# Strong Hands Stop Violence POETRY BOOK VOLUME III



#### Chi Miigwetch

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.



# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

#16days
#orangetheworld

#### #orangetheworld

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign which takes place each year and runs from November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, International Human Rights Day. It was originated by activists at the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and is coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

In support of this civil society initiative, each year, the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign UNITE to End Violence against Women (UNITE) calls for global action to increase worldwide awareness and create opportunities for discussion about challenges and solutions. In recent years, the UNITE campaign has utilized the colour orange as a unifying theme running through all of its global activities. Orange is one of the official colours of the UNITE campaign and in the context of its global advocacy, is used as a symbol of a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls.

endviolence.un.org

# Strong Hands Stop Violence

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) hosts an annual poetry night to raise awareness of Violence Against Women in support of the *United Nations International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women #orangetheworld* campaign. This day (November 25th) provides a great opportunity to create a space where Indigenous women can gather and celebrate strength and resiliency.

Poetry Night includes readings from both emerging and established poets, live musical performances, and a collective art project.

The ongoing, collective art project is called *Strong Hands Stop Violence*. Participants of the evening 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.

The name, Strong Hands Stop Violence, is also shared with this poetry book, which is filled with some of the beautiful expressions that emerged from ONWA's 2018 Poetry Night.









## Blueberry

Collective Mindfulness Poem from Poetry Night 2018 - Thunder Bay

Close your eyes
Put a berry in your mouth
One word

Tattoo

Awaken

Explosive

Julilious

Sour

Sweet

Fresh

**Bittersweet** 

Tart

Take a moment
Appreciate the little things
Even blueberries



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!



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 Ii ot mac.

Ojone

Let us stop Tim gero

I'm a woman.



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

## 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 paydays ....all 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 ....

#### 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 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.

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 surlight 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

## Exiction 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.

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

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

She never agreed to this.

soot

stench

Poisoning our waters with his

Suffocating the animals with the

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.

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.

They will lead the way

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.



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

## 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

#### 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



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 beauteous 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.



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



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 to 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 a adult wants to see.

The child of the creator dies on the street drugged up, emaciated, wearing clothes not her own, shoes to 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.



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.

#### A COMPILATION OF POEMS FROM THE ONTARIO NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION'S

#### **Poetry Night**

November 2018

#### IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITED NATION INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

#orangetheworld #OrangeDay #hearmetoo



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