



# *Strong Hands Stop Violence*

POETRY BOOK VOLUME 8



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.

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## Strong Hands Stop Violence

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 UNITE 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (#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](http://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.

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## 8th Annual Poetry Night

ONWA's 8th annual gathering unfolded on November 25th at the stunning Delta Hotel, located on the Thunder Bay downtown waterfront. This beautiful setting provided the perfect backdrop for an evening of powerful expression, community connection, and shared commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

The night was illuminated by the presence of esteemed guests who brought their unique voices and experiences to the stage. Author, filmmaker, artist, and speaker Cher Obediah graced the event with a reading from her book *From Shame to Shine*, a poignant exploration of her journey from violence to recovery. Her artwork, also on display, visually narrated this transformation, offering attendees a deep and personal connection to her story.

Activist, writer, poet, teacher, and community leader Jana-Rae Xera further captivated the audience with her moving poetry. Her words, imbued with strength and resilience, echoed the evening's theme of empowerment and healing.

Adding to the evening's emotional resonance, the musical talents of Sara Kae once again touched hearts, as she did last year. The night was further elevated by the presence of seven-time Juno Award winner Susan Aglukark, whose soul-stirring performance bookended the evening. Susan opened the show with a breathtaking rendition of "Amazing Grace" in Inuktitut, setting a reverent tone for the night, and concluded with a powerful set that left a lasting impression on all who were present.



After the featured performances, a number of community members, both in person and online, inspired the audience with their heartfelt poetry submissions. Their words added depth and diversity to the evening, showcasing the rich talent and profound voices within our communities.

As in previous years, the event offered both in-person and virtual participation, allowing voices from across the province to join in this shared experience of artistic expression and advocacy. Attendees, whether at the Delta Hotel or connected via Zoom, were united in a collective spirit of resistance against violence and celebration of Indigenous talent.

This 8th edition of the Strong Hands Stop Violence Poetry Night was not just an event but a communal declaration of solidarity and resilience. Through the power of poetry, music, and art, we reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to fostering a world where women and girls are safe, respected, and empowered. The evening left an indelible mark on all who participated, reminding us of the strength that comes from standing together and using our voices to inspire change.



## *Harshness of Life*

by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz

Life has been unkind  
The road I tackle is always bumpy and rough  
It seems endless and tiring  
No chance to even rest.  
No choice but to move forward.  
Day and night,  
Both seems the same  
Facing the future with little hope.  
Although the scenery is beautiful and bright .  
I didn't even notice.  
I keep walking on....  
So many questions going through my head  
All I wanted is to pause.  
The afflictions of life  
Seeping through my veins..  
Melting me like a candlestick  
Draining me bit by bit.  
Getting lost in the loop  
As I fade away in the background.

## *Be A Good Man*

by Okechukwu Chidoluo Vitus

You are an infidel for any abuse  
You caused to the woman in your life  
You have lost it and you don't know  
That you may need help  
And you resort to abuse and violence  
You descend so low as an animal  
And yet love kept you through  
It is expected you come back  
And back to your senses  
And pray to God and for peace  
Add love to your heart  
Change your life for the good  
You are a product of a woman  
Who is there to show you love  
If you come bac k now and change  
You will find life is good  
You will have a better partner  
And a God life

# Copper Thunderbird

by Alma Lee (Byzewski)

Thunderbird speaks to the sleeping giant of stone,  
From the sacred mountain,  
Great feathered creature roils the sweet water sea,  
White tipped waves turn magic, myth, unroll scrolls of mystery.

They are lovers, ancient and devoted, the Giant Rocks and the Thunderbird,  
The Land and Sky groan in pleasure,  
Congress of molten magma, casting off embers, hot, glowing,  
Gold, silver, diamonds, amethyst,  
COPPER.

Scorching the flesh of the Man, copper sparks freed from the ancients,  
Blind the Man in Mystic Knowledge  
The Burning Man Paints.  
Colours stream from the hole in time,

Rough wooden panels, canvases of strange shapes, brown bag paper,  
As anointed as Birch Bark Scrolls, only the Man can translate,  
The Bear holds the Fish in the belly of the Birds,  
The Wolf cries fidelity to the Deer,  
Energy Lines in Rock Shields, the Spirits of the Ancestors,  
Eyes that do not Blink.  
The Thunderbird cajoles and whispers to the Man,  
The Stone Formations sing to the Man,  
The Animals speak to the Man,

COPPER THUNDERBIRD  
"Tell our Story"

# Dance.

by Mary Ann Caron

Drum beat sounds -Heart beat calls  
Pow wow entry- Dance with All  
Step by step- Dance with grace  
Head held high- Back held straight  
Step by step- Flow with beat  
Drum beat calls- Healing grace  
Spirit full  
DANCE!

Beat calls Heart- Fills the air  
Step by step- Fills the Soul  
Dance for children- Lost and gone  
Dance for culture- Stolen tongue  
Dance for knowledge- Almost torn  
Dance with pride- Still WE dance  
Step by step- Reclaim our right  
Proudly stand- Feathers high  
Step by step  
DANCE!

Dance to heartbeat- Foot by foot  
Solid Earth- Step by step  
Dance and sway- Step by step  
Tassels flow - water wave  
Traditional Dance- Woman proud  
Dance for family- Culture Teacher  
Dance for healing- Water Keeper  
Dance with pride- Still WE Dance  
Eagle fan – held to heart  
Strong and proud- Women pray  
Dance is Prayer- Step by step  
Tradition lives  
DANCE!

# Shadow Man

by Edna king

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

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

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

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

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

It never should have happened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Darkness

by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz

The stillness of the night  
Silence is deafening..  
Peering through the windowpane  
Staring into the darkness...into the unknown  
Thoughts getting ahead of me  
Pulling me into the black hole  
Drowning....gasping for air  
Feeling like I'm in another world  
Lying on the bottom of nowhere  
A bottomless pit...  
Unable to move...  
Struggling to get out  
Barely seeing the light  
Looking like a pinhole from below  
Trying to touch it  
Hoping it will give me some glimpse  
Of positivity and hope  
But it seems so out of reach  
Need to breathe  
Want some freedom..  
A space I really want to have  
Just to be ME  
And not how others expect me to be....

