

#NotYourPrincess

VOICES OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale



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For every Indigenous woman who has ever been called "Pocahontas" – L.C.

For my mother Hazel with thanks – M.B.L.



I am always trying to escape—from dangerous situations, from racist stereotypes, from environmental destruction in my territory, and from the assault on my freedom as an individual and as part of the Nishnaabeg nation. As an Indigenous person, I have to escape in order to survive, but I don't just escape. I hold this beautiful, rich Indigenous decolonial space inside and around me. I am escaping into Indigenous freedom. I am escaping into Indigenous land and my Indigenous body.

~ **Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg)**

contents

Foreword.....	9
Shawl of Memory's Embrace	11
Clear Wind Blows Over the Moon (Cree/Innu-Montagnais/Dene/Métis)	

the ties that bind us

Tear	14
Linda Hogan (Chickasaw)	
Blankets of Shame	16
Maria Campbell (Métis)	
Two Braids	18
Rosanna Deerchild (Cree)	
My Parents' Pain	20
Madelaine McCallum (Cree/Métis)	
#LittleSalmonWoman	22
Lianne Charlie (Tagé Cho Hudān)	
Reclaiming Indigenous Women's Rights	24
Nahanni Fontaine (Anishinaabe)	
A Tale Of Two Winonas	26
Winona Linn (Maliseet)	
Leaks	28
Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg)	
My Grandmother Sophia	30
Saige Mukash (Cree)	
In Her Words	32
Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe/Ojibwe) & Jen VanStrander (Western Band of Cherokee)	

it could have been me

	34
Falling	36
Natanya Ann Pulley (Navajo)	
I Don't Want To Be Afraid	38
Imajyn Cardinal (Cree/Dene)	
She Is Riding	40
Joanne Arnott (Métis)	
Onto The Red Road	42
Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota)	
The Things We Taught Our Daughters	44
Helen Knott (Dane Zaa/Cree)	
Freedom In The Fog	46
Zoey Roy (Cree/Dene/Métis)	
It Could Have Been Me	50
Patty Stonefish (Lakota)	
Honor Song	52
Gwen Benaway (Anishinaabe/Métis)	
In Her Words	54
Gloria Larocque Campbell Moses (Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, Northern Alberta) & Nathalie Bertin (Métis)	

i am not your princess

	56
A Conversation with a Massage Therapist	58
Francine Cunningham (Cree/Métis)	
We Are Not A Costume	60
Jessica Deer (Mohawk)	
The Invisible Indians	62
Shelby Lisk (Mohawk)	
What's There to Take Back?	66
Tiffany Midge (Hunkpapa Lakota)	
Why Not Indians?	68
DeLanna Studi (Cherokee)	
Stereotype This	70
Melanie Fey (Diné)	
Real NDNZ	72
Pamela J. Peters (Navajo)	
I Am The Only American Indian	76
Cecelia Rose LaPointe (Ojibway/Métis)	
In Her Words	78
Hazel Hedgecoke (Sioux/Hunkpapa/Wendat/Métis/Cherokee/Creek) & Tanaya Winder (Duckwater Shoshone)	

pathfinders

	80
When I Have a Daughter	82
Ntawnis Piapot (Piapot Cree Nation)	
Defender of Mother Earth	84
AnnaLee Rain Yellowhammer (Hunkpapa/Standing Rock Sioux)	
Digital Smoke Signals	86
Various	
Living Their Dreams	88
Shoni Schimmel (Umatilla), September Big Crow (Tsuu T'ina Nation), Ashton Locklear (Lumbee), Brigitte Lacquette (Ojibwe)	
Good Medicine	92
Janet Smylie (Cree/Métis)	
More Than Meets the Eye	94
Kelly Edzerza-Bapty (Tahltan) and Claire Anderson (Tlingit)	
Baby-Girlz-Gotta-Mustang	96
Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota)	
“Dear Past Self”	98
Isabella Fillspipe (Oglala Lakota)	
In Her Words	100
Adrienne Chalepah (Kiowa/Apache) & Lee Maracle (Stó:lō Nation)	
Little Sister	102
Tasha Spillett (Cree)	
Contributors	104
Credits	108
Acknowledgments	109

foreword

“It seemed as if the spiritual and social tapestry they had created for centuries was unraveling. Everything lost that sacred balance. And ever since, we have been striving to return to the harmony we once had. It has been a difficult task. The odds against us have been formidable. But despite everything that has happened to us, we have never given up and will never give up.”

~ Political leader and author Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee Nation, 1945–2010)

I came to terms with what it meant to be an Indigenous woman in my twenties, around the same time as the trial of a male serial killer who targeted vulnerable Indigenous women dominated the news. I was shattered by the very presence of those headlines, because I knew that with one simple twist of fate, I myself could’ve been listed as one of the victims.

I had spent most of my life up to that point filled with self-loathing and a sense of aimlessness. I hadn’t yet realized that the key to finding my direction was directly tied to finding my place—and pride—as an Indigenous woman.

Too often I’ve seen, we’ve all seen, those headlines that send shivers down spines, spin stereotypes to soaring heights, and ultimately shame Indigenous women. Yet when I look around me, I see so many bright, talented, ambitious Indigenous women and girls, full of light, laughter, and love.

This book, co-edited with my longtime peer and mentor Mary Beth Leatherdale, gave me the space to not only write a love letter to all young Indigenous women trying to find their way, but also to help dispel those stereotypes so we can collectively move forward to a brighter future for all.

Lisa Charleyboy (Tsilhqot’in – Tsi Del Del First Nation)



Transform by Tania Willard (Secwepemc Nation)

shawl of memory's embrace

Clear Wind Blows Over The Moon (*Cree/Innu-Montagnais/Dene/Métis*)

past

present

future

myriad textures

woven into

the fabric of life

lived

unlived

being

seeing

scene after scene

a shawl of memory's embrace

adorns futures unknown





the ties that bind us



Tear

Linda Hogan (Chickasaw)

I remember the women.
Tonight they walk
out from the shadows
with black dogs,
children, the dark heavy horses,
and worn-out men.

They walk inside me. This blood
is a map of the road between us.
I am why they survived.
The world behind them did not close.
The world before them is still open.
All around me are my ancestors,
my unborn children.

I am the tear between them
and both sides live.

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Tonight they walk
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my unborn children.

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and both sides live.

Artwork by Wakeah Jhane (Comanche/Blackfoot/Kiowa)



Medicine Lodge

Arkansas City

Ceded to U.S. by Cherokees
Articles 15 and 16 July 19, 1866

7th Standard Parallel N.
KANSAS
IND.

XX XIX XVIII XVII XVI XV XIV XIII XII XI X IX VIII
CHEROKEE

6th Standard Parallel N.
OSAGES

Supply

Cameron River

Salt Fork

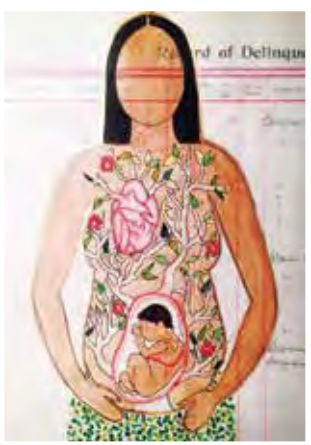
Black Bear C.

Parallel North

Ceded by Seminoles to U.S.

Ceded to U.S. by
Choctaws and
Chickasaws

Art. 3 Treaty
April 28.



Shields
Sne's Fox Agency

4th Standard Par. N.

Deep Fork

3rd Standard Par. N.

2nd Standard Par. N.

1st Standard Par. N.

KIOWA, COMANCHE AND
APACHE RESERVATION

Art. 2 Treaty Oct. 21, 1867

Camp Radgiminski

Red River

Cherokees Old Store

Old Fort Arbuckