

Native American Poetry

How Will You Know Me?

How will you know me?
You will know me by my stature.
I'm the one with brown skin, head held high,
and wisdom in my eyes.
Wisdom from happenings in years gone by.
You will know me by my ready smile.
Do not misunderstand this smile.
You meet me in the strangest places,
singing your songs,
speaking to your group,
writing your paper,
nursing your sick,
I am ready to defend me and mine to the death.
You are now hearing the beat of the Chiefs drum.
You have yet to hear from me!
By Shing wauk — Ta

Death Of A Spirit

Another spirit has been wasted.
My young man has died. . .
In front of my eyes.
And in my heart. . .
Silently I would beg him,
Please turn away from this disease,
This white mans alcohol.
But words would have been to no avail.
Couldn't he see it was killing our people?
And him. . .
And me. . .
And us. . .
His body lives on, perhaps not for long,
But his spirit died with that last drink.
Ki jin o quay

To Bridge Our World

It must be hard to
see beyond the clouds in
people's eyes that lock
you out of their private worlds
or lift your voice above the
ever constant wind and
never know if someone hears
or even cares.
Yes, it must be hard
finding your own way through
these troubled times and
trying to put the
jigsaw puzzle together
when you know someone's
played the game before
and a piece may be missing
or bent out of shape.
So, if in quiet nights
sleep is hard to find and
you hear only the ticking
of the clock
remember
you are not alone.

By Timothy Colombe

Our Prayer

Our Grandfathers who are all things
Sacred are your names
Your time will come again
Your Dreams will be again
On our Earth Mother as it is everywhere else.
We give our thanks once more for the
nourishment you give our Mother for us.
And forgive us our wrongs
as we have tried to forgive the wrongs against
us over and over.
Lead us not into greed, but
protect us from the evil ones who are greedy.
For yours is all things, the strength
and happiness for ever and all time.
Black Owl Thunder

Red-White And Blue

I met a pretty city girl — Indian, she said.
She said she'd heard of Ouster and she knew her skin was red.
But outside of those facts and inside of her mind
She wasn't sure just who she was or what she'd left behind.
She didn't know her tribe, she didn't know her land —
All she knew was welfare and charity's helping hand.
She must have had some pride, but it was deep within,
Beaten in by foster homes that tried to change her skin.
They tried to make her "civilized" — they made her white in-
stead.
She laughed away their insults, but she cried herself to bed.
"Why did you do this to me?" she cried in outraged shame.
"You took away my parents and you took away my name!"
"You forced me into poverty, then said I was to blame,
"Cause my father drank your white man's wine and mother took
his name."
"Their land was taken from them: their home, their pride — and
me."
"How can you claim to judge them and put your claim on me?"
"I looked into my history book; I read between the lines.
"Where did you mention Trail of Tears — that print was awful
fine."
"I must have missed the Sand Creek page, and also Wounded
Knee."
"And then your textbook tells me that all of us are free?"
"All lies!" she cries in fearful pain and runs out of the room.
"You didn't raise your hand," they said, "You'll stay this af-
ternoon."
"I'll stay, okay, but when I leave I won't be going home.
"I have no home in this town — I'll go my way alone."
Another Indian seeing red; another leaving town.
"I'm free and red!" to me she said, "No whites can tie me down.
"I'm back upon my Mother Earth, beneath my Father Sky.
"I'm back where I belong now — back where my people died."
Red and white and blue, and searching for a home,
Searching for a way of life that white has left alone.
I wish that they find it, I hope they find that place.
I wish they'd take me with them — back to the human race!
Author Unknown

Here Today Gone Tomorrow

Here today, gone tomorrow,
is that what happiness seems?
Am I lost in my sorrow
to live upon yesterday's dreams?
Could today unveil a beauty unknown
and find a golden rainbow for me?
Or is happiness something else shown
inside the person you should be?
For you will find a stillness there
and won't dream or think back.
You will live today without a care
and won't dream or think back.
So think of others and see
that in yourself is love
and you are the person to be
if your smiles shine above.
Dave Houghton

Courier

He comes in the night
Carrying letters from
Wives
Lovers
Mothers
Children
Friends
And places as he goes
pieces of people
on lonely men's cell doors.
And as the letters dwindle
With each passing day
Men disappear beneath
the dust of time
leaving only traces
Of their lives
Scrapped on pale green walls.

By Timothy Colombe

Can You Tell Me Why

From the first time that I met you
to now that we're apart,
so many times you love me
and now you've gone and broke my heart.
Oh the hurt, the pain, the sorrows,
all the things that I've been through, I know
I've only lasted because
I'm so in love with you.
Tell me why
have you lost your love for me?
Tell me why
They don't want me to be free?
The darkness of my days
and the loneliness of my nights away from you
My darling when can we make it right?
Yes the love that we once shared
the love you had for me
is only love from you in all my memories.
Just remember this my darling
everytime you're all alone,
because sooner than you think
I'll once again be home.
By Reynaldo

Sweet Indian Child

Oh, sweet Indian child —
full of wonder and joy —
I shall lead you to manhood —
but never hold you back.
Child of my heart —
who drinks the milk of my body.
The softness of your baby face —
hides the strong, proud warrior you will be.
When you can walk —
I'll lead you by the hand to your father's side —
and you will follow behind his strong back —
until you become a man.
By Neashasha Talongha Luahati



Today

I plan my life beyond
and past
This tomb rock I live in;
This angry cesspool of violence
Where I daily swim,
One eye open for butterflies,
The other seeing
knives, boots and iron bars.
Perhaps
there are no butterflies
Here,
But I hear roses
in the dawn.
By Timothy Colombe

Pine Tree

The pine stands dark against the night.
The branches breathe a prayer to the Spirits.
I stand beside one who has seen many winters
and many storms, yet grows straight.
Father, let the power of my brother flow
between us as I touch him.
Come, my brother, sit with me by the fire.
In the presence of the Great Spirit.
We will sing the songs of our Mother Earth
and talk of her creatures and their ways.
David Lang

They Say

They say. . .
There is nothing worse than a liberated woman.
This is not true!
There is nothing worse than a liberated
Indian woman!
By Shing wauk — Ta

Thoughts For Sharing

How we look at life
Makes all the difference
In our levels of efficiency
Happiness, and productivity.
Each Indian came into this world
Without possessions
But all the raw materials
Are here for us to use.
We can make the most of these
Or we can let
Our opportunities slip away
It's up to us.
The Spirit delights in us
When we set high ideals
He blesses our life
With abundant good.
Let's step out
In faith, today,
Claim our rich inheritance
From a generous creator.
A Creator who has already
Given us our Earth Mother
And the joy of life.
We will be glad we did.
Frank Chilcote

Nightmare

When silence accompanies the night
I think, sometimes, of death
or dying
of being in prison.

Friends tell me
That if no one claims the body
They'll take me in a cheap pine box
To a hill just outside the wall and
lower me into a yawning pit
leaving only my number
To mark the spot.

Confined within walls of wood and earth
To spend eternity
A prisoner
even in death.
By Timothy Colombe

Proud

I am a little fawn
half white,
half wild Indian deer,
and sometimes,
I am confused.
I go to the White man's school,
and,
learn of the rights,
rights of the strangers
to these shores,
and the struggle
with my people.

In my history class,
I hear of massacres.
The word,
so misunderstood,
by white man's ways,
introduced into a language,
that lies.
That lies in treaties,
written by my people,
and,
I will have them fulfilled —
even if they are to be
in White man's blood
I do not care — or should I?

No more —
No more about their 'victories'
Born from my peoples blood.

No more —
My ancient rights
I claim.
We're far too proud
a people,
to be disgraced
by White man's fork tongue.
His language deceiving.

He can have his
corporate capitols.
Let me find peace —
in my heritage,
proud I will remain.

I, little fawn
a reservation
hence, I came.

Time Like Glass

In time like glass the stars are set,
And seeming-fluttering butterflies
Are fixed fast in time's glass web
With mountains and with maid's' bright eyes.

Above the cold condilleras hung
The winged eagle and the moon:
The gold, snow-throated orchid sprung
from gloom where peers the dark baobon.

The Himalays' white, rapt brows;
The jewel-eyed bear that threads their caves;
The lush plain's lowing herds of cows;
The shadow entering human graves

All these like stars in time are set,
They vanish but can never pass;
The sun that with them fades is yet
Fast-fixed as they in time like glass.

By Timothy Colombe

Tear Drops Of My Hopes

These teardrops that I cry,
I shed for you because I know
my feelings are all true, and
if our love is to be given
another chance I will always
keep you so very close to me.

The days will come and
the night will pass us by
for we're all alone for years
and years to come but still
some day I will once again
be free for these prison walls
will no longer have a hold on me.

Then I will come to you
in the sunshine of the day,
to be born again with the
love you have for me. Yes
I will be born again, I
will have new life, knowing
I'm home with you my son
and my darling wife.

Yes these teardrops that
I've cried I've shed for you
because I know my love
for you is true. Things will
be different, just you wait
and see. We will be happy
My Son, My Wife and me.
— Reynaldo Rodrigy

BEING INDIAN IS.....

BEING INDIAN IS . . . watching John Wayne whip 50 of your kind with a single-shot pistol and a rusty pocket-knife on the late show.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having at least a dozen missionaries from twelve different faiths trying to save your heathen soul every year.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . fighting with the U.S. Army to save your country from the evils of communists, and against the U.S. Army on your reservation to keep the Corps of Engineers from stealing all your land.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having every third person you meet tell you about his great grandmother who was a real Cherokee princess.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having 9 out of 10 people tell you how great they believe Jim Thorpe, Squanto, Tonto, and Little Beaver are.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . loving frybread and corn soup.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having high salaried BIA, PHS, OEO, HEW, and DOL white-collar bureaucrats tell you how much money is being spent on Indians these days.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having the greatest grandparents in the world.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having your teenage child come home from school and ask you about "the strange beliefs" of Indians that the teacher mentioned in school today.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . waiting (impatiently) for the new Tecumseh, Osceola, Crazy Horse, and Geronimo to appear.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . living on borrowed time after your 44th birthday.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . listening to all the middle-class Tontos and Uncle Tomahawks tell you we must do things the "American Way".

BEING INDIAN IS . . . feeding anyone and everyone who comes to your door with whatever you have.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . feeling the stares of all the whiteys in any public place you walk into.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having your non-Indian wife dancing in full regalia at your tribal pow-wow.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . knowing the Great Spirit.

BEING INDIAN IS . . . having a Christian missionary tell you it is wrong to believe in more than one Divine Being, then listen to him tell you about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Patric, St. Christopher, St. Francis, etc. etc.

— by Reuben Snake