## Ode to Indigenous Women

by Malak Kalmoni Chehab

Who are our greatest victims?  
Our native women's rapes?

Over half a century ago,  
Their children were of age to

Be abused and killed  
Then buried and abandoned.

Abandoned but not forgetting  
As parents went unknowing  
Of their fates and kept hoping ...

Their faith in governments  
That oppressed them and forsakes


Their loved one's destinies  
That are only excavated on pleas ...

And demands for knowledge  
Of their kismet to be able to judge,

Whether to move on, or ...  
Stay in Limbo's nescience for

Their needs are trivialized,  
While others' are optimized...

What's needed to achieve equality  
In attaining justice for all humanity  
And not only a minority?





# Compassion IN-Action???

by D. Roberta Della-Picca

Mother Teresa be damned?  
just pull yourself up by your  
bootstraps!  
no one gave ME an handout:  
get a haircut,  
get a job

spread the word,  
spread the faith  
we'll give you aid  
only if...  
you join our cause  
saving Souls,  
THAT'S our mission

OH, there IS another way???

Compassion in Action  
belief in a Kind and  
Loving Community  
equal resources  
for Each and All

loaves and fishes multiply  
when shared with  
Sisters and Brothers

walk in my Neighbour's footwear  
empathy for their Life Walk:  
Sacred Journey

stick my neck out?  
You Bet!  
insular blindness  
to the plight of my Cousin?  
a thing of the past!

xenophobia BE GONE!  
an alien to my own Divinity?  
conversion to Empathy,  
Dignity,  
Honour and  
Respect  
Loving-kindness to ALL!!!

are we merely Clay Figures  
into whom Creator blew His/Her/  
Their Breath?  
with free will  
to do what we wish?

hand on Heart...  
hand on head...  
the longest distance in the world...  
head to Heart -  
remediated

treasure chest of Goodness,  
Trueness,  
Integrity  
swirled spiral...  
unshedding...  
unpeeling,  
royal rumble

candles unlit...  
unmanifested light?  
vested interest...  
common good

tied together with  
ribbons of Love...  
interlaced with promise

branches of harmony:  
harmonic convergence;

arms across the oceans  
choral unity  
voicing the unspoken  
we ARE all in this together!

winged statuettes  
shimmering with promise...  
sculpted with Freedom  
and Joy

cloistered competency...  
clustered commiseration  
masked performers  
with their wooden stares?  
drumming the Heartbeat of Mother  
Earth

skipping stones into oblivion  
back to Our Origins -  
rediscovering Creation:  
muffled memories

snazzy, jazzy tunes  
magical sense of Awe  
Connection to something bigger:  
collective unconscious  
recurring theme:  
one for all...  
All for One

strength to resist status quo:  
transformative Acceptance!!!

farewell to conformity  
meaningful Spirituality!!!  
Linked to All That Is

NOW...THAT...  
is  
Compassion  
in Action!!!



## Hope

by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz

She stands by the edge of the river  
Watching as it flows  
She reflects on her life  
As the glimmering water hits her eyes  
She feels all the pain once more  
Past slowly creeping into her  
Memories of betrayal and deception  
Eating inside of her.  
She started to question herself  
How naive she is  
How transparent she has been  
To be manipulated so easily.  
On the other hand,  
Like the river  
She knows all the pain will wash away  
The clarity of the water  
Gives her some sense of hope  
A new journey awaits..  
The wind started blowing  
As if it wants to whisper something  
That healing takes time  
All the love you've given mattered  
Even if the world is unkind.

## Best Wishes...

by Lisa 'altogetherlisa' Webster

I hope you heal from the things you do not talk about.  
But, if you struggle  
I will lend you my listening ear  
my receiving heart  
be your soul grief exorcist  
give you a hug  
to ground you to this place  
this time  
connect you to  
this person  
who knows  
who cares  
who loves  
you.



## *The Water*

by Anonymous

I was always scared of the water, as I couldn't swim,  
But for you I jumped in.  
Blindly I jumped head first,  
not knowing the current that lay beneath.  
The waves of your feelings crashed over my head as I  
struggled to swim,  
But there you sat on the shore at peace with the sounds  
they made.  
As my body became tired from the force of the waves,  
there you were prepared to hold my almost lifeless  
body.  
I found peace in your waters, one I can't explain,  
because like the seasons the water levels would change,  
Some days I could even breathe beneath.  
But I have learned the water is a scary place to be,  
because even in the calm there is much more that lies  
beneath.  
The plates will soon shift beneath the ocean floor  
and I once more will rely on the life raft you provided.  
I still don't know how to swim,  
but I know my own life jacket is safer than the driftwood  
pieces you threw to me.



## *Yellow, Blue, Red, Red*

by Mackenzie Angeconeb

rip me open and say you love me  
turn my bones to dust and my body into nothing  
ii. rip me open and tell me how much you care  
force my limbs apart and ignore every prayer  
iii. rip me open and climb on in  
add to the pieces left within  
iv. rip me open and lick my wounds  
tell me how pretty i am while being shoved into

# All of a Kind

by D.Roberta Della-Picca

all this talk - EMPTINESS!!!  
in faces: surfaces of vacancy  
You reach to Us with empty hands...

to  
hearts that are  
tattered and torn,  
filled with power and rage  
unrelenting misery  
accumulation of loss  
crying out in shame  
yelling out grief  
mumbling epithets  
swearing at your own grave  
dreading your reflection  
becoming the walking dead

the complexity and beauty  
of a culture  
no longer recognized  
homogenous mainstream values  
ignoring and neglecting  
the Wisdom of the Ages  
Ancestral imprints  
on a collision course  
going somewhere  
going nowhere  
at an impasse  
wheels spinning  
in a rut  
crying out for compassion  
understanding

balancing the light  
claiming birthright  
creating change  
starts from within  
profound housecleaning  
cobwebs  
death  
dirt  
detritus  
dust, must and mildew  
unpleasant feelings  
inner demons audible  
erroneous beliefs  
walking beside one's shadow

human kindness is hard to find  
but if You feel it deep inside  
and think it in your mind  
then it is easy to love humankind

great to receive  
harder to give  
isn't it funny  
how all life depends  
on such a simple thing?

without it now  
there would be no life  
no hope  
nothing at all

nature radiates  
full spectrum of colour  
right within our grasp  
thoughts and joy  
sparkle of life  
bubbling  
promise of renewal  
regeneration

recapturing resilience  
overcoming desperate hopelessness  
awakening new possibilities  
fulfilling the promise of things to be

are we in reality, dreamland  
or simply fantasy land?  
what We evented, manifested  
fairness and justice  
in a world that cares about neither  
value systems  
or pretext of such?

progeny programmed  
interstitial memories  
encoded messages  
primordial origins  
from eternity to here

dare to remember  
dare to be brave  
metamorph  
glorious, glorious You

if only We try harder  
We play more often  
We BELIEVE

celebrating our arrival

each and every One of Us  
has a role to play  
using our unique set of gifts and  
talents  
sharing  
making a difference  
doing our part  
EVERYTHING We can  
actualizing truths

evolution is imminent  
do You resist  
or concede?



## Untitled

by Changing Moon / Patti A. McIntomney

A Woman of Strength in a world too blind  
Violence against people such a horrific crime  
The trauma endured to such an extent  
We must be Resilient in every sense  
Empower our People to be strong and bold  
To Act with Courage with the stories they hold .  
Rise now in Wisdom and bravery with your head held high  
Bringing awareness to all those who've cried  
Miiigwech  
Baa Maa Pii  
Put an end to violence and make it History

## ENOUGH!

by Mary Ann Caron

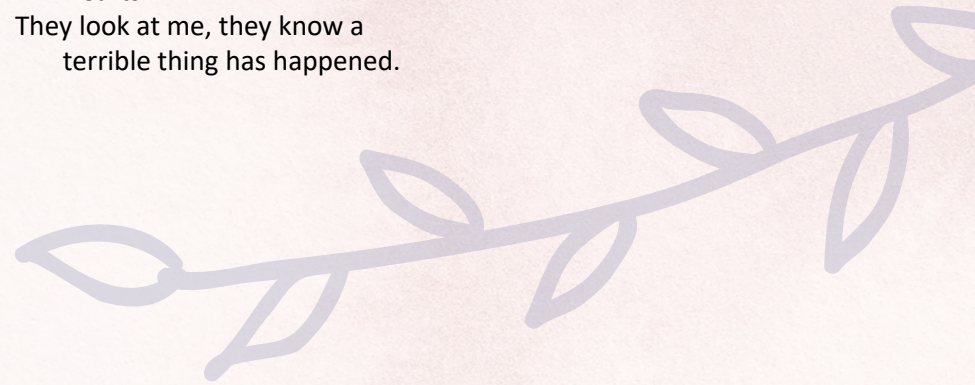
[me]  
I sit here gasping.  
Stare at empty shelves  
Piles of boxes, crates ready to go.  
Empty spaces on the walls  
This time,  
This time I have packed you away.  
My heart aches so.

[him]  
I love you- I leave you  
I leave you- I love you  
How could you believe I would ever  
leave you  
I want a divorce- I love you  
I'm leaving you

[me]  
The house is filled with emptiness  
Furry Boys wait by the window  
Waiting, waiting  
But I will not let you return.  
How can they understand, Loyal  
Hearts.  
They look at me, they know a  
terrible thing has happened.

[him]  
I love you- I leave you  
I leave you- I love you  
I love you- I leave you  
I hate you- I love you  
I'm leaving you

[me]  
How can you say that again and  
again to my heart?  
Don't you know how this tears my  
soul apart  
How is it that Love is not enough!  
How much more could I have loved!  
How many years.  
I sit here gasping  
Reeling, such familiar Ache  
So you must leave then?  
So Leave.  
This time,  
This time it is Enough!  
Maybe one day you will know what  
you have lost.



# Fragmentation

by Veronica Spade

If I showed you my bruise, would  
You ask me how I'm feeling, and  
call the paramedics, or  
Would we smile it into a façade?  
An x-ray shows a fracture, and  
I lie to protect you, and,  
I lie over and over, and  
- I am a boomerang.  
Was it you, or was it me?  
Was it fear, or was it shame?

So many dreams should have been realities,  
So many roads could have been travelled,  
So many worlds I would have conquered.  
Instead, my abilities I shelved to your suggestions,  
Drowned my capabilities for zombie-love, and  
Ultimately, I laid my sovereignties to animation.

It's been 4086 eves since the stella nova sparkled.  
I've walked many tightropes, sometimes  
Crushing tears and grasping straws to stay afloat.  
While, juggling 20,974 days of parasites attacking my existence.  
Somewhere in the absence of light, is my thin red line  
- I'm still searching

I'm fearing a lot.  
I'm failing a lot.  
I'm despising a lot.  
But mostly, my trust is an evil eye in all my imbalances -  
- I'm still cataloguing

In a new moment...  
This journey has taught me to lean on the advice of Ancestors –  
- For my foundation  
Those of time immemorial  
Those of the dark eras  
Those of the awakening years, and  
Those of the reconciliation revolution.  
- And my evolving

I close my eyes and I touch their realness,  
I speak to their energies and I feel complete,  
To my heart, my mind, to my spirit, they mend my fragments.



