of the night saying "come get me".
I don't want to go again ...but I do.
She died too soon, she hadn't found her perfect love, someone to
hold her, someone to love her long brown hair that glistened in
the sun.
I don't want to hear her cry any more ...but I do.



HEALING

by Anonymous

Healing
on a winter night
in a dream
an orange sun
beams its warmth
bathing a small girl in
love as she dreams
a doll with long hair
and one eye
that peers like an owl
from behind
a tree of lights, the owl
looks over her, a fairy in green
a string of stars over
the girl

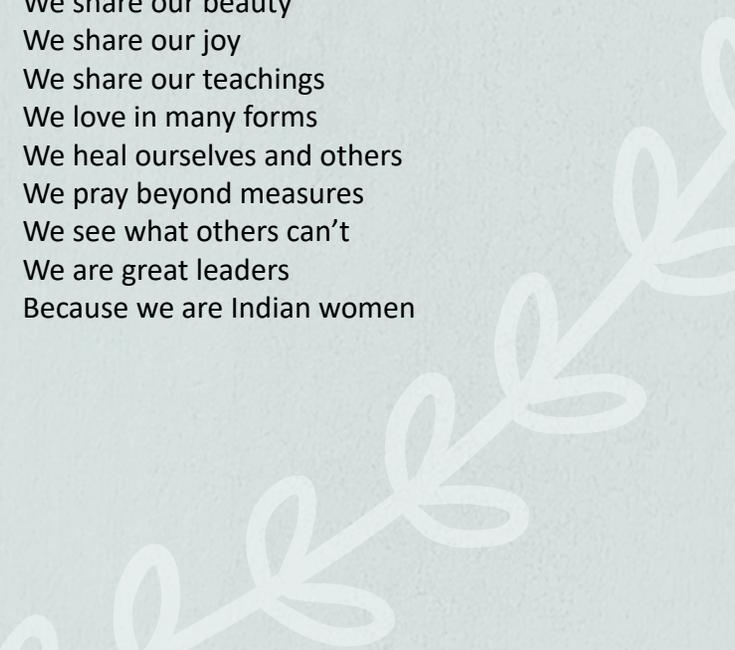
the girls voice sings
across he healing blue
at 3 a.m.



Native Women

by Cecile Hardy

We are daughters
We are mothers
We are grandmothers
We are proud
We are true
We are good
We are strong
We are independent
We are equal
We share our love
We share our life
We share our wisdom
We share our beauty
We share our joy
We share our teachings
We love in many forms
We heal ourselves and others
We pray beyond measures
We see what others can't
We are great leaders
Because we are Indian women



Untitled

by Anonymous

Made from the flesh of mtigook
Stripped, still and naked
Lined upon them are faces.
Faces strangers
Faces of masters
Masters of the house.
White empty eyes staring back at her
A stranger in her own home
Tolerated, appeased.
An outsider
She never agreed to this.

The animals have been thrown out the door
They don't belong in the house
They are no longer family
They can stay outside
For now.
Until he decides he wants that space.
A white fence would look nice there
Why not a suburban garden? Perhaps a garage?
Silly nintiigok why would you grow there?
Crazy bineshin why would you build your nest there?
Clear the way
Clear the land
Stamp his dirty boots across Mother Earth.
Dragging his foot
Tearing up the earth, our mothers' floor
Ripping our homes apart, forcing our families to flee
Washing his boots in niibi
Poisoning our waters with the stench

She never agreed to this
It is not his land
It is not his home
It has never been his
It will never be.
He was a guest
The time is up.

Take those boots
Retrace your steps
If you do not know the way
The follow the destruction, the pain
Follow the scars in the earth.
The ripples of sadness in the water,
The refugee camps of the animals
Follow the tears, The anger
Follow the loss
They will lead the way

Pick up those boots
Take this pain
Tear down these walls
Rip up the marble floor
Let Mother Earth breathe again.
Open the gates
There is no space for him here
She never agreed to this.
Zhaaganaash, you have been a bad tenant
It is time to evict.



Violence to me

by Tina Hibbs

Violence to me was something unseen. It was a secret in silence of something so mean.

It was to be hidden and forgotten and tucked in my mind. It was a feeling of hopelessness, confusion and loss of time.

A memory to be blocked from the now, to resurface later with bad choices and wondering how?

How one can forget things so traumatic, things that forever affect who we are and become so automatic.

Violence to me has changed my life and it touches everyone in all walks of life.

Although it has changed me and who I am, now that I am older, I do understand.

Although it is negative and a part of the world, it is an unfortunate reality that needs to be heard.

With love and guidance and being self-aware, people can heal from violence everywhere.

It starts from using our voices and stopping the silence, to empower to make positive changes and say no to violence.



HEARTBREAK

by Tina Hibbs

A heavy heart is what I feel, a place of sadness that feels unreal.

The numbness in fact is hard to take, the pain so bad when you have a heartache.

The loss of love just seems so unfair, no other feeling so hard to bare.

Although I have been here many times before, does not make it easier, in fact in hurts more.

A place I chose not to be in again, is a choice that I make to help my heart mend.

I will love myself and will not permit, another great loss to my heart to begin.

I will set boundaries and not let anyone in, unless they come with love, true love from within.

A lesson to learn, a story to share.

Cause heartache hurts too much, too much to bare.

UNTITLED

by Faith Turner

It was all my fault
she's met with a quick halt
As you slam her to the wall
Her crumpled body sliding down to fall

Always my fault, you remind me again
That reoccurring look insane
As she tries to run
I wonder when will this all be done?

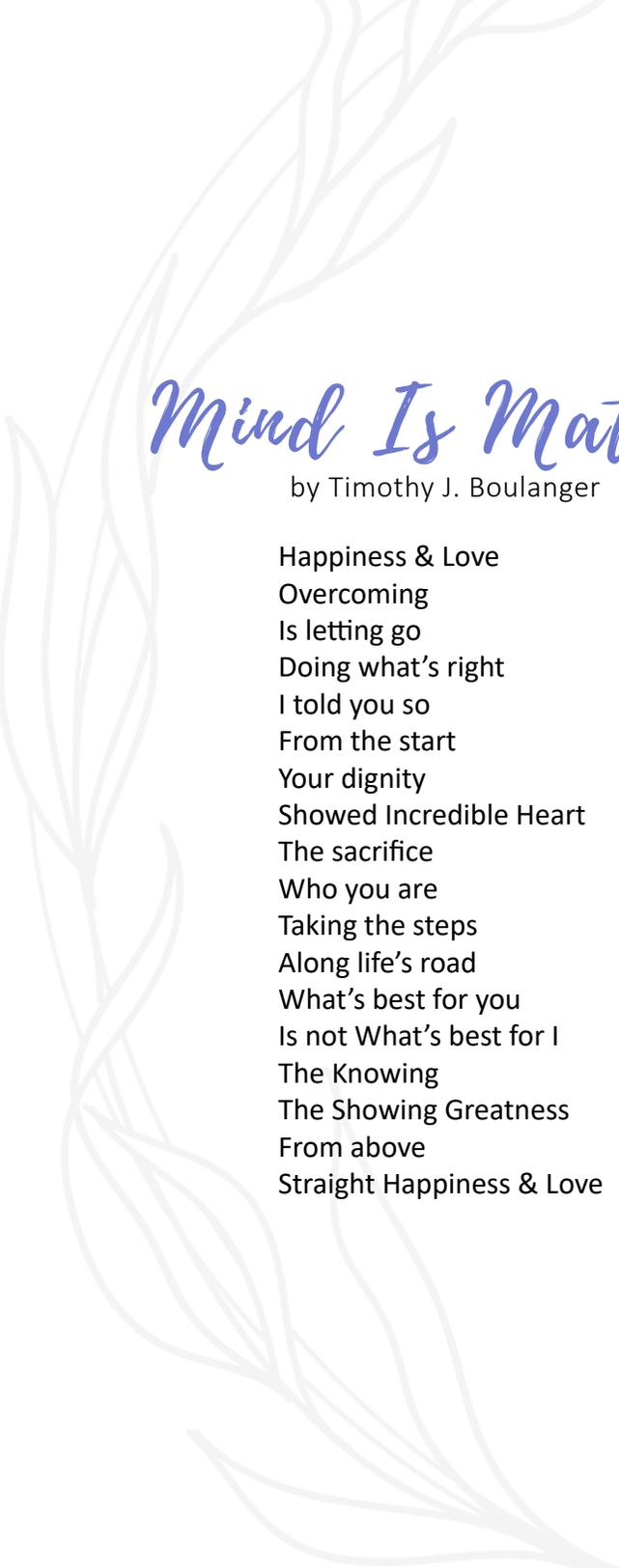
I am the reason yet, I did nothing wrong
I hold on to my mothers love and song
Just a little girl in this chaotic world stuck
As she holds on to a man who doesnt give a fk

I am the reason you argue?
If I go away, will it stop what you do?
A child burdened with the blame
My mother hangs her head in shame

But no. You become the reason.
I am now a woman of season
Knowing the fault in your fists
Hanging on to her wrists

I let you all go
You didn't win you know
I walked away
Into my own story and hope of a brighter day

Just a shadow of each memory
Pains my heart but helps me to see
The cycle coming full circle around
As a shadow of a hand on my face is found



Mind Is Matter

by Timothy J. Boulanger

Happiness & Love
Overcoming
Is letting go
Doing what's right
I told you so
From the start
Your dignity
Showed Incredible Heart
The sacrifice
Who you are
Taking the steps
Along life's road
What's best for you
Is not What's best for I
The Knowing
The Showing Greatness
From above
Straight Happiness & Love

PERSEVERANCE

by Timothy J. Boulanger

Where's that
Get up & go
Attitude

The world is
Not going to wait
For you

Decisions
Come From
The Heart

Knowing what's right
Knowing what's wrong

I will do this
I am strong

Why are these
Feelings & Emotions
Inside of I
Always right

Just doing right
Takes me to
The next flight

My meaning
My purpose

My Heavenly Delight



Sisters

by Anonymous

I still wait for you sometimes at the Cronos Cafe
Or at least my heart does

When the snow is coming down ever so softly and it's chilly out
I still remember our laughs

That evening you got to put your knife down
in a safe place, for one night

We talked about the fat dog - cool cat theory
Sipping our large hot chocolates, smiling

You told me I was still your number one baby, your first child
Your sister

So much love, despite it all

What I want you to know is this

Standing on your corner
Never defined your beauty or worth

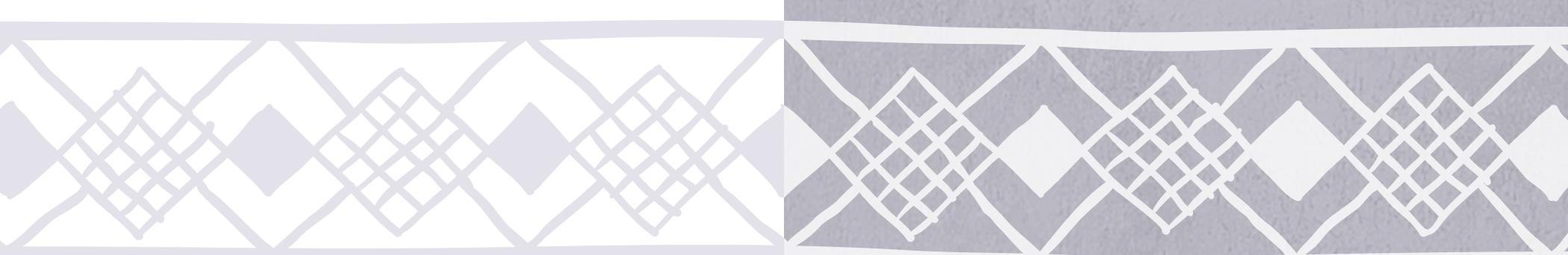
You were better than all those men
Who took advantage of you, hurt you

They never deserved you

You are an Anishnawbe kwe
Clothed in spirit colours and love from your ancestors

It's never too late to remember who you are

"An older sister helps one remain half child, half woman."



THE HOOK

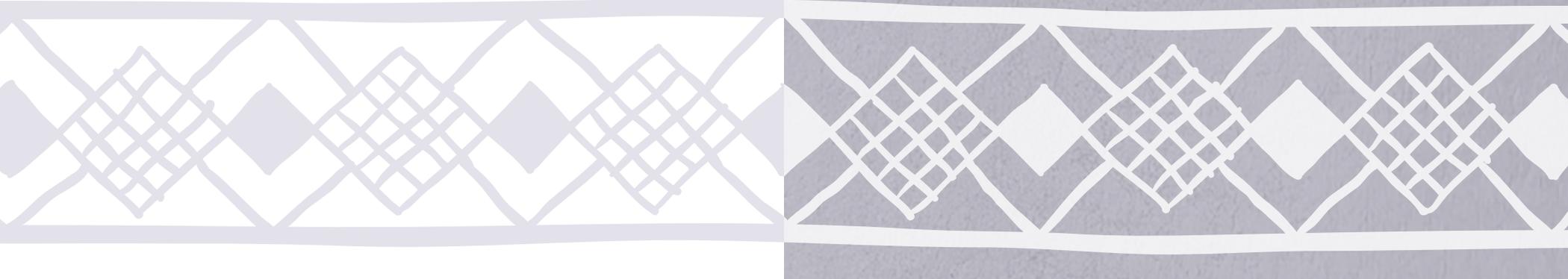
by Hailey Krolyk

You think its love
Entranced with desire
The hook has been set
Reeling you in, you soon get a taste
Realizing the is a terrible place
New colours show
The facade lifts
Dissolving the desire you mistakingly placed
Wishing to be released
You see this is a dark, dark place
Remembering your inner peace
All the work you've done wont go to waste
Your strength is always there
Overrides your old desire
Remember who you are, light your soul on fire

1

by Bänoo Zan

Bänoo Zan Child
The grown man is friendly
He covers my eyes with a stale towel and proceeds
The other girl gets chocolate and no blood
She doesn't remember a thing I—cannot forget— the
push—the tear—the pain
My stopped mouth a soundless scream
Childhood is a utopia— doesn't last long but long
enough to go from me to the world— You are tiny,
child! You need an adult
Here— take this chocolate and let me close your eyes



YOU SAID YOU LOVE ME

by T C Martin

You said you love me
I guess you show it by keeping me from my family

You said you love me
I guess you show it with a criticizing remark

You said you love me
I guess you show it by denying me dignity

You said you love me
I guess you show it with a slap in the face

You said you love me
I guess you show it with a black eye

You said you love me
I guess you show it with a shove down the stairs

You said you love me
I guess you show it by strangling me to death

Flip The Script

by Lindsay Rogers

I hurt so bad inside
I wish you could see the world through my eyes
You'll never see the tears I've cried
Attempting suicide, I'll say my goodbyes
I never thought I'd die alone
Growing darkness taking dawn
Another six months I'll be unknown
I'm no longer me, she's gone
This life is overwhelming and I'm ready for the next one
But maybe I'm alive because I didn't really want to die
This can be undone
I've got to try
I don't want to die anymore
I didn't walk with Creator before

I am blood

by Joceline Nobis

I am blood
My blood flows through me
My wisdom, my priorities and privileges
I carry within me

I am blood
I trust this process of its flow
Respecting and honoring You, Me, We and Thee
We are at different levels in life and with different abilities
A unique individual, including the color of our skin

I am blood
I have flowed throughout history and centuries

I am blood
I flow through all cultures, all religions and all people
I will never stop flowing
This is who that we all are, including me

I am blood
We all bleed red

I am blood
Miigwetch, blood

We all bleed red

POEM 17

by Hailey Krolyk

Searching, seeking, internal critiquing
Wondering if it's all worth the deep havoc it's wreaking
Inner intimate secrets beseeching
Uncovering diverged paths you've been probing
Globally, locally, it's unknown poetry
Totally insurmountable sentiments are uncountable
Courage diverged leaving feelings submerged
Whats left unsaid is better left unheard

I AM RESILIENT.

by Standing Hawk Woman Who Spreads Her Wings
Maureen Hearn

You promised to love and protect me, as you hold me down.
The more I struggle the harder you hold my wrists.
I hear you say "If I can't have you no one will."
I can barely breathe with the weight of you on my chest.

I know in my heart I have to stop struggling: or you will beat me... again.
The fight leaves my body as you take what you want.
You never saw the fear or pain in my eyes or the vacant look as my soul
slipped away to a safe place.
The sound of my pounding heart gave way to the sound of hand drums
in the distance.

I was in a cool forest of red, brown, and gold autumn leaves, comforted
by the smell of the wet soil.
I was again the young girl of eight years old.
As my eyes looked up towards the sky, I saw sisters, aunties, and
grandmothers all old and young.
They were beating their drums singing an honour song with tears
streaming down their cheeks.
It only lasted a small span of time but I will always remember it.

Slowly the noises of you stop.
I hear you zip up your jeans and laugh, "Go ahead have a good time, I
had you first".
As the door slams I cry into the closest pillow.
Relieved that for now, you are gone.

I carry this memory with me as I graduate with my degree, my two
diplomas; the anger having helped me through my darkest times.
I will make a difference.

Thirty years later I stand on the shore of the lake, it is massive and
powerful.
I feel the warmth of the sun on my face and a cool breeze.
The salt from my tears runs to my upper lip.
I am drumming and singing at the same time.

I'm thinking of all the women who have survived, the missing and
murdered.
As I release the scared tobacco from my left hand I pray for their safety,
for their families left behind, for the next generations knowing the
violence may never stop.
My sisters this is for all of you.
We are all here together; wanting the next generation to be different.

When I am finished I turn and look into my partners eyes and he holds
me safely in his strong arms.

I am home.
I am safe.
I have won.

This Lady

by Candace Lloyd

This lady is my teacher,
Who taught me right from wrong.

This lady is my nurse,
Who sat beside me when I was ill.

This lady is my friend,
Who was there when I had no other.

This lady is my chef,
Who made me eat my meals.

This lady makes me wonder,
With grey hair of love,
And smile lines of care,
There can be no other,
That is similar to this lady,
Who happens to be my mother.

PRISONER OF WAR

by Marlene Elder

I am a strong woman
But I sleep with my purse now
Phone under my pillow
Car keys at the ready

I am a strong woman
But Angry voices wake me
I hold my breath
My home a prison

I am a strong woman
But sleeping in a fighter's stance waking, shoulders stiff, fists clenched
Ready to do battle,

I am a strong woman
But held hostage by the ties that bind
I cannot defend myself trying to keep the poison at bay

I am a strong woman
But violence erupts night and day,
Trauma and drama are my daily bread

But I am a strong woman.

Spirited Flight

by Candace Lloyd

Upon her wings I flew
Across the Never Sea
To a place where I have
Always been.

With her eyes downcast
I see the things I
Need to do, to be that, which
Has been set in the Stones of Ages.

My disbelief shines in my spirited soul,
for I fear what I have always seen,
to be
That which I have strength to be.

She guides me down in
Spiraled slopes, to that
Which I believe to be to be my
Last day ever seen.

On the Lost Shores I
Walk, with knowledge of
Things that cannot possibly
Be, but I Know are.

I fell the things I have always sought
The beat of the sea's surf
The sighs of the wind in song
The trees call to me to become what
They have always been,
Immortal.

My eyes cast skyward to my Winged friend,
she bows to me in
Understanding for I have seen
Too much today.

Upon her wings I flew
Across the Never Sea,
To a place where I have
Always been.



FREEDOM

by Candace Lloyd

In the woodland country,
Among the big trees,
Tumbles a little brook,
Which seems to sing to me.

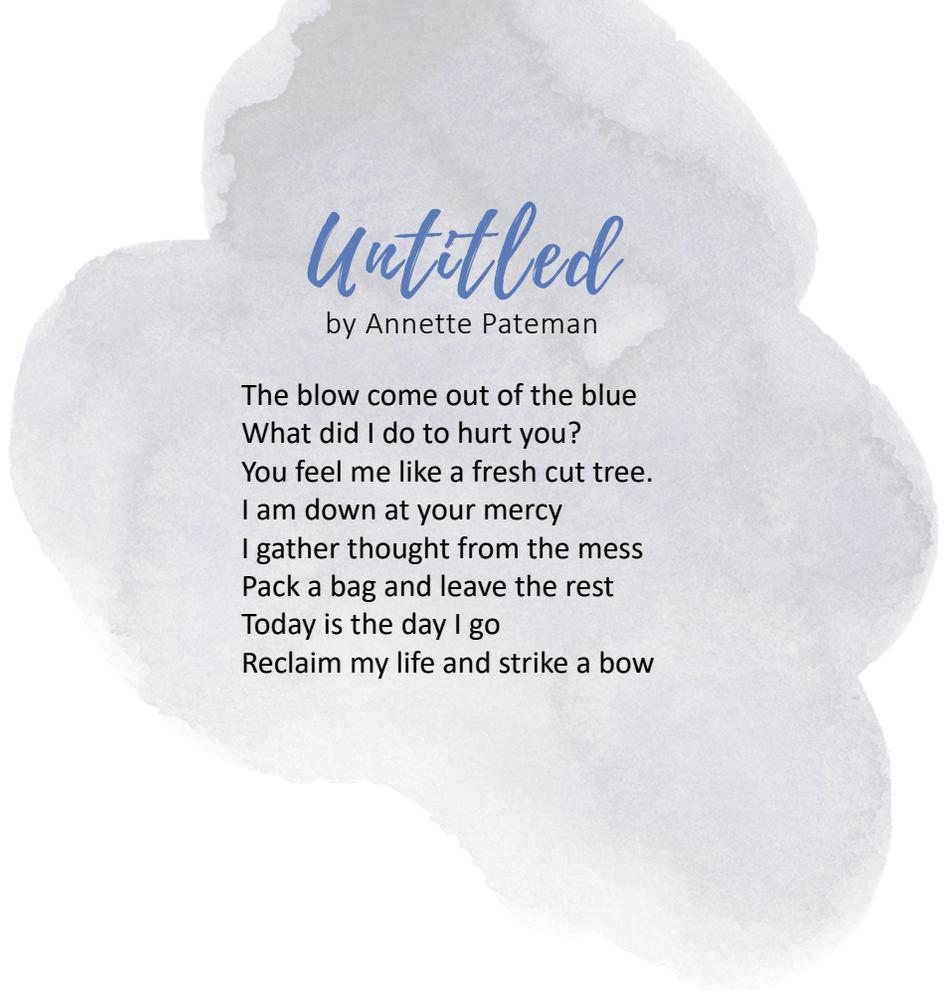
As it dances over the rocks,
It's music fills the air,
"Take a look, at my brook,
Where the beauty is everywhere!"

To see the great noble eagle,
In the bright blue skies,
How effortless she flies,
She seems to float by.

A beautiful spotted trout,
Which swims in this brook,
Dashing 'round to find
His favorite nook.

The doe and her fawn,
Seems to think
This is a great spot,
To have a cool drink.

The wind seems to whisper,
As it blows through the trees,
This is freedom...
Freedom to me.



Untitled

by Annette Pateman

The blow come out of the blue
What did I do to hurt you?
You feel me like a fresh cut tree.
I am down at your mercy
I gather thought from the mess
Pack a bag and leave the rest
Today is the day I go
Reclaim my life and strike a bow



Dedication For Women!

by Thundercloud aka Michele Rosano (2020)

We are Strong indigenous Women
Earning the Wisdom to Know Who & Why We Are
Our Tears are of Pride
Our Joy is to Love Ourselves Our Families & Communities!



A compilation of five year's of poems from the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)'s

Strong Hands Stop Violence Poetry Night

(2015 - 2020)

to raise awareness of violence against women in support of the United Nation International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women



#orangetheworld



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