

# *Strong Hands Stop Violence*

POETRY BOOK VOLUME 7



Ontario Native Women's Association

# Content Warning:

This poetry book features artworks themed around violence against Indigenous women and girls. All works express the thoughts, ideas, and visions of individual artists. Some works may include language that may be considered offensive to some people.

If you need mental health support, **Talk4Healing's** toll-free lines are open 24/7 to provide support. Call 1-855-554-4325 or visit [talk4healing.com](http://talk4healing.com)

If you would like to contact with the **Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)**, call our toll-free line 1-800-667-0816 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm EST) or visit [onwa.ca/contact-us](http://onwa.ca/contact-us)

The Ontario Native Women's Association acknowledges Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples in that "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions." ONWA honours the importance of Indigenous women's voices and stories. Each submission of poetry is copyrighted to the owner of that poem or story. ONWA recognizes our responsibility to protect and make space for Indigenous women's voices in their advocacy work for ending violence against Indigenous women.



## #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](https://onwa.ca/strong-hands-stop-violence)





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.



## Table of Contents



6	7 <sup>th</sup> Annual Poetry Night	18	Dear Auntie <i>by Joshua LeClair</i>
10	Abuse Wears a Suit <i>by Cher Obediah</i>	19	Death by Omission <i>by Colleen E Charlette</i>
11	Annulment <i>by Lisa-Ann LaForme</i>	20	Debwe <i>by Faye Naveau</i>
12	At First... <i>by Hilary Fox</i>	21	Destruction Denied! <i>by Christine Cherniski</i>
13	Avery's Song <i>by Faye Naveau</i>	24	Full Circle <i>by Mary Ann Sackabuckschkum</i>
14	A Blanket of Dirt <i>by Alma-Lee Byzewski</i>	25	The Gains of Pain <i>by Cher Obediah</i>
14	Cadaver Doe <i>by Colleen E Charlette</i>	26	Genocide <i>By Obzidion</i>
15	Canada <i>by Sarah</i>	28	Give me a reason <i>by Michelle Fiatsi</i>
17	Constriction <i>by E.J.Radford</i>		



- 29 **Glass Eyes**  
*by Claudia Lockman*
- 30 **An Honest Flower**  
*by Colleen Toulouse*
- 32 **I Broke Free**  
*by Colleen Toulouse*
- 33 **I Marched In Red**  
*by Jean Forget*
- 34 **I'm everything they said I  
wouldn't be**  
*by Silence Starts*
- 35 **In Memory.....**  
*by Tuesday Johnson-  
MacDonald*
- 36 **In My Moccasins**  
*by Louise T Jacko*
- 37 **In The Darkness**  
*by Tara Jeanne*
- 38 **Invisible**  
*by Danijela Milić*
- 39 **The Kick-in-the-Face Horses**  
*by Alma Lee Byzewski*
- 40 **Late arrival**  
*by Valerie Vickery*
- 41 **Letting Go**  
*by Anonymous*
- 42 **MMIW**  
*By Jean Forget*
- 43 **My body pulls me towards  
you**  
*by Shelby Gagnon*
- 44 **My Enemy**  
*by Sharon Dolly Syrette*



- 45 **Nibi Kwe**  
*by Valerie Vickery*
- 46 **Ogichidaa Kwe [Warrior Woman]**  
*by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum*
- 48 **Ovum**  
*by Lisa-Ann Laforme*
- 49 **The Peaceful Warrior**  
*by Kaluyuti*
- 51 **Pictures on the Table**  
*by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum*
- 53 **Precious Little One**  
*by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum*
- 54 **The Protection**  
*by Alma Lee Byzewski*
- 55 **Resiliency**  
*by Susan Richards-Brant*
- 56 **Revolution Rising**  
*by Tina Miller*
- 57 **She is Free**  
*by Tara Jeanne*
- 58 **She Was A True Bellwether**  
*by Deanna Naveau-Heyde*
- 59 **Still**  
*by Louise Theresa Jacko*
- 60 **Stop**  
*by Susan Richards-Brant*
- 61 **A Study in Missingness**  
*by Colleen E Charlette*
- 62 **Tear Drops In the Rain**  
*by Sharon Dolly Syrette*
- 63 **They Had Names**  
*by Ananya Pawtey*
- 65 **The Thin Veil**  
*by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum*



- 67 Time Has Come  
*by Sharon Dolly Syrette*
- 68 Tina Fontaine  
*by Douglas Sinclair*
- 70 Untitled  
*by Sandra*
- 71 Untitled  
*by Suzie Q*
- 72 The Violent One  
*by Sharon Dolly Syrette*
- 73 The Wait  
*by Alma Lee Byrzewski*
- 74 When West Met South  
*by Veronica Spade*
- 76 Wings Unfolded  
*by Cher Obediah*
- 78 Winnipeg 2022  
*by Alma Lee*
- 79 Wondering Shame  
*by Christine MacKay*





## *7th Annual Poetry Night*

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)'s 7th annual Strong Hands Stop Violence Poetry Night held on November 25th, 2022, transcended physical boundaries as it unfolded both in the cozy ambiance of the Chanterelle on Park Avenue in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and virtually via Zoom. This innovative hybrid format brought together a diverse assembly of participants, uniting voices from near and far for an enchanting evening of poetry and artistic expression.

The evening commenced with reverence, as Elder Catherine Everson, from Lac Seul First Nation, bestowed an opening prayer. The atmosphere reverberated with cultural significance as the Passwewe Ikwug Drum Group offered an opening drum song. These ceremonial moments paved the way for Cora Mc Guire-Cyrette, ONWA's CEO, to share her insightful opening remarks, setting the stage for the artistic wonders that were to follow.

The stage then belonged to our first distinguished guest, Ojibwe poet Mary Black. She masterfully recited her poignant poem, "Quiet," and shared her inspiring experiences as an Indigenous woman in Canada, leaving the audience deeply moved.

Following this, we had the honor of hosting Al Hunter, a renowned poet, author, and former chief of Rainy River first Nations. His readings stirred souls with their profound depth and emotional resonance.

To further elevate the poetic atmosphere, the night resonated with the melodic tunes of Sara Kae, a talented musician from Lake Helen First Nation. Her music added an extra layer of emotion to the evening, captivating all in attendance.





The event reached a crescendo with the appearance of a special guest, the multiple Juno award winner, Susan Aglukark. Her captivating voice resonated deeply with everyone present, truly making the night unforgettable.

The Poetry Night also provided a vibrant platform for aspiring poets from across the province to showcase their talent. Through heartfelt recitations, whether in-person or via Zoom, these poets wove a rich tapestry of voices, highlighting the abundant literary talent within Indigenous communities.

In addition to the enthralling poetry readings and musical performances, the event featured a collective art project. Attendees were invited to contribute to this communal artwork, symbolizing their unwavering commitment to stand together against violence towards women and girls. The collective art piece serves as a tangible representation of our shared determination to build a safer, more inclusive society.

ONWA'S 7th annual Strong Hands Stop Violence Poetry Night seamlessly blended artistry, advocacy, and community engagement. Through the power of poetry, the magic of music, and the unity of collective art, this evening forged bonds of resilience and empowerment that will leave an enduring mark on all who were fortunate to be a part of it.

# Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women Youth Art Design Contest

In 2022, the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)'s held an Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women Youth Art Contest.

Submissions were separated into age brackets: Ages 11-14, ages 15-18, and ages 19-25. Each bracket will have their own 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prize winners.

The winning designs will be showcased on T-shirts distributed across Ontario.

ONWA asked Indigenous youth (ages 11-25) to submit artwork showcasing: **"What does ending violence against Indigenous women looks like to you?"**

Watch the video highlight at to see all submissions: [youtu.be/faEKznBa9E0](https://youtu.be/faEKznBa9E0)

Here are the winning designs...

## Bracket 1: Ages 11 - 14



**1st place:**  
Michael Ross-Matansinine,  
age 13



**2nd place:**  
Lotus Waite,  
Webequie First  
Nation, age 14

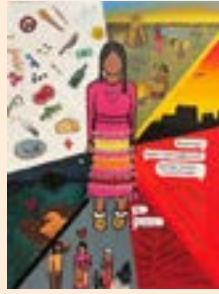


**3rd place:**  
Payton  
Tyance,  
Gull Bay First  
Nation,  
age 14

## Bracket 2: Ages 15-18



**1st place:**  
Tisha Duncan,  
*Bearskin Lake First Nation, age 17*



**2nd place:**  
Emidee Gibbins,  
*age 15*



**3rd place:**  
Kayla Spence,  
*age 18*

## Bracket 3: Ages 19-25



**1st place:**  
MJ Singleton,  
*Eagle Lake First Nation, age 19*



**2nd place:**  
Lauren Sooley,  
*Chippewas of Georgiana  
Island First Nation,  
age 19*



**3rd place:**  
Mackenzie  
Janveaux,  
*M'Chigeeng, age 21*

# Abuse Wears a Suit

by Cher Obediah

socialized in social lies  
I thought abuse had a look  
a dress code  
rebellious sleeveless  
moral conduct eroded  
or uninstalled  
I watched abuse slip on a suit  
shine his shoes  
and be  
what he wanted people to see  
a master of mattering  
chameleon of chaos  
rich in drive  
emotionally bankrupt  
his pain and protection too busy in bed  
to fold down the sheets  
for authenticity  
handsomeness  
is not the absence of abusiveness  
the body can only do  
what the brain tells it to  
fear informed fingers  
will always find a way to scratch you  
in the grip of emotional overspill  
a sharp dressed vampire  
still needs to feed  
all drain equals pain  
I apologize to the rebels of the world  
who are less of a liability  
than the guy  
who slipped out of a suit  
and into bed with me



## *Annulment*

**by Lisa-Ann LaForme**

Your promises are lethal  
Binding to your spirit  
Mine shattered and broken  
You've taken every bit  
I, your conquest  
You my captor  
Jesus himself,  
Prays for the rapture  
I close my eyes  
Imagine freedom from my thought  
You lie cheat and brutalize  
Thinking you'll never be caught  
You are temporary  
As is this life  
No man shall ever  
Own his wife



# At First...

by Hilary Fox

i grew up in a good home  
a lil rough in the beginning  
but love was definitely shown

im not sure how i got here  
raised well, educated  
still somehow i got steered

at first it's just a jolt  
a small shock  
later following a bigger bolt

it took a long time to understand the  
happening  
not until you had me in your choke  
hold

blackeyes, broken bones, heartline  
flattening

lost my self worth through all the  
chaos

i dont blame anyone but myself  
i went back more than 7 times at all  
costs

days i could barely look in the mirror  
hoping time would heal my emotional  
and physical wounds  
it hurt so bad but i had to see clearer

i realized my love runs like a rushing  
river  
as water moving through the rocks  
and sand  
you made my blood slow with every  
sliver, ever hurt, every quiver

my love flowed like water  
yours glowed like fire  
in the end you were'nt what my heart  
desired

a better future is what i needed, for  
our daughter  
out that clutch, i fought harder

my time being abused is done  
i praise the creator for letting me have  
a chance  
going forward i only want the best or  
none



# Avery's Song

by Faye Naveau

Way hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha,  
Wey hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha, HA!

I am worthy, I am here

I plant my feet, I face my fear

Wey hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha, HA!

Cedar, Sage, Sweetgrass, Tobacco

Smudge to cleanse or I'll go wacko

Wey hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha, HA!

Nishnawbe, we are love

Gizhe-manidoo, strength from above

Way hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha, HA!

Nishnawbe, feast, dance, pray

Nishnawbe here to stay!

Wey hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha, HA!

We are worthy,

We are here

We plant our feet

We face our fear!

Way hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha,

Wey hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha,

Wey hay ha ha, way hey ha, way hey ha ha, way hey ha, ha, HA!

# *A Blanket of Dirt*

by Alma-Lee Byzewski

A Blanket of Dirt

The Lost

Teeming with fearsome worms,

Their treasure of skulls and bones are tended to with care,

Some bones are broken. Some are opalescent and pearlized white,

Baby bones,

Still trying to grow.

The worms weave soft blankets of dirt,

The weft and warf,

In intricate patterns,

To cradle the bones in beautiful blankets of dirt.

# *Cadaver Doe*

by Colleen E Charlette

Cadaver Doe shouts to us in compressed tones.

Cadaver Doe awaits the delivery of Justice from the gallows gallery.

Cadaver Doe pleads with the gatekeeper to allow a breach of light through the dark cover.

Cadaver Doe sings her mourning song in the hope that it could be heard through all three dimensions.

Cadaver Doe will not relent until her unfinished story is told.





# Canada

by Sarah

*\*dedicated to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women\**

centuries of hatred  
stolen land  
silenced voices  
forgotten language  
buried culture.  
trauma that has shattered generations  
like glass dominos  
crashing into each other  
lying in shards, bearing the weight of the dominos fallen before.

warm food, families gather  
someone is missing  
they wait  
and wait  
and wait  
pudgy white men dressed in blue  
brush off our cries for help  
like crumbs on a plastic table

the food grows cold as the drum in my  
mother's, sister's, aunt's, daughter's chest

beats for the final time  
yet the river flows on  
the current unchanging,  
indifferent to the body it swallowed  
that will be discovered days, weeks, even months later  
forgotten by the men in blue  
the men who failed  
failed to respond  
failed to care  
failed to investigate  
failed to do their jobs.

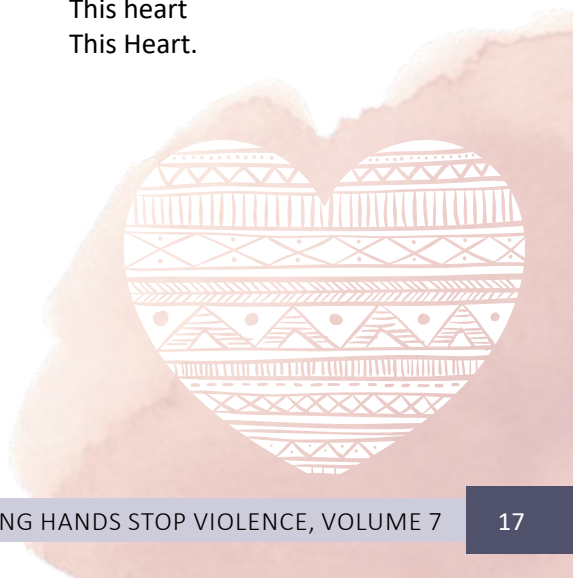
a life lost decades too soon  
dreams extinguished  
but remembered  
remembered by the family  
remembered by the friends  
remembered by the art teacher  
remembered by the lady at the bakery  
and by the stranger.  
the stranger they never met - never will  
the stranger who attends ceremonies and protests, the  
stranger who wants to learn  
the activist - a seed, a spark  
growing into and fueling a larger movement  
a sea of red  
red for remembrance  
red for justice  
red for the drum in my mother's, sister's, aunt's, daughter's  
chest  
the drum now silenced  
as the river flows on.

# Constriction

by E.J.Radford

Cascading layers  
Of salted waters  
I am drowning In my own tears  
The feeling of  
Not enough oxygen  
In the air Is overwhelming my senses  
Searching for breath  
Through the blurred vision  
The waterfalls  
Ceasing to flow  
I've cried ugly tears  
With such intensity  
My eyes  
Like fresh burns  
Open wounds  
To the air  
Sore to the breath of wind  
Unable to grasp clarity  
In these moments  
The grief  
An overwhelming flood Of carbon  
dioxide  
Depriving my lungs of oxygen  
The feeling of suffocating In my own  
presence  
Of tainted sense of perspective  
Of enclosed spaces  
Heart constricted  
Eyes aflood  
Body tensing  
Heartbeat stalling  
I am a disaster of collisions  
The meeting place of  
Too many intersecting  
Thoughts and feelings

And other people's pain  
Mixed with all of the pains I own  
That connect I cannot right now  
The ache is greater  
Than this little frame can handle I  
wasn't built  
To carry this much  
But I don't know how to stop  
Breaking under the weight  
Cracking under the pressure  
I am a fissure of emotion  
Unmaintainable mass  
Running critical  
Grasping at straws  
My toolbox feeling insufficient  
All these tools  
All this wisdom  
And I'm still trapped  
Behind these eyelids  
Behind this flesh prison  
Between these synapses  
Nothing is ever enough  
To contain this journey  
This heart  
This Heart.





## *Dear Auntie*

**by Joshua LeClair**

Bernadette LeClair  
Daughter to Esther  
Granddaughter of Lola and Laura  
My Auntie

The girl, the woman  
The love, the kindness unknown

My Auntie

Taken at 16

Never saw 17

My Auntie

The nieces, the nephews  
The family gatherings, the laughter  
A love unknown

I love you Auntie Bernadette

I miss you Auntie Bernadette

My Auntie

The page features a vertical orange band on the right side. The background is white with faint, stylized leaf outlines in grey and brown. The title is written in a blue, cursive font.

# *Death by Omission*

by Colleen E Charlette

It'll be a trackless undoing.  
We're talking layers of negative omission  
Like a multi-dimensional parlour game.  
So much so that when it all hits the fan,  
the birth of floundering begins.  
The cold trail is embanked with cold bodies.  
A predator's paradise.  
The trail is so buried and burned,  
the stench is very far-ly distant.  
There are those who still read the scent trails,  
it's deeply embedded.

# Debate

by Faye Naveau

I am worthy  
I am here  
I plant my feet  
I face my fears  
I want to run away  
I want to stay and play  
Where do I belong?  
Where am I today?  
Looking for connections  
The heart cries out  
Where do I belong?  
I want to shout  
I close my mouth  
For fear of being heard  
I want to release  
And fly like a bird  
The room where I was hurt  
Makes a difference, I blurt  
I need to be touched in a gentle way  
Please don't leave me, don't go away  
I'm not crazy  
You only hear  
The things that scare you  
And bring you fear  
You mock me and tease me  
Fuck you!! I'll please me!  
You don't deserve to know me  
And YOU can blow ME!  
"I'll give you something to cry about"  
What? You have more? I want to shout  
"You're crazy, your memory is hazy!"  
I'm not lazy, I feel sick  
And you were very quick  
To punish me with your moral stick  
The memories of a child's wars

Bring a life sentence of unseen bars  
Looking to escape,  
Looking for a way  
Wishing to be, a healthy Kwe  
Cedar, Sage, Sweetgrass, Tobacco  
Smudge to Cleanse or I'll go wacko  
Sing, Laugh, Pray to Creator  
Respect, Love, Kindness NOW, not later  
I bite my lip to stop from talking  
I want to run, but just keep walking  
Cleanse my body, cleanse my soul  
Feed my body, feeling whole?  
Not quite yet, it is coming  
Feel the energy, feel the strength  
I am going the whole length  
The journey is long  
Body's not strong  
Spirit is tough  
Is it enough?  
Could not handle the pain back then  
To myself, I have not been a friend  
They tried to quench my soul  
They failed  
I WILL BE WHOLE  
We are worthy  
We are here  
We plant our feet  
We face our fears!  
KWE

# *Destruction Denied!*

by Christine Cherniski

A quiet & hardworking man  
Most of your paychecks come home  
Usually there's food on the table  
And rarely your wife is alone

Your family all know not to test you  
Power & fear make you whole  
But controlling you is your fear  
And always you may lose control


You run & you hide; what a wimp  
You creep like the creep that you are  
You can't even admit that your fucked  
You hide & you tinker with the car

You drive into town for a part  
To keep your "great mission" alive  
You spend the whole day wasting time  
Come on 'Sis & I'll teach you to drive

You've adopted the roll of my father  
In you I am obligated to trust  
You gripped on my unexplored essence  
And abandoned my future in the dust

You took me aside & you trapped me in fear  
You shattered to pieces the soul  
Of my heart that contains my delicate side  
That young women all need, that you stole

Does it make you feel strong, this obsession of yours?  
Do you feel that it makes you a man?  
A coward you'll die absorbing the tears  
Your hellish damnation began



Betraying your torment & unmasculine self  
Have you found what you need in this barren of evil you wrought?  
I hate you with all that's imaginable  
And misery & sickening contempt that you've brought

Fuck you! & All others who follow your creed  
But not in the way that would pleasure your cult  
Damn you to whatever is worse than your hell  
And remember, it's all your own fault


I need to escape all you've set out to do  
You've hurt & you've anguished – all that I've to give  
You take all this pleasure so tormenting me  
In my relations with others your fantasy lives

I will have you know that you bastard from hell  
I shall conquer eternal the pain you cannot  
You haven't defeated me "oh daddy dear"  
Your ruin of me come to naught

& I'll have you aware it won't matter to me  
That you always may feel you are just  
Because somewhere in depths you can't even see  
Your manhood & pride have long rust

The wimp that you are now you always will be  
You don't win over me in this war  
I know you exist as a coward  
Seeing love through only our bars





But here's where you absolute moron I show  
That you've defeated yourself in your pain  
How I torture your bastardly ways  
Here's asshole where I win your game

My sensual being is not dead as you wish  
My pride living on strong in me  
The anger will go from the that I share  
Of disgust & your filth I'll be free

See: passion is something you cannot explore  
Your desire is sucked up by greed  
The use you possess to control & oppress  
Is something that I'll never need

I'll love & I'll show love that you'll never know  
My dignity has not been lost  
The warmest of futures is waiting for me  
But for you only anger & cost

You've defeated yourself once again "my old man"  
As only you feel you can do  
So pathetic you are in your world of unrest  
That I almost feel sorry for you

But not quite, so Fuck You!

# Full Circle

by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum

Safe Now.

I travel through the years  
Photos scattered on the table  
People places Time  
Transported through the images  
How did it all begin  
I hold my breath instinctive  
Sink into years gone by.

Return to the beginning  
How did it come to this  
Innocence and trusting  
Shining eyes and hope  
I hold the photos closely  
Transported to that time  
Unknowing of the danger  
Not seeing bait and trap  
Like flies in webs of spiders  
Not seen until too late.

Memories of the process  
As he yanked me back and forth  
Recall the pained betrayals  
The mind games and the words  
Relive tortured survival  
Not daring to rebut  
Recall the nights of weeping  
In hopelessness and loss  
Alone and isolation  
Invisible to most  
Who knew the true reality  
Who saw his crushing hold  
How could I run to freedom  
All doors were barred and closed.

And yet-

It grew so slow within me  
Relentless like a tide  
Within the steel grew stronger  
In spite of his control  
For each and every cruelty  
Love died a little more  
For each and every falsehood  
Within birthed Warrior truth  
No more! I rose and rallied  
And finally stood my ground  
I dared the brave release  
Pushed back until he broke  
Set free- my Self rebirthed.

Abandoning the lie  
The journey fully circles  
I safely turn within  
How had it come to this  
How did I miss the lie  
An answer must be found  
A story found in pictures  
In faces years gone by  
In memories kept on paper  
In photos on the table.

# The Gains of Pain

by Cher Obediah

hopelessness by definition  
holds hope  
it's a natural crevice  
a low lying landscape  
a place within  
where the wallpaper dark  
shields you in silence  
and strength is revealed  
a womb where  
miscalculation is recalibrated  
and pain transforms  
where your relationship  
with money cheapens  
and your partnership with peace  
gains wealth  
an abyss where  
the only acceptable  
vandalism  
on your boundaries'  
brickwork  
is the graffiti of self- love  
a place where people pleasing ends  
and personal power begins  
hopelessness is not  
without hope  
it is the loving valley of emergence

# Genocide

By Obzidion

G is for grief

Grief that has plagued my people for centuries

Grief that has caused a generational curse of self sabotaging destruction

Alcohol is rarely the only substance

Colonialism is corruption

E is for evil

Evil that was brought here against our will.

Evil that is now masked with holidays and coloured bills.

People say evil is invisible, that's only because they turn a blind eye

When you see an inuk begging for change do you continue to pass by?

When another native girl goes missing do you cry?

You are not the ones suffering inside.

N is for Novocain

A drug curated to help with pain

Useless when our communities have been stained with horror and carnage

You see, our pain runs much deeper than the average

There is no scale for us to pinpoint how bad it is


There is no scale that rates the pain of finding our children's bodies buried by  
the church

We have been tortured and burned.

Taken hostage.

Murdered.

Lost and forgotten.



O is for oppression

Let me give you some statistics

Just listen

How can we make up less than 4% of the Canadian population

But take up half a prison our women are 10x more likely to be a victim

But make up 50% of the incarcerated

We are 6x more likely to be murdered or missing

On top of that

No one is searching for our little girls who disappear

Our communities live in fear

Move off the reserve

Chances are you'll be gone in a year

C is for Christopher Columbus

My apologies Columbus

The first European man to touch our land If I could go back in time I'd sever his  
hands

Sign the treaties now stumpy

I is for Indian act

A document that outlines our rights under the Canadian government

But

When we fight for our rights we get punished

What good is an agreement when the other party abuses their power to go  
against it

In the end

It's all Bullshit

D is for decay

Our land is now dying after being stolen

The smell of buried children plagues our elders noses

Canada is built on top of rotted corpses

E is for endangered

Because that is what it means to be indigenous.

# Give me a reason

by Michelle Fiatsi

give me a reason to stop loving you.  
i have my reasons, but they're not enough.  
i still love you.  
i thought the bad memories were more than enough,  
given they outweigh the good ones.  
but if im being honest it gives me a reason to keep  
loving you.  
to keep holding on, holding onto what could have been.  
maybe your reason will be enough for me.  
but deep down i'm hoping it's not enough.  
i guess i don't want to stop loving you.  
but why though? the bad memories certainly outweigh  
the good by a landslide.  
loving you is easier than hating you.  
because once i let that love go and start to hate you?  
i don't think i'll be able to handle letting in all that hurt.  
i know i won't, if i'm being honest.  
truthfully speaking, it's too much hurt that i'd rather  
just channel that energy into loving you.  
why? because i'd rather love you than hate you.  
despite everything..loving you is probably the easiest  
thing for me to do because i've done it for so long.  
why stop now?

give me a reason.  
my reasons aren't enough.  
i need a reason to let go of you .  
i need a reason to stop caring about you.  
i need a reason to stop loving you.  
because the bad memories aren't doing it anymore.  
i just need a reason.  
one, will do.  
then i can let you go. i can stop caring about you. i can  
finally stop loving you.  
just one, and then i'll stop.



# Glass Eyes

by Claudia Lockman

In her flannel gown, she stands in the pouring rain  
As the flashing lights, light up the night's sky  
You can hear the sirens from miles away  
As she witnessed the worst a child should that day  
They notice the bruising without questions  
As the tears from her eyes just wash away  
And she stares in the distance with no direction  
Her eyes avoiding all the attention  
Glass eyes see everything  
Innocent smile remains confused  
Every fight, every hit, big or small  
She sees it all, She Felt it all but she can't do a thing  
Through the years she hears her mother's whispers  
To be strong and carry on,  
Don't ever let the devil take a hold on you  
Through the tears, she whispers mom " I Love you"  
She grew up, to be a kind loving soul  
She met a man and became a mother of her own  
She saw the signs, memories flashed through her mind  
She recognized the devils eyes,,,  
22 years of secrets is enough for her  
Innocent smile no longer confused  
She walked out with her head held high  
And here baby girl safe by her side.....  
**Glass eyes see everything**  
**Every fight, every hit, big or small**  
**She will never again live through such a thing**  
**She will never forget such a thing**

# An Honest Flower

by Colleen Toulouse

A daisy flower, in full bloom, under the sun,  
Felt the warm wind, while having fun.  
Ladybug danced freely upon her,  
Singing songs, the happiest they were.  
Grandmother Cedar kept a nurturing eye,  
Of all things living under the sky.  
Flower celebrated each day with content,  
Many visitors spoke of love and its sentiment.  
Not understanding, flower longed for love,  
A gift from Creator from high above.

A handsome man arrived in the field,  
He spoke of her beauty then he kneeled.  
'Please be with me forever, flower,  
Feel our bond, feel its power.'  
Flower brushed a soft kiss upon his face,  
Feeling warmth in his strong embrace.  
His words, held true in her heart,  
This is love, this is a good start!  
'Goodbye Grandmother Cedar and ladybug,  
Off I go, but first, accept a farewell hug.

The handsome man asked to pluck flower,  
She did agree, her love did allow her.  
He snapped her long green stem and left  
He took her honest love, it was theft.  
Days went by, the winds started blowing,  
Alone, flower cold, was no longer glowing.  
Ladybug came and asked for songs,  
'Dearest companion, with all the wrongs,  
My songs are now filled with tears,  
There's sadness, no more cheers.'

Her petals wilting and browning,  
In her existence, she was drowning.  
'I have no strength to be a friend,



If you want, we could pretend.  
I am ugly and truly broken,  
This is fate, it has been spoken.'

Her breaking heart echoed in the land,  
'It hurts, can someone give me a hand.

The pouring rain grew heavy and hard.  
She gave love, only for him to discard.  
Forcing her downwards to the ground,  
Is she alone, or will she be found.  
'Grandmother Cedar, will my spirit ever heal?  
The good in life, will I ever feel?  
In the asking, Grandmother Cedar poured her tea,  
'Drink my cleansing medicine, you'll see.  
The Creator gifted me to heal the hurting soul,  
This heartbreak is real, it has taken its toll.

'You believed the dishonest handsome man,  
In passing time, your heart will withstand.  
Honesty in relationships, is its truest form,  
If not mutual, the outcome, a storm.'  
'But, what have I learned Grandmother Cedar?'  
'You and all women, no one must mistreat her.  
Broken spirits will heal after mistrust and loss,  
You are sacred, you are nothing to toss.  
Surrounded with guidance and loving faces,  
Look for support that creates safe spaces.

Your spirit will resonate life and be content,  
You deserve respect, as it was meant.  
Your strength and compassion, take hold,  
Flower, oh Flower, you are nature's gold.  
Be honest with yourself in accepting your gifts,  
Keep singing your songs for it lifts.  
Flower grew tired of doom and gloom,  
Welcoming gratitude, she began to bloom.  
Seasons passed, it was once again spring,  
Ladybug arrived then flower began to sing.

# *I Broke Free*

by Colleen Toulouse

I found myself swept up like prey  
In romantic ideation,  
sweetened by dreams of a blanket  
securely wrapped around two spirits.

Stained in blood and tears,  
smothered in fear and darkness,  
my blanket swallowed me.

I stayed  
underneath its heaviness,  
a confusing cycle of abuse  
while yearning for flight  
and desiring stability.

I held tenderly onto our union,  
pleading,  
hold me,  
cherish me,  
love me.

I pulled frantically from our union,  
pleading,

don't hit me,  
don't hurt me,  
don't break me.

Once soaked in manipulation and  
pain,  
coldness hardened my blanket.  
The frayed relationship wore me  
down  
to threads.

My awaking spirit sought freedom  
by tearing the misleading blanket.  
I broke free.  
I fled  
and found warmth  
as well as solace  
within my comforting arms.

# *I Marched In Red*

by Jean Forget

I marched in red for those no longer here  
For those women who must live in fear  
From my head to my feet  
I walked tall for those I'll never meet  
For those with no more time to pray  
that no longer get to meet the day  
I marched in red to help keep the memory  
Of those lost to us in history  
I use my hands to do what's right  
To stand in solidarity; to join the fight  
For all those who have been taken  
I pray our world to waken  
I marched in red, their lives had meaning  
It should never have ended with their leaving  
Their lives had meaning, they were someone  
A life of love where now there is none  
Our actions and our words become prayer  
To the words and actions that are not fair  
I marched in red for I once was lost  
But I'll stand, and fight, no matter the cost  
I'll march with my people this time around  
March together, feet on the ground  
I am thankful I still have the words to say  
It is for you my lost loves that I will pray  
I marched in red for things greater than me  
For those members of my unknown family  
Whatever is your identity  
Remember, you belong you Great and Magical entity  
Together we can make that change  
Turn to love what is now rage  
To step out of our crushing cage  
To write our own story and turn that page  
Together in unity we can be strong  
Come together and sing our own song  
I marched in red for you and me  
For we all come from the same great mother,  
Don't you see...?

# *I'm everything they said I wouldn't be*

**by Silence Staats**

you blamed your unwanted hands on my body on the generational  
trauma (both lost in our lineage somewhere),  
the same trauma i will now carry until i am still under the universe -  
but when i decompose,  
i will find myself buried side-by-side with the person who detached  
my spirit from my body with force,  
torn away with greed -  
the very hands that i thought had ruined me,  
had diminished my childhood,  
citing that "he shared the same cycles,  
that it was all he knew,  
and so would i."  
he was wrong,  
i am a gentle, softened, sensitive, steadfast emotional whirlwind  
(with more love than i know what to do with) -  
i am slightly weathered and more than exhausted,  
but still sober, and still in control of myself and my grief -  
my hands have not once maimed in the same way his did,  
they never will -  
because the situations that should have led me directly into the  
ground,  
or worse, a carbon copy of the person he still is,  
has instead driven me to become a vessel of adoration, light,  
protection, and beauty -  
working with the hordes of ancestors that are patch-worked into my  
genealogy,  
tucked in my rib-cage,  
holding onto the hands of a frightened girl,  
and showing her into womanhood with a kiss on the forehead;  
fledged, free,  
with repeated whispers that i cement my own path,  
everything-all-at-once, they have shown me a fighter -

# *In Memory.....*

by Tuesday Johnson-MacDonald

I spent the day today trying to hide among the living, among those laughing and smiling in the sunshine.  
What are we to do now..... but to embrace the thunderstorms and to ride the torrid waves of the cold blue ocean.  
It is the most amazing sensation to walk in numbness. To watch ones self put one foot before the other, for today eludes me.  
What are we to do now..... but to embrace the thunderstorms and to ride the torrid waves of the cold blue ocean.  
How am I to feel, sad for my lost Rejoicing in honour for all of who you were.  
My heart is broken as I swim among the lost.  
What are we to do now....I see your smile, I can hear you laugh. My heart warms with joy, with thoughts of you.  
I can see the sunshine and watch the flowers bloom in the spring and summer rays....is it a dream so far away?  
What are we to do now....I see your smile, I can hear you laugh. My heart warms with joy with thoughts of you.  
Oh how I loved you. Surely you saw my eyes shine and you heard the warmth in my voce when I called you name.  
Did you know I admired your strength and grace? I love standing in your presence.  
Did you know how much strength and confidence your acts of kindness and gentle love provided?  
Oh what are we to do now..... but to embrace the rain storms and to ride the waves of the deep blue ocean.  
I will cry today and probable tomorrow for my lost. I'll smile when I hear your loving voice and gentle push towards the fresh spring air. I will honour your heart and memory.  
For what are we to do now....but to remember....to honour the gifts, the nuggets of treasure you left for us to embrace.  
In memory.....



# *In My Moccasins*

by Louise T Jacko

How would you feel, what would you think If you were to  
walk in my moccasins  
Would you feel as deeply as I  
Would you understand why I cry  
Would you stand still, and let the pain engulf you  
Or keep walking as if nothing was happening  
Would your step be light with all the burdens upon you  
Or would it be quick to outrun the pain in your heart  
Would your step be sure, with all the confusion within you  
For many years I have walked in these Moccasins  
While you stand in your shoes looking down on me, thinking  
you could do better.  
I have travelled far, been through much  
Seen and heard many things I have fought hard, won little  
and lost everything  
And still ii wear these Moccasins  
These are the Moccasins I was born to walk with  
Those which you can never fit

# *In The Darkness*

by Tara Jeanne

Black are her wings  
Darker than the night  
My old friend has come to visit; and boy is she a sight  
She's flown in with a vengeance to whisper her sweet lies  
Only this time I feel ready; I feel ready for the fight  
She rattles off her stories  
She tells me I'm alone  
She breathes her venom into me  
Doubting all the truth I've come to know  
I'm trapped in her tsunami of sorrow  
She never lets me speak  
For she is the almighty; and I am the weak  
She stares as the tears roll down my cheeks  
Just waiting for the moment; I raise my hands in defeat  
I've fought the good fight to keep her at bay  
But, it's in these lonely nights she reminds me; she's here to stay  
She's come to see me lose  
as her demons attack my soul  
But, little does she know, this time I'm in control  
I take a look in the mirror as she watches with disdain  
And start to remind myself of who I've become  
The morning sun that will shine through my window  
The breeze that caresses my face  
The love and the joy that fills my life  
And all the memories I have yet to create  
I take a look at my son, my sister, my family and friends and the darkness, she  
starts to fade.  
Tonight I fought the darkness and the demons she brought inside  
Tonight, I may have won, but many don't survive.



# *Invisible*

by Danijela Milić

No, these dark sunglasses on a dreary autumn day  
are not part of my Halloween costume.  
I don't hide from the Sun,  
as the Sun has hidden from me.  
I hide so you won't ache for my bruises  
I hide to protect you, my child,  
from the cruelties of this world.  
One fell on the knife's point,  
while carrying it – of course.  
Another deserved it, for sure,  
by uttering that her body was hers.  
The third managed to run away,  
but can't see her children anymore.  
One of these three women made a statistic.  
I am invisible.  
With invisible bruises.  
Shame is the most painful bruise to bear.  
Who will believe me when even I sometimes don't?  
He is a good man, don't cause trouble.  
Don't shame the family,  
It will pass.  
I will pass.  
With my invisible bruises.  
There is no proof, they will say.  
Nobody has yet invented an X-ray for the beaten soul.



# *The Kick-in-the-Face Horses*

by Alma Lee Byzewski

The big-eyed horses stand,  
Motionless  
A grove of legs,  
Entangled,

They lean on each other,  
Catching their breath from a long ridge walk,  
They support each other's weight,  
Buttress of muscle and brain,  
They stand undisturbed,  
Trusting the stability of their formation

Knowing they are ready,  
To kick in the face,  
Whatever attacks from behind.





## *Late arrival*

by Valerie Vickery

Lift, with trembling hands,  
the drunken teapot flavored with crazy water.  
Amber destruction poured over sadness, disguised as anger and fear.  
Tears spilled over teacups.  
Tongues loosened,  
Ojibwe falls on deaf ears.  
Our stolen mother- tongue.  
The poster bearing your image, marks you an unwanted woman.  
All over town. No crazy water for you- yet, there is always a way.  
What happened to you?  
To us?  
The answer lies misplaced and alone, buried along that highway.  
Fast forward by decades:  
this story, seems not for us to know in this lifetime,  
yet: blood memory is enshrined in our marrow.  
Now unearthed, we emerge as unfallen maple flowers, hawks and  
hummingbirds.  
North Star vows to find our way home,  
even if we arrive sixty years late.

# Letting Go

by Anonymous

Yesterday is gone,  
So is the trouble.  
I had shoved it back.  
So far back,  
Not to remember.  
But this is my peace,  
Letting go.  
Letting my soul rest,  
Believing I can heal.  
Can't win a battle  
With silence.  
So here I stand.  
My voice  
My choice  
I'm Letting Go





*MMIW*

**By Jean Forget**

On This day of love, we come to mourn  
Those lost too soon whose life was torn  
To become an unsolved crime  
When they should have been met by father time  
Those still here we must also honor  
staying strong take much inner power  
endless searching can take its tole  
it can be taxing on the soul  
while trying re connect and re-embroider  
the damaged seams of our worlds disorder  
indigenous women have so much worth  
they are the light and spirit of earth  
Life itself depends on them  
This broken story we must hem  
Open our eyes, we have been shown  
Too many red dresses have be sewn  
As a prayer to all, these words are said  
See each and all safe home to bed  
Although Our ancestors live within us for eternity  
Let us not allow another to be lost in memory

# *My body pulls me towards you*

by Shelby Gagnon

My body pulls me towards you,  
I greet, immerse, dive.  
Lust and love in life breathe through me.  
My body is held by you,  
As I am floating in time and space.  
Silence, until I hear a beat.  
An entity of energy at my core,  
Ebbs and flows through my veins.  
Feeling gravity, like an undertow, you pull in all directions of my being, my spirit.  
Expanding to every cell, every sensation.  
Currents of desire, creating consciousness of understanding, respect, trust and  
pleasure.  
Waves deep with feelings and movement,  
Dripping inside and outside of my body.  
Reaching out my arms, my mind, my heart.  
You are there, you always were.  
I knew your love before I knew your name,  
Nibi.

# *My Enemy*

by Sharon Dolly Syrette

My Enemy  
How to feel today  
Angry, sad, confused, upset  
Feelings and emotions all in turmoil  
Not knowing which way to turn.

Wondering ever so – why?  
Should the relationship continue or end?  
Should you fight to stay?  
Leaving is so easy.

Alcohol seems to be his solution.  
It always wins in the end  
Never considering the consequences  
Never caring.

Always remembering the past  
Never forgetting.



## *Nibi Kwe*

by Valerie Vickery

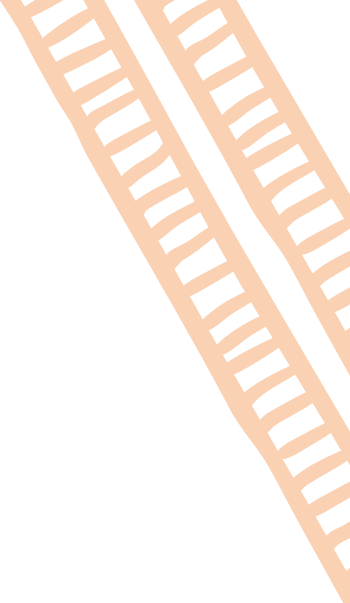
She moves in nibi, as Ophelia.  
Hands outstretched, eyes wide open,  
greeting Grandfather sky.  
Travelling the current of black river.  
Not yet seen, her body gently sways, in full Regalia.  
Moving past bones of ancestors, among the riverbanks, in unmarked graves.  
The bear bundles of her people, released in spring, entangled in her chestnut  
hair.  
Her voice now silent, once sung in ancient language.  
Heard by spirits, in the beat of drum.  
Kwe, who will light the fire, and when?  
You have yet to make your way to those you sang for.  
Elder, please tell me the meaning of this waking nightmare.  
No longer embedded in a dream

# Ogichidaa Kwe [Warrior Woman]

by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum

Ogichidaa! it whispered breathless  
Like drums within the deep  
Rumbling pounding heartbeat.  
A memory of who I was drifts past,  
Like a Shade in the dark  
Aimless whisp  
Where did I go  
I wonder, how did I get lost?  
Spirit called, then vanished, and I wandered again.  
Ogichidaa! it calls again, lingers in the moment  
Memory of Elder's teaching  
This is who you are!  
The beat arises pounding  
Women can be warriors, you are One,  
I SEE Woman standing proudly, refusing to be moved  
Protecting earth and waters, honoured giver of life  
Arise you Warrior Woman!  
Be who you can be!  
Learn again the teachings lost to mists of time  
Stolen by the others, taught to bow the line  
Arise you Warrior Woman!  
BE who you should be!  
Spirit and Mother SEE you  
That strength that lies within you,  
FEEL it call and  
RISE  
HEAR the heartbeat pounding like drums from eons past.





Pounding thunder heartbeat calls me to rise and stand  
No more the lies and violence  
No more the weakened frame  
Deep within it strengthens,  
Spirit calls again  
Arise you Warrior Woman!  
Ogichidaa you are!  
In time I KNOW, believe it!  
In time I choose to stand

No more I say!  
and hold to it!  
Drums within the deep  
I stand declare my freedom  
Rumbling pounding beat!  
Spirit-cover protects in moment's desperate danger  
Others gather round me,  
protect me as I flee  
Ogichidaa! it calls me, rising from within  
Drums of Warrior Women,  
roaring from the past  
Drums that strengthen, calling,  
I claim back who I am Warrior Woman am !!  
Ogichidaa Kwe n'dawe  
Spirit and Mother see me  
Heartbeat calls within  
Thunder rumble pounding  
Drums within the deep.



## *Cicum*

by Lisa-Ann Laforme

She didn't come home, last night, I prayed  
If I had only known she had died  
i wouldn't have lamented my heart, my soul, my mind  
Instead, 'Id avenge, seek, pray and find  
What is in the mind of a murderous bastard  
To take such beauty away  
So deeply morbidly empty  
What does your conscience have to say  
You remain a prowler  
Stinking and rotten to the core  
Slithering through time  
Until you are no more  
then you must face this delicate angel  
Reflect upon your deed  
the giver of life  
she carried your seed  
Lisa

# The Peaceful Warrior

by Kaluyuti

My name is Kaluyuti and I'm at war for Peace  
all senseless attacks I see must cease  
So what am I doing here and what do  
I really want to say  
is that this world has got to change its way  
see, I'm going to battle for the red white yellow and black  
I'm going to fight for the ones who can't fight back  
and I'm talking about all the creatures from the water to the sky  
I'm talking about all the issues from the truth to the lies  
and I'm gonna make my stand with a paper and a pen  
you wanna argue that, go back to bed again  
cause you never gonna win against what I stand for  
so sit down, shut up and listen as I give my grand tour  
I'm going to target the corruption in our government  
I'm going to target the poison in our environment  
I'm going to target the injustices to the people  
I'm going to hit every target  
or I won't keep still  
and I'm going to battle the battle of the battles  
I'll shake up the cage until it rattles  
cause you never gonna get rid of me  
not until the problems of the world are cut at the knee  
know what I'm saying?  
Let me kick this out one more time  
so crystal clear is the message in my rhyme  
my name is Kaluyuti and I'm at war for peace  
all senseless attacks I see must cease  
I'm going to fight for the red white yellow and black  
I'm going to fight for the ones who can't fight back  
so let's keep passing around our information  
so we can improve this planet through education  
somebodys gotta make the people aware  
someones gotta make everybody care  
so pass my message on if you dare  
and whether it's mine or yours,

we all got to share  
because there's more power in one mans voice  
than all the weapons of military choice  
so with my voice and your voice  
we can shout out loud that we belong to the human race  
and that we are proud  
you don't have to be a master of science  
to see that we need to create a worldwide alliance  
in order to approach the corporations  
that's axing people for their insubordination  
when they bring what's happening to our waters  
and the diseases spreading through our slaughters  
so what about the government officials that stand behind them  
with their backdoor handshakes and verbal deals that bind them  
We have seen how the world can be devastated  
through the actions of men with minds of hatred  
Look at Hitler, Charlie Manson and even Osama  
these are the men who've caused us trauma  
then we have cops with hookers in the backseat  
we have punk ass teens knifing each other in the streets  
we have drug dealers hooking up kids with crack  
theres a lot shit in this world that's just whack  
we have people who stand up for their rights  
and get shot down  
well you better batton down the hatches cause we heading into the next round  
There's no getting through a war without losses  
Lennon, King and Ghandi are all on symbolic crosses  
speakers of the past  
are going to inspire speakers of the future  
and we're going to try to heal this world with a metaphorical suture  
my name is Kaluyuti and I'm at war for peace  
all senseless attacks I see must cease  
But I won't be able to move this world all alone  
so just remember this is also your home  
so if I put my voice with your voice and we shout together  
why people gonna hear us and things are gonna get better  
Denay, peace

# Pictures on the Table

by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum

Pictures on the table  
Scattered coloured squares  
Radiant face and smiles  
Fade as years go by  
Memories of my laughter  
Moments caught in time  
Recall the loss of love  
My eyes speak through that passage  
I journey back through time

I see the spark relinquish  
And hidden eyes emerge  
Soul-wounded veiled these Windows  
They could not fully hide  
All hope and love had vanished  
Survival reigned supreme  
Who saw these tortured Windows  
Who knew the truth within

Alone in isolation  
Escape a fruitless whim  
Till nothing lived but Shadow  
The spark was gone within  
Dead eyes in coloured photos  
No smile permitted then  
HIS face a painted falsehood  
Persona Grand designed  
I stand beside him tortured  
Who saw the broken spine

These pictures on the table  
A story told in eyes  
At first aglow all joyful  
Then agony of mind  
A tortured soul defiled  
My eyes descend in darkness  
Until that cord was broken  
And steel was found within

Reborn the Strength of Woman  
No more to bow again  
Control was finally broken  
Now free to breathe and live  
I sit in sun and safety  
The story comes full circle  
In scattered coloured squares  
In eyes of photo'd memories  
In faces back in time  
In pictures on the table



# Precious Little One

by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum

O my Precious Little One  
How long have you been weeping  
Wailing at the foot of Life  
Yet unheard and alone  
No hearts to hear, no eyes to see you  
How long have I hid you away within  
me

O Precious Little One  
Shame Shame they called  
Bewildered you ran  
But no one saw and no one heard  
No arms to hold you  
No safe place to warm you  
You wept till tears failed you  
Aching in isolation  
You could never understand  
That Shame was not yours to carry

O Precious Little One  
So many years I have hidden you away  
Until the healing journey  
Cracked open that darkness  
So deep that well, so powerful that  
dam-burst  
The pain too much to carry openly  
Until now.

Your weeping becomes mine again  
Your pain grows to flood me  
The tears rush out again  
Healing painful memory  
Now I shed the Lie of Shame  
I know it was never mine  
I recall the lonely darkness  
And take steps to bring new light  
I shed the Lie of Not Enough  
Embrace the hidden Child  
I weep with her at memory  
Let her tell her tale  
Safe today we walk together  
Now hand in hand  
O Precious Little One  
I bring us home.



# *The Protection*

by Alma Lee Byzewski

There is no successful hunt from a wild horse,  
No target gained with a crooked arrow,  
Do not trust the man who goes dark at night,  
Do not pretend to be as big as your shadow,

Walk beside the horse you can not tame,  
Watch, if you do not trust,  
Keep your words in your mouth,  
They are not safe in the mouths of others.

Blaze, blaze in the sun,  
Blind your fears with light,  
Speak, speak your words to the sun and moon,  
Your words are precious to them,  
Stand in the light,  
Know then,  
Your shadow will always be under your own feet.





# Resiliency

by Susan Richards-Brant

Generational traumas placed us, and for generations to come  
Only to whisper those secrets,  
holding the deep where they're from  
Hearts aching for decades,  
your shame kept safe down inside  
Knowing the truth all along,  
yet, still I am dancing with pride  
Sure, I still tremble with sadness,  
but I am healing today  
So, if you just take my hand and I'll show you the way  
While I take back my language, with my culture and song  
Oppression I leave behind me, freedom was there all along  
Owning your actions, then forgiveness,  
I'll show In sharing circles,  
moving forward I'll go  
Abandoning all the sorrow,  
walking away with head held high I'll prey for your happy tomorrow,  
with this last kiss good-bye.

# Revolution Rising

by Tina Miller

The voiceless found their voices,  
together,

United by rebellion.

It was revolutionary to be women,

It was radical to embrace it,

It was courageous to demand respect.

Their voices rose with identity,  
echoing across the land.

Their beating hearts,  
ignited a fire,

that burned a path,  
leading them to their freedom.

With fists raised,  
singing their song of resilience.

Collectively going forward,  
baring their crosses,  
for women must struggle,  
in order to gain.

Their dignity fanned the flames,

Their voices breathed life,  
into the voiceless,

transferring the soul of,

“Rise up and lock arms - we are women; together we will lead the revolution.”

As women,  
we are one heart,  
rebellious and strong,  
Revolutionary!

# She is Free

by Tara Jeanne

Before there was him...there was her  
Before there was loss, there was love  
Before the tears, before the grief, before the nights she couldn't sleep  
There was joy, there was laughter and peace  
She wanted to heal all his jagged edges  
She wanted to "fix" all his foolish messes  
She lifted him up, on that pedestal so high  
She gave him a home and more love than he's ever known  
Before there was him, she shined so bright  
Before there was him, she had the fight  
There's a pain and heartache only her heart knows  
There's a trail of "what ifs" that start to grow  
"What if" she did more  
"What if" she said less  
"What if" she....fuck this.  
Before there was him.  
THERE WAS HER  
She is here to pick up her crown that was lost in the rubble  
She is here to rise, no longer stumble  
She is here to love herself and continue her hustle  
She is here to heal all the parts of her he crumbled  
After him...she is free. She is free.

# She Was A True Bellwether

by Deanna Naveau-Heyde

*Poem for MMIW, in memory of Loretta Saunders  
& all of the others who've never been found.*

She was a true bellwether  
the breath that she spoke was loud and clear  
a breath that reached far from within  
deep down, the muscles of her diaphragm were as strong as the words she laid  
out on paper  
Her willingness to learn and share  
to strengthen a nation on the trivial loses of missing and murdered women will  
poster respectfully  
She was a bellwether her unfinished work - never to be forgotten.



# Still

by Louise Theresa Jacko

STILL

I walk in silence  
Speaking to myself only in my mind  
My voice is silenced  
I have learned well how to live in this hell  
I hide my face to weep  
With ears and eyes open Is how I now sleep  
A mouse is who I've become  
Shriveled and cowering in shame  
Somehow I was the only one to blame  
The constant shouting in my ears  
Playing on every one of my fears  
It's gone on far too many years  
I no longer have the will  
So i've become still.

# Stop

by Susan Richards-Brant

With the stench of Bourbon on your breath  
Closing my eyes I can see my death  
Slapped to the ground, same old same  
Now I'm forced to carry your shame  
Day after day, next one is always worse  
You yell, scream, you smack, and curse  
STOP...before it's too late  
STOP...is this really my fate  
This life fills me with despair  
Well, nobody said it'll be fare  
Alcohol will take it away  
It may, but only for a day  
As good as it gets  
With no hidden assets  
STOP...let me in from the rain  
STOP...you've rewired my brain  
Whiskey and Rum has changed your view  
But now it's killing me too  
My soul is just black and blue  
Yet I still try loving you  
I feel so disrespected  
What's my need to be accepted  
STOP...you've taken a vow  
STOP...find a way now  
Take your empty promises, abuse no more  
Last time you knock me out on the floor  
Now I know your love is fake  
So keep Slithering away snake  
You asked me into your life  
You made me your wife  
STOP...you are leaving today  
STOP...for forgiveness you better pray



# *A Study in Missingness*

by Colleen E Charlette

an incomplete deck of cards

living an entire lifetime seeing the colour bar with a piece of the spectrum  
missing

beige-brown colour blindness, anyone?

a language based on an alphabet that has almost all of the vowels present  
except “U” and “I.”

a television’s remote control without batteries

official reports of enquiries without the damning facts of the matter

macular degenerative eyesight cavities,

a void of enamel and dentin

nativity dioramas with no baby or only two wise men

a “kibosh” move when it comes to tolerance

greed and deceit’s “safe word”

a smoking gun

an orchestra without a first violin

Yoda’s proper grammar usage

a piano with 87 keys

boundaries and limits for the disenfranchised and dysfunctional

a musical scale with no key of C

a vitamin deficiency taken to an extreme resulting in malnutrition

family member relationships for Sixties Scoop survivors

a scientific table of elements with no noble gases

a solution to cool the earth’s oceanic base temperature while keeping the planet  
humanly-inhabitable

my sense of humour in a dearth of compassion

4,000 First Nations women in Canada



# *Tear Drops In the Rain*

by Sharon Dolly Syrette

Tear Drops in the Rain  
Hear the whisper of the breeze  
It tells of a grieving heart  
Hear the wind blowing through the trees  
It speaks of lovers torn apart.

Hear the crackle of thunder  
It tells of my sorrow and pain  
As I look out my window  
And watch the pouring rain.

As I lay here and think  
of all the good times we once shared  
The lightning flashes a brief reminder  
of how much you said you cared

As I look up in the sky  
my eyes take in the rough, cloudy, grey skies  
I once again remember  
those kind moments  
and the tears slowly fill my eyes.

I walk outside into the storm  
My heart filled with pain  
The thunder sounds; the lightning flashes  
As my tears mingle with the rain.



# They Had Names

by Ananya Pawtey

Her name is Beverly Albrecht  
They called her 66  
When they came to get her  
Her heart murmured  
So she donned her armour  
To prove that she was no conformer  
But little girls are not suited to the weight of chainmail  
So with a kiss and a hug her comrade let her in Residential school!  
What a place Gain your uniform and lose your name  
The only requirement? Well you better be scared  
The day starts with a visit to the Mush Hole  
So eat your sloppy grains  
And don't leave behind any remains  
Remember if you let it up it'll only go down again  
Now it's time to lose your tongue  
And maybe your family too  
Brothers and sisters kept apart  
And Sometimes even made to rumble  
Sisters pitted against each other  
By the house-mothers  
Better to be angry at each other  
Than be cross with the true scoundrels  
The ones Dressed in black  
With wrinkles created from frowns rather than smiles  
They would ensure that warmth was a foreign concept  
And that cold would stay in her bones  
Passed down from generation to generation  
Adept only at destroying  
Much like Gaea's blood curse  
Her name is Blanche Hill-Easton  
They called her 10  
The death of a beloved forced her out of the woods  
And the need to eat left her at the Mohawk Institute  
There she scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed  
Until she scrubbed all of the feeling out of her

And the mush Oh the mush!  
Served with blue milk  
She can't bear to eat it anymore  
Another thing little girls aren't used to is loneliness  
They especially aren't used to being punished for being lonesome  
A teacher from the same place as her mom Simcoe and Simcoe  
The place that harkens  
One would think that being born in such a place  
Would lead to them being better listeners  
Yet She took a little too much glee In strapping a crying child  
But still she went on Drawing a beautiful world  
Unlike the one she was in  
Only to be told that a girl like her couldn't imagine such beauty  
His name is Geronimo Henry  
They called him 48  
Digging up his nightmare hoping not to find another one  
Over 200 graves found  
He hopes he's not standing on another one  
And we all sit here today  
Forcing ourselves to remember  
To keep looking  
For bodies and for memories  
The morning dew whispering to us what could have been  
And the glaring sun showing us what is  
To remember what was forgotten  
The children murdered and the languages forgotten  
Children that had their childhoods stolen  
And the parents that could never give their children what they lost  
Through the cyclical nature of intergenerational trauma  
We are still in trapped in the bony clutches of residential school  
And so we must remember  
And we must know Every Child Matters

# The Thin Veil

by Mary Ann Sackabuckshkum

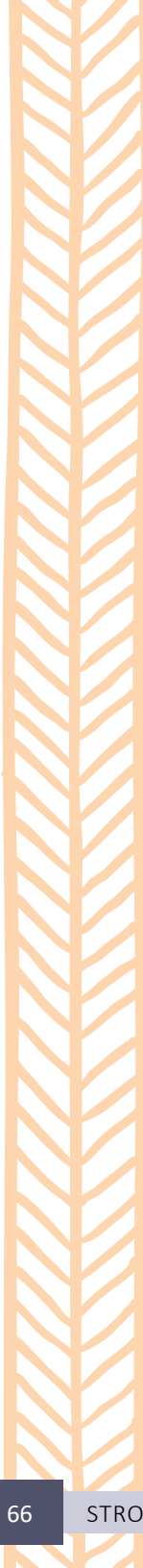
Was That You  
Last night, when Veil thins  
And the Silver Light merges with the corporeal darkness  
Was that You hovering on the edge?  
Afraid to enter,  
Hesitation,  
Wondering if You were welcome...  
Hoping.

Was that You?  
A Shadow among shadows  
Whispering through the Veil.  
Waking me.  
The wind and rain against the window  
Tears of the Earth mingling with my own,  
As I feel your Soul crying out in Sorrow.  
Lament, lament your Darkness,  
Lament the Emptiness  
The Loss.  
Lament, lament your foolishness.

It was You wasn't it?

Such depths of Your Sorrow, waves upon waves,  
Crashing against the shores of Your Life, resonating through my  
soul.  
Sorrow and tears at where You find yourself,  
That I am no longer there at your side, your steady Rock.

And I lament my loss; the hope, the desire to connect, to  
'Mean Something' to someone.  
I lament the years I have wasted, trying in vain to create my  
heart's Home  
In Your Emptiness.



The Silver thread still ties us together  
The Silver chain of souls still lingers.  
So be it.

I will know when You leave  
My Soul will know Your Flight.  
I pray, my compassion remains  
But I can no longer Stand at Your side.  
I must, I will  
Go on alone.  
As will You.

Misty Soul reaching to me through the Veil  
Weeping, lamenting.  
I can no longer be the rock that steadies You.  
Turn Your heart to the LifeGiver now  
Before it is too late for You.  
Grasp that last shred of Wisdom that Your Darkness has not yet  
consumed  
And return to the LightGiver with a humble heart.

The Veil closes.  
The slumbering darkness returns,  
Quiet is restored.  
Rain and wind comfort my soul.  
My eyes hold my sadness, my heart steadies.  
My Hope is My Rock -Creator of All- and  
I return to sleep, praying gratefulness that  
Even in my aloneness  
I am never truly Alone.

# *Time Has Come*

**by Sharon Dolly Syrette**

Time Has Come  
Time has come to mend old wounds  
To leave the past behind and go on.

Time has eased the pain  
of our broken hearts  
and love has returned  
Now the sun shines once again.

I wish time could erase  
the torment that tore us apart  
and bring back  
those happy, joyous days.

But too much has happened  
and too much time has passed.

One day we'll look back  
and see that life had to run that way  
in order to find our new love.

# *Jina Fontaine*

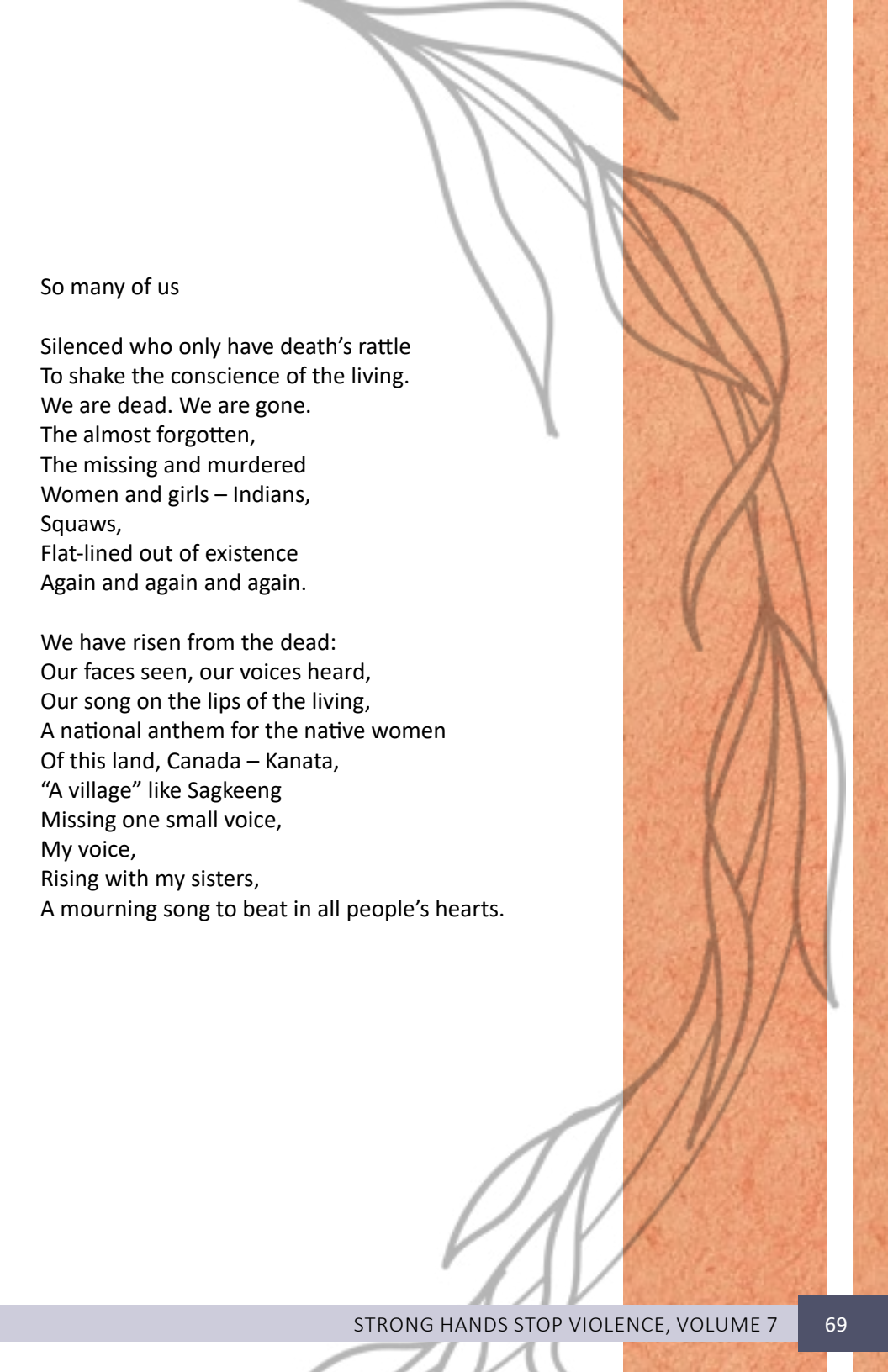
by Douglas Sinclair

The river is cold.  
Bubbles rise to the surface – my spirit's  
Last breath, the last and final gasp  
From a broken body abandoned by the blind  
Streets of Winnipeg to this unholy grave  
That was once cradle to so many  
Cree, Ojibwa, Assiniboine.  
Now, another Anishinaabe in The Red  
Whose pulse weakens under the weight  
Of another unsung prayer -

Why am I here? In the dark? Alone?

Listening to the sounds of my silence  
Fade into the exhaustion that was my life  
Far far away from Sagkeeng  
And home.  
Who will hear my song rising  
From death's cocoon, note by note,  
Through the murky waters  
As buoyant as a melody  
Composed by the innocent wail  
Of a lost soul drifting on a current  
Into yet another oblivion – unseen, unheard.

I will sing my song  
From now until eternity  
Drapes its shroud over the world,  
Pulse by pulse, a heartbeat rising  
From the depths to the soul of creation  
To join my sisters in the night.



So many of us

Silenced who only have death's rattle  
To shake the conscience of the living.  
We are dead. We are gone.  
The almost forgotten,  
The missing and murdered  
Women and girls – Indians,  
Squaws,  
Flat-lined out of existence  
Again and again and again.

We have risen from the dead:  
Our faces seen, our voices heard,  
Our song on the lips of the living,  
A national anthem for the native women  
Of this land, Canada – Kanata,  
“A village” like Sagkeeng  
Missing one small voice,  
My voice,  
Rising with my sisters,  
A mourning song to beat in all people's hearts.



# Untitled

by Sandra

I feel the dark, see myself running away  
From all that abused me in a dirty way  
A Dad who said it was ok  
As he shipped me away  
To another who said it's ok  
How can an uncle act this way  
Abuse, Abuse, I cry out loud  
How can you do this to a child so small  
Than as I got older, still ashamed got abuse to this Day  
How can you say bye,  
But I know why  
As I had no place to stay  
I ask a stanger, If I could stay  
He Drove in the dark down a rock road I didn't know  
He pulled up a hill, in the dark we go  
He said you do this or you will die  
So I did and I cried  
He stabbed me in the side  
Left me there in the dark, no place to go  
As I'm bleeding scared and confused  
I still didn't know what to do.



# Untitled

by Suzie Q

Bob, weave and duck

Oh shoot too late

Ouch do my little dance again

Bob, weave and duck

This time luck

Don't matter

His anger flares

Bob and oh shoot too late he caught me

Just don't move

His fists will get red

Bob, weave and duck

Don't matter...

Wake up he says

Wash up he says

So the walls don't stain



# *The Violent One*


by Sharon Dolly Syrette

The Violent One  
Answer is in his eyes  
the sadness  
the desperation.

The tone can make you cry  
but your heart does not break.

Too much anger  
Too much rage.

To think he can hurt you  
when he says he “never” will.





*The Wait*

by Alma Lee Byrzewski

The Wait; the 215 is late  
We wait.

On Railroad platforms,  
Bus stations,  
Whistle stops,  
Ferry docks,  
We wait,  
Worried now,  
The winter beaded  
Little feet waiting  
Soft as baby cheeks  
Slip on missed toes with kisses,  
Will be too small.

The 215 is late,  
We wait,  
Gazing down the tracks,  
A clear view now,  
No trees even,  
All cut away and clogging rivers.

# When West Met South

by Veronica Spade

anywhere, everywhere, somewhere, nowhere.

I must always be surrounded by noise of some sort:  
It brings an odd comfort to the fierce warring battleground,  
clinging to every molecule that musters me out of my bed every day.  
The good and the bad  
The positive and negative.  
This is strangeness, either is the conqueror, and  
neither wants to be the victor.

But what is victory in this chaotic society?  
Is it being selective about matters that would benefit my heart?  
Or, burying myself beneath the aftermath of unrelenting self-destruction?

spinning, swirling, saddening, sickening.

My child, who unknowingly laughed at many stupidities in the backwoods  
My youth, who believed cruelties was the way, the light, and the truth in cement  
walls.

My young adult, who was ordained to compliance as a hail to honor  
They all languished in benightedness,  
from one second to many years:  
ignored  
forgotten  
as one.

What have I done?  
What is there to do?  
What path leads to me?

I could not even answer myself, so  
I dwelled forever and a day in mischances,  
compartmentalizing all unsympathetic circumstances.  
in servitude to self-injustice.

The moments in the shadows, and  
the cries cringing in the tunnels became my hardness.  
The pangs of loneliness so heavy that I made  
every moonlight become black on black.

My life was a repetitious arduous clump of clay.  
Booze, domestic violence, cas, violence,  
violence, cas, domestic violence, booze, and this  
powerful need to find this alien energy.  
Ev-veryday I was empty. Empty.

And, my child waited, omgoodness did she wait.  
She scaled shelves for a cease fire,  
drifted between good and bad,  
rebutted the positive and negative, and  
continued inching on muck filled floors.  
Because the shell could not crack enough for light to seep through.

trails, paths, streets, roads, highways

As the dusk on noise brought resilience to my silence,  
I leaned on a sight I could not visually see,  
and pride became proud to embrace the Feather.  
It was then, I begged, "Just help me, help me;"  
to liberate nature's truth,  
to nurture my Ancestor's Red Road,  
to root compassion and kindness with my heart.

nowhere, somewhere, everywhere, anywhere.

The tracks that I once longed to take me away, are  
in the rear-view, not gone, not strong, but behind me.  
As I cruise in my solace, my soul can touch to outshine, and  
it can see the harsh eventualities, and  
feel the bittersweet everydayness' to continue forging a footpath,  
to end the violence within.

# Wings Unfolded

by Cher Obediah

healing is knowing  
whatever the question is  
I am the answer  
it's studying the roundness  
of a raindrop  
on a blade of grass  
and acknowledging the miracle  
it's buying flowers  
and not being able to decide  
if I'm happy or sad  
to be a part of their ending  
it's the feeling of jumping  
in a pile of leaves as a kid  
and having that same urge now  
it's confidence in that dress  
without the weight  
of his insecurities  
no more subtle insults being said  
or slow sorry hands  
creeping my side of the bed  
it's understanding my birth name  
is too tiny  
to describe my infinity

healing is  
holding hands with the wind  
tongue infatuated with rain  
and my thunder cured of its shyness  
its knowing a rose petal in your fingers  
can speak to your spirit  
the way money in your hand cannot  
it's sliding into the swimming pool of self  
to walk weightless in a thousand  
tomorrows  
and longing for conversations  
that talk like twigs in fire  
it's feeling square  
in the circle of society and celebrating  
that  
it's mistakes made forgiveness given  
and reflecting on the reasons for it all  
healing is  
stepping over the verbal abuse  
strewn all over the floor  
beside the egg shells  
and walking out the door for the last time



# Winnipeg 2022

by Alma Lee

Children begging for  
disappeared mothers,  
are the new  
empty-armed mothers  
crying  
for their stolen children.

They are the desperation  
darlings  
of  
the five minutes of  
misery media,

The Daughters of sovereign  
sorrow,  
they stand as solidly as the  
Buffalo  
facing killer north winds.

The wind- tunnels of empty  
responses,  
the echo chambers of  
scripted condolences,  
squeezed from leather  
belted Police

And

Elected Officials in expensive suits paired with \$2,000.00 leather shoes,  
Winnipeg 2022

Adds

more unmarked graves  
to

Reconciliation

and

Bare-footed

TRUTH

Hangs by the neck

In

The Village Square.



# Wondering Shame

by Christine MacKay

You could hear a pin drop in the room.  
Tensions so thick in the air you'd need a knife to cut through it.  
As your mind frantically wonders.  
Wonders what have I done wrong this time?

Face turning red.  
Voice thundering.

Wonders was supper too cold?  
Wonders did I not prepare the right meal?  
Wonders are his clothes not folded properly?  
Wonders did I look at him the wrong way?

Anger flaring.  
Tension building to a crescendo.

When that first blow finally lands,  
it feels like an explosion of heat and pain shattering across  
your face to the back of your skull.

And you wonder, how it is possible that your body is flying  
through the air without your will.

Another painful blow.  
Body slamming into a hard wall.

And you wonder is love supposed to hurt like this?  
You wonder is love really supposed to feel like this?

Another powerful blow, this time crippling you to the ground.  
Softly sobbing in a messy heap on the cold, hard floor.

And you wonder.

And after the wonder comes the shame.

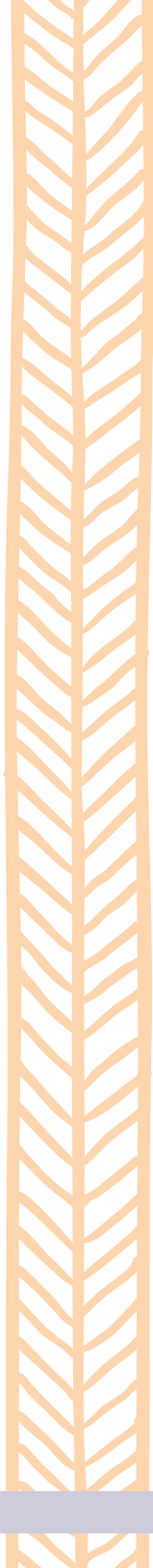
The shame of loving a man like this.  
The shame of loving a man who would strike a woman.  
The shame of staying with a man who would treat a woman  
this way.

And you wonder some more.

Surely there must be something wrong with me?  
Surely I am broken.  
Surely I'm just not built right.

And more shame.  
Shame for not being better.  
Shame for not standing up for yourself.  
The shame of who you are as a woman.

And so you remain.  
Beaten and broken in this endless cycle of wondering shame.







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

# Strong Hands Stop Violence Poetry Night & Community Call Out (2022)

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

[onwa.ca/strong-hands-stop-violence](https://onwa.ca/strong-hands-stop-violence)



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(Left: [onwa.ca/social](https://onwa.ca/social))