## *The Gift My Mother Gave Me*

by **Emilie Corbiere**

Needle in hand and ready to sew  
one by one the beads will go  
see the beads and how they shine  
I knew one day would be my time  
To learn the old traditional ways  
of beading in the olden days  
Mama says to take my time and just go slow  
as I lay my beads in a row  
My mother sings a traditional song  
while I bead and sing along  
stories are told while we bead  
a few more colours are all I need  
Time for a break to have some tea  
with fresh Bannock all buttery  
all done and excited to see  
the gift that my mother gave me

## *She is Resilient*

by **Patti A McIntomney**

A Woman of Strength in a world too blind  
Violence against people such a horrific crime  
The trauma endured to such an extent  
We must be Resilient in every sense  
Empower our People to be strong and bold  
To Act with Courage with the stories they hold  
Rise now in Wisdom and bravery with your head held high  
Bringing awareness to all those who've cried  
Miigwech  
Baa Maa Pii  
Put an end to violence and make it History



# We ar' honour

by Deyowidron't Teri Morrow

We seek peace, we ar' ongwehonwe, passed on through our niece, by  
aunties that will never cease  
Clan mother to you, clan mother to me  
Mis:cheif of the moment come wild and see  
through eyes so eager that they share in a moment  
Wondering if ever there would be an atonement  
The vibe in my heart when this opportunity arises  
Affords my spirit to begin the uprising  
Carrying my words your words, our words surmising  
To the innocent and liable,  
Untrained in their art we fight for survival  
Situations have trained our hearts to be suicidal  
Our family's are entwined, we need to rewind to find the divine and beauty  
intwined  
Passing the vibes from mother,daughter,father to sun earth and water  
Pulsing and surging taking solace in the err'  
It washes away the hurt and the glare  
The vibes from those times no longer defines us we must fight this fight to  
regain our vibrance  
This time on our own to learn and to seek  
The knowledge the power to follow the meek  
In humility comes possibility that leads to notability so forthcoming stability  
succeeds  
Our mother will give from the sand to the shore...we'll begin to spread Earth  
to the proportion of more  
To touch and to feel as we once did,  
A tonal vibration that we can never rid  
Recognize the inattention deficit will be used to our benefit,  
Unanimity will reign in this honour song  
So with neglect as our confederate let's make the better of it  
Belong with love, peace and hope in your starts ?

We seek peace, we ar' ongwehonwe, passed on through our niece, by  
aunties that will never cease  
Clan mother to you, clan mother to me  
Mis:cheif of the moment come wild and see  
through eyes so eager that they share in a moment  
Wondering if ever there would be an atonement  
The vibe in my heart when this opportunity arises  
Affords my spirit to begin the uprising  
Carrying my words your words, our words surmising  
To the innocent and liable,  
Untrained in their art we fight for survival  
Situations have trained our hearts to be suicidal  
Our family's are entwined, we need to rewind to find the divine and beauty  
intwined  
Passing the vibes from mother,daughter,father to sun earth and water  
Pulsing and surging taking solace in the err'  
It washes away the hurt and the glare  
The vibes from those times no longer defines us we must fight this fight to  
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So with neglect as our confederate let's make the better of it  
Belong with love,peace and hope in your starts.



# *If I Disappeared*

by Jennifer Bahinski

If I disappeared, would anyone care?  
My husband, my children, my family would know  
That I would never leave them or have any thoughts to go  
They would search for me, cry for me, they would never sleep  
But I often wonder, would a report be filed and my papers  
buried deep?

Would the news broadcast my face?  
Would they shout out my name?  
Or would they simply shake their heads,  
Oh she's just one in the same  
Another Native girl up to no good  
Why bother looking?  
She should have been more careful, she really should

What scarring words would my family be hearing,  
That I am to blame for my own disappearing?  
They need to fight through the misconceptions and lies,  
Before they even listen to my family's cries?  
I am not seeking notoriety, clout or fame,  
But everyone knows all of our missing white allies names...  
Yet my life is not as sacred or treated the same

Another name to add to the list  
Brown skin, brown hair  
Does anyone care?  
I'm lost, I'm stolen, I'm missing and broken  
Please find me, don't forget me  
My name must be spoken  
I am a mother, a daughter, a sister and friend  
And I matter and have worth, right to the end

# *No More Stolen Sisters*

by Resilient Inuk

*(This is a song I created that I sing on my Inuit drum about our stolen sisters)*

Somewhere in the distance, I can see your face. Somewhere in the distance,  
you're at that place. Somewhere in the distance, I scream your name.  
Somewhere in the distance, we're all the same.

I stand here before you, why can't you see? I stand here before you, listen to  
my plea. I stand here before you, with so much fear. I stand here before  
you, as we disappear.

Please politicians, I'm begging you. Please politicians, what can we do?  
Please politicians, it's time for change. Please politicians, no more  
making strange.

Oh Canada, how we love thee. Oh Canada, for such a fee. Oh Canada, when  
will you stand with me. Oh Canada, time to set us free.

# Stella Bella

by D. Roberta Della-Picca

From the creative depths of the  
primordial soup

I arose...  
surrounded,  
engulfed,  
nurtured and  
protected  
by Spirit Guides and Ancestors...  
through a childhood of hell:

physical,  
verbal,  
psychological,  
emotional,  
sexual and  
spiritual abuse

shame,  
blame...  
abject futility.  
awkward puberty...

sexually-provocative drunken  
escapades  
maligned,  
raped and  
further shamed.

Trudging on bleeding soles (soul?)  
through which life-essence oozed...

silent;  
hopeless,  
gawky,  
moody,  
easily-triggered,  
constantly experiencing  
unidentified flashbacks,  
never realizing  
the magnitude of the damage:

post-traumatic stress disorder...

unbelievably ever-resilient,  
constantly seeking  
refuge and healing

suicide attempts!!!

hopelessness assuaged:  
ever-present Spirit Guides  
and Ancestors...

Working stiff...  
functionally-alcoholic.  
consumed by rage and terror...  
slim hope of finding her purpose...  
wandering...  
bereft of hope...  
faith LONG gone!

searching high and low,  
never looking inside...  
yet...  
knowing the empty shell covers  
the Truth of Who She REALLY is:  
a beloved Child of the Universe

Ever-present Spirit Guides  
and Ancestors  
egging her on...  
hinting at  
a Higher Purpose...  
hinting at  
a Life Mission.

Decades of non-judgmental,  
caring,  
concerned,  
empathetic,  
understanding:  
Our Elders  
with their calm encouragement:  
channeling  
Divine Wisdom.

Finding just an hint  
of a whisper of a voice...

opening Pandora's box,  
the lid of which  
would NEVER be shut again.

Answered prayers  
in the form of unconditional loving-  
kindness:  
Angels:  
in the guise of Offspring -  
unflinching devotion.

Maturing into her Soul Essence...  
sharing  
the seeds of wisdom  
sown by Our Elders,  
Keepers of the Traditions,  
for the Next 7 Generations...  
those Sacred Seeds  
fall upon fertile ground...  
magically overseen  
by Mother Earth  
and Grandmother Moon...  
constant reminders  
of the Resilience of Her Women!

Living Proof  
of the glorious resurrection  
of the Phoenix:  
reciprocated,  
creative community involvement -  
the pathway from egocentricity  
to philanthropy...  
mirrored Inner Beauty...  
Blueprint of her Soul.

# Karma

by Theresa O'Connor

Hidden behind your mask  
Lay the fear and anguish  
The smile upon your face  
As phony as "I'm fine" comments

Brick by brick  
You assembled the wall  
Created to shield yourself  
From the evil within your home

Two brown eyes peering  
Into the abyss  
Searching, pleading  
Did it work am I invisible?

A story book façade  
To create the ultimate illusion  
The perfect family, perfect home,  
perfect life  
Can they see, do they know? Shhh

Reciting prayers each night  
Hopeful that they will be heard  
Believing in a safe future  
Daring to paint a world of hope

Cleaning, scrubbing, polishing  
Trying to erase all the damage  
It's never good enough  
Scrub and clean some more

Feeling so powerless  
Allowing the brute to do it  
No one is safe from the rage  
You try to protect the children

A child yourself when you married  
Told by your mom...  
"you made your bed lie in it"  
No escape, no power, no voice

Insides turning numb  
A frozen wasteland replaces your  
soul  
Tears no longer flow  
Numbness is all consuming

A life lost to servitude  
Catering to the angry monster  
Always walking on eggshells  
Aiming to please him

The only peace you can find  
Is in His submission to dementia  
As he slowly loses his fierceness  
The toxic monster starts to fade

Then one day as quick as ever  
Your heart just gives out  
You are released from the pain  
Journeying to the Spirit World

Karma comes in the end  
He is left to fade away  
Dementia taking a solid hold  
Guilt and shame his burden to  
bare

# Questionable Existence

by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz

When you look at me  
What do you see  
Do you see the tiredness in me  
Or the strength I've been trying to show.

Have you ever looked into my eyes  
And seen the roughness of my life  
The pain and disappointments, I've been through  
And yet outside  
All you see is my smile

If you only know  
The depths of my soul  
You will see the ocean of tears  
My heart into pieces  
Suffocating...

If you can just read my mind  
It might scare you  
Raging war and racing thoughts  
Full of doubts and fear

The war I face within me  
A breach of peace  
Confrontation seems hard to overcome  
Positivity so out of reach  
I don't even know  
How to ignite the fire within me  
It seems I can only exist  
In the dream world I've created in my mind.

# Oh Violence

by Keirs Sagutch

ruined spirits ;; we reached our limits  
self esteem destroyed ;; alcohol to fill the void  
the anger we face ;; in this home we call a place  
abuse that we suffered ;; the evidence you covered  
the names you called ;; said it was our fault  
oh violence, oh violence

how could you ;; do what you do  
so very cold ;; we are the ones you scold  
you caused pain ;; left us in the rain  
to fight or to die ;; only to ask why  
not knowing if ;; not choosing to forgive  
oh violence, oh violence

am i going to see ;; am i going to be free  
once again ;; this is how it all began  
we are to blame ;; such shame  
beating us down ;; until we drown  
in our own blood ;; the doors shut  
oh violence, oh violence

when will it end ;; so we no longer have to fend  
no longer have to fear ;; to even be here  
yet we face so much ;; we lost touch  
lost our self ;; to abuse itself  
do you enjoy ;; taking our joy  
oh violence, oh violence

wanting it to end ;; so we no longer got to pretend  
suffering in silence ;; we need some guidance  
too afraid to seek ;; but feeling so weak  
its like we got no voice ;; so it destroys  
everything inside ;; what is there to decide  
oh violence, oh violence

trying to escape the abuse ;; its us you accuse  
you laid your hands on us ;; as we fuss  
trying so hard to get help ;; but we only yelp  
nobody hears ;; of all the fears  
we shake, we tremble ;; its dreadful  
oh violence, oh violence

finally going to escape this mess ;; finally going to confess  
its time to be heard ;; its time to hear our word  
the violence we face ;; its such a disgrace  
got to be strong ;; going through abuse for so long  
indigenous women got to fight ;; for what is right  
oh violence, oh violence

stand up and shout ;; let our voices be loud  
its time ;; no longer pretending we are fine  
women take a stand ;; as we stand on this land  
put an end to this abuse ;; its no use  
to continue to feel this way ;; this is our day  
oh violence, oh violence

## Phyllis Webstad: A Little Girl

by Elisha Alladina

She couldn't help being a little girl  
But they didn't have respect for her  
Took away her orange shirt  
Not even realizing they all faced hurt

She couldn't help being a little girl  
But it was insults they hurled  
Towards their race and cultures  
Only Christian beliefs were preferred

She couldn't help being a little girl  
Living in an oppressed world  
Where they couldn't speak their languages  
Without being labelled as "savages"

She couldn't help being a little girl  
But nobody thought to respect her  
She was stuck at a residential school  
Surrounded by staff that were much too cruel

She couldn't help being a little girl  
Don't you ever forget her name  
And how their identities were shamed  
She never deserved to be blamed

## Drowning

by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz

I feel like battling more than a storm  
The road seems so distant and bleak  
Holding on to what seem like little hope  
Time seems to be running out.  
I know this too shall pass  
A rainbow after the storm  
Even a light at the end of the tunnel  
As some people may say.  
Right now, those are just words  
Not even completely comprehending  
What it truly means.  
I know I need to hang on  
Stay strong as I can be  
For someone greater than all of these  
Will do the fighting for me..

# Polaris

by D. Roberta Della-Picca

Vast expanse  
filled with promise  
snow-white horizon  
meets the land seamlessly  
where one ends  
and the other begins,  
is anyone's guess  
Five seasons in one month  
Tundra meadows of vibrant colours

—  
lavender-blue lupine,  
buttercups,  
bearberry  
and velvety carpet of  
rusty lichen...  
soft comfort for weary bones

Sedge and willow  
competing for attention with  
Summer's breath,  
fleetingly filled with heather's  
    heady aroma,  
wafting on  
currents of social unrest

watching arctic poppies  
produce yellow offspring,  
alongside purple saxifrage  
threading beads of hope

tufts of Arctic cotton  
fluffing in the gentle breeze —  
potential fuel  
for Aanaa's Qalluq

speckled-winged Snowy Owl  
contemplating our future

claiming a haven  
by the stream  
sorting inuksuk stones,  
piling them higher and higher,  
into markers of  
infinite messages  
Ancient Grandfathers  
conveying a Sacred Story  
for Those Who will follow:  
Progeny

caribou whispering wisdom -  
Ancestral Memories  
regal heads bending  
and flowing  
with all-knowing eyes

endless whispers  
carving a presence  
in the annals of life

childhood memories -  
resilience,  
each step of the way  
surrounded with the comfort  
    and warmth  
of the gentleness of oft-  
    forgotten arms  
of Aanaa...  
adoring glances of Agla

polar bears,  
wolves,  
mothers with unconditionally-loved  
    Babes in their amauti -  
love and integrity  
The birthing sod-houses  
still remain...  
reminders of a time  
which has passed us by...

Ceremonial drum,  
Sealskin,  
lovingly pinned with the Pauktuutit  
Connecting One's Heartbeat  
to the Heartbeat  
of Mother Earth

Heart to Heart  
Soul to Soul  
Spirit to Spirit

Dog-teams race across white  
    horizons  
remembering Ancient Instructions  
Survival of the Fittest

Shadows  
of a lifetime  
murmured on the Wind

Sharing Creator's Medicine Gifts

# Reconcile This! Assimilate That!

by D. Roberta Della-Picca

embraced, encapsulated  
grief's doom and gloom  
fragile faces with courage written  
behind hooded eyes  
illuminating/illuminating millennia of  
Teachings  
dark nights of the Soul  
in the shattered silence  
from the abyss  
healing wounds SO profound that  
the Marianna Trench looks lame  
pivoting truths and lies  
twisted Sisters  
shrouded shadows hovering  
gossamer threads in the tapestry of  
truth-seeking  
burdened hearts acknowledging the  
solemnity  
compassionate understanding  
bridging the gap  
perpetuating an agenda of  
conquering, vanquishing,  
assimilation  
  
tears of irreparable Soul Sorrow  
those who survived  
who are still alive  
MUST thrive  
  
the best "revenge" is  
retained Pure Spirits  
loving-kindness  
Indigenous renaissance  
is mandatory!!!

winged statuettes  
shimmering with Promise  
sculpted with Freedom, and  
Joy

cloistered competency  
clustered commiseration  
masked performers, with  
wooden stares  
drumming the Heartbeat of  
Mother Earth

tied together with  
Ribbons of Love  
interlaced with Integrity  
branches of Harmony  
harmonic convergence  
Arms across the Oceans  
choral unity  
Voicing  
the unspoken  
the unspeakable

We are All in this Together

empty shells  
covering the Truth of  
Who We REALLY Are  
Beloved Children of  
Creator

maturing Soul Essences  
sharing Seeds of Wisdom  
sown by Our Elders for the  
Next Seven Generations  
those Sacred Seeds  
falling on fertile ground  
watered by Collective Tears  
magically overseen by  
Mother Earth and  
Grandmother Moon  
constant reminders of the  
resilience of Our Women  
Water Carriers

creating radical change  
is an Inside Job  
profound housecleaning  
cobwebs  
dust  
death  
despair  
detritus  
must and mildew  
unpleasant  
nasty-smelling  
odious  
pent-up feelings and emotions  
erroneous beliefs  
walking beside  
One's Shadow

Mother Nature radiates  
full spectrum of colour  
right within our grasp  
sparkles of life, bubbling  
promises of renewal  
regeneration

are we IN reality?  
dreamland?  
or simply  
fantasy-land?  
what We are eventuating  
manifesting  
bringing into Creation  
Fairness  
Justice  
in a world that cares  
about neither...  
Value Systems  
only a pretext of such

Dare to Remember  
Dare to Be Brave  
Metamorph  
glorious,  
Glorious You

Celebrate Our Arrival

Each  
and  
Every  
One  
of  
Us  
has a role to play  
using our unique set of Gifts and  
Talents  
Sharing  
Making a Difference  
doing Our Part  
EVERYTHING We can...  
actualizing TRUTH

contemplating our future  
claiming a Haven  
by the River  
sorting Pink Stones  
arranging them lovingly, into  
Healing Mandalas  
Casting Sacred Circles, with  
Ancient Grandfathers  
forging a Path  
for Others to follow

bending and flowing with Knowing  
carving a Presence  
Memories  
Resilience  
each step of the Way  
surrounded with the comfort and  
warmth  
encapsulated and embraced  
adoring glances  
unconditionally-loved  
mirage of a pirouette en pointe  
wraiths of Swan Lake and  
Sedna's Selkies

re-writing the Script  
sharing Medicine Gifts  
treasures  
hailing from everywhere  
and  
nowhere  
both  
at the same time  
land of ice and snow  
water and earth  
fire and air  
Rainbow Nation  
Creator's Breath  
Aki's Womb

hard-earned struggle to  
self-acceptance  
balance  
using a Velvet Tongue to  
Speak Truth

ashes to ashes  
back to Source

## Safe place

by Mary Ann Caron

Memory of my refuge, vivid living colour  
How did I get through it, years of soul destruction  
Memory of my safe place, visible to none  
Survival, refuge, hidden  
Safe place

Memory of my refuge, the Past becomes Today  
I sit on pillowed rock, as night enfolds around me  
Coolness in its blanket, August air embrace  
Night air kisses face  
Safe place

Stars hang close above me, sparkle milky line  
Song wells up within me, thankful for the smiles  
Ancient Ones before us, gaze upon my life  
Grandmothers see and hold me, I feel their ancient love  
Gnarled tree encourages, roots entwined beside  
Water licks my feet, Lake laughs at my play  
Night enfolds around me  
Blankets me and whispers  
Safe place

Memory of my refuge



# Rescind/Resign

by D. Roberta Della-Picca

here's hoping that the boys in  
the vatican are feeling the  
metaphorical 2" by 4"  
to the side of their collective  
head!!!

tendrils of  
tragedy exposed...

knackered COWARDS!!!

gossamer threads of kindred Spirits  
wafting through our group  
consciousness

heads in the sand,  
best response - NONE???

RESCIND the papal bull dum dversas  
of June 18, 1452,  
issued by pope nicholas V,

RESCIND the papal bull romanus  
pontifex of January 15, 1455  
issued by pope nicholas V and

RESCIND the papal bull intra  
caetera, issued by pope  
Alexander VI  
on May 14, 1493

They paved the way for HUNDREDS  
of years  
of UNSPEAKABLE atrocities  
committed on Turtle Island  
WIPING OUT millions of PEOPLE

On the advice of my lawyer,  
I am unable to issue an apology???

So as not to cause more harm,  
DO NOT DARE to ask for  
forgiveness!!!

You have been handed a GOLDEN  
opportunity...  
You continue...IN SILENCE

Due to a total lack of leadership,  
RESIGN!!!

dismantle the monstrosity that  
allowed you,  
a cog in the machinery of  
ABHHORRENT EVIL  
to perpetuate your narcissistic,  
arrogant, racist agenda...  
THROUGHOUT the globe

You have taken the CHRIST  
out of christianity

You MOCK the values of your  
purported Role Model

NO WONDER the level of the  
oceans have risen dramatically  
TEARS of irreparable  
Soul Sorrow

those who survived  
who are still alive  
MUST thrive!!!

UNSPEAKABLE  
EXTREME maltreatment

intergenerational ANGST  
suicide pacts amongst Our Youth

the best "revenge"  
is retained PURE Spirits,  
Loving-Kindness

Indigenous RENAISSANCE  
is mandatory!!!



# The price I pay

by Maria Guard

Laying in someone else's bed  
Thinking about where we went left  
Things remain unsaid  
Feeling buried and undead

I try to forget  
Swirling emotions filled with regret  
Drying my tears but it still feels wet  
Did you love me or was I just your little pet  
I feel overwhelmed but out of place  
I wish I didn't remember the look on your face  
Soul ties or soul mate  
Only time will unfold our fate  
Until then we wait...  
Carrying the burden with me and more on my plate  
Wishing I could turn back the time to our first date  
I wish I could go back and clear the slate  
Or maybe I wouldn't have now showed  
If I knew that this would all unfold  
I was looking for love and all I can remember from your  
touch is your hands around my throat  
I remember walking on eggshells not trying to rock the  
boat  
I was trying to please you and keep myself afloat  
Things could have ended on a better note  
I should have agreed with you when said to go our  
separate ways.  
Instead of counting sheep I'm counting the days.  
Out in the sun but can't feel it's rays  
God please tell me I'm going to be ok  
Please God I beg you lord please stay  
every night I pray  
To make it to another day  
Because no one else stays.  
If this is love, why is this the price I pay.

# Sitting Pretty

by Dominique Hardy

She screams and she shouts  
But, nothing comes out

She screams and she shouts  
But, still nothing comes out

So, she sits sitting pretty  
As if nothing is bothering her

She screams and she shouts  
But, nothing comes out

Her pride set aside  
Her hair let loose

She finally figures the courage inside  
That was blinded by her mind's eye

She screams and she shouts  
She screams and she listens

Echoes of help ripple back  
Teary eyed she finally sees

She screams and cries  
Her pleas are figured out

She screams and she shouts



## *My Reflection of life*

**by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz**

She stared at her reflection  
At the mirror in front of her  
She saw the little girl  
The one who's shielded from everything  
Full of life and laughter  
Not a care in the world.

Her youthful self appeared  
Threading the waters  
Strong-headed and fierce  
Trying to conquer the world  
Full of dreams and ambitions

The breeze went through the window  
Reality sets in....  
As the image staring back at her  
The fine lines on her face  
The puffiness of her eyes  
She realized how much she'd aged  
She often wonders...  
Where did time go  
As reflection shows  
The battle scars written all over her face.

## *Indigenous from different nations*

**by Adriana Lovato**

From a South American perspective, I have the image that indigenous women have a lot to dream about, their past is held in the background, because the resilience that define this culture has a horizon to explore around.

The pathways are opening, demonstrating honesty and a broad wisdom that they will give to the youngest.

Empowering and together we will look forward to a new era that will surprise Mohawks.

Even though, I have too much to know, too much to search, but I'm in my way to learn.

We are indigenous, with a common soul, common life, sharing passionate perspectives in different types. We are Indigenous, devoted to love, even if I am indigenous from another nation.



## Mistakenly understood

by Destiny Southwind

Most understood, yet often mistaken.

Truth. lies.

Within its walls.

It can be light as a feather.

As intense as the deep blue sea

Day. night.

Everything in between.

A speck of dirt/a branch of a tree.

Lost. Forgotten. Heavy. & Still.

It all lays rotting as they get their fill.

Continuation. Recrimination.

What was mistaken as sweet smelling lilac.

Turning out to be, a raging fire skiing across.

Beyond what I can see.

A speck of dirt? A branch of a tree?

It all means nothing.

When I can no longer be.

Breathe.

I do understand how hurtful it all can be.

Beneath it.

we stay still, rise above it and we will.

Rig this lateral violence that kept us ill.



## Scorched

by Mackenzie Angecone

Disinterest when I said yes,  
Confiscating when I said no,  
Exploiting when I said nothing.

Scorched skin leaves behind burns  
Unable to ever heal,  
Carefully hidden and covered.

A mask so well,  
Even I could not see  
What was being done to me.

For entertainment or for release?  
I was never sure which  
It would be.

# Bright Star

by D. Roberta Della-Picca

seeking refuge from inexorable  
misery  
while resting  
on the side of the creek  
watching the lily-pads  
produce yellow offspring  
cattails fluffing reproductive  
potential  
frogs croaking their warning:  
rain is coming  
red-winged blackbirds  
contemplating our future

claiming a haven by the river  
sorting pink stones,  
arranging them lovingly,  
into healing mandalas  
casting a Sacred Circle with Ancient  
Grandfathers  
forging a path  
for others to follow...

meadows of vibrant colours,  
soft comfort for weary bones  
pine trees, whispering wisdom -  
Ancestral memories

willows bending and  
flowing with knowing  
with birches winking humour, with  
their all-knowing eyes  
endless sand angels, carving a  
presence  
in the dunes of life...

childhood memories - resilience,  
each step of the way  
surrounded with the comfort and  
warmth  
of the gentleness of oft-fondled  
Baby blankie  
adoring glance of "Nurse Nu-Nu",  
our dog

polar bears, wolves, mothers  
with unconditionally-loved Babes in  
their amauti - carved with love and  
integrity

homestead aromas of  
partridge in orange sauce,  
bannock,  
almond pizzelles,  
maple syrup,  
cinnamon,  
apple cider and  
lemon peel

Red-tail hawk feathers,  
Snowy-owl wings,  
Ceremonial drum,  
Sealskin, lovingly pinned with  
Pauktuutit

Shadows of a pirouette on pointe,  
ghosts of Swan Lake, and  
the Blue Danube

Day-dreaming on the mountain-side  
of hope  
lifetime of Nature's compassion,  
caring and  
sharing  
belonging connection -  
the warmth  
of embracing acceptance

"The BEAUTIFUL Cygnet: The TRUE  
Story of the Ugly Duckling" –  
re-writing the script  
sharing Creator's Medicine Gifts –  
Treasures,  
written by the Swans

I hail from everywhere and  
nowhere,  
both at the same time  
Land of the Ice and Snow.

Rainbow nation, Creator's Heart  
and...  
Mother's womb,  
Profoundly deep  
inside of Aki/Mother Earth  
a hard-earned struggle  
to self-acceptance,  
using a Velvet Tongue  
to speak MY Truth,  
embracing and sharing  
Inner Sage  
manifesting  
Desert Rose, Bright Star  
Foundation –  
the path to self-sufficiency,  
sanctuary and  
serenity:  
my island -  
My HOME  
keeping the home-fires burning:  
surrounded by  
grandchildren,  
rocking in Nanny's glider,  
exuding the wisdom of the  
Hearth –  
Generations of Wise Women...  
ashes to ashes,  
dust to dust,  
back to  
Source!



## *Suicide or Testify*

by Theresa O'Connor

The pain erupted  
I scream to be heard  
No one would listen  
It was suicide or testify

I was fed to the wolves  
Your defense attacked me  
As you sat and watched  
It was suicide or testify

As he ripped me apart  
Scrutinizing my statements  
But my truth came out  
It was suicide or testify

I crumple into a ball of tears  
The pain of the child surging forth  
The Judge calls a recess  
It was suicide or testify

Purging of my agony  
Flooding of memories  
Flashbacks exploding  
It was suicide or testify

The childhood trauma exposed  
Revealing the truth  
No doubt in the judge's mind  
It was suicide or testify

Blame and shame thrust upon me!  
For revealing family secrets  
Shunned and disowned  
It was suicide or testify

The shame was yours  
I needed to speak my truth  
Pleading to be heard  
It was suicide or testify

Looking into your eyes  
Blackness and darkness there  
I am alone in my agony  
It was suicide or testify

Speaking my truth  
Freed me from the shame  
I did not surrender to suicide  
I bravely testified



## *The Broken Reflection*

by Sherr Marie Altamirano Diaz

The brokenness flows all over her  
As she stared at her reflection  
At the shattered mirror  
She felt all the afflictions....the torment  
The harshness of life in her.  
Tears covered her face  
As she cried a river  
Not a care in the world  
If anyone sees how she is.  
Often wondered how she even reached this point  
All the care she gives  
Even though she is wilting slowly away  
Like a flower outside in the cold.  
No one noticed the exhaustion  
As she smiles her way through  
The strength she is trying to portray  
Is finally disappearing day by day  
Yet she is trying to find hope  
That one day her sun will come back  
And take her away somewhere  
To see the rainbow once more  
Deep inside of her.



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

# Strong Hands Stop Violence Poetry Night & Community Call Out (2023)

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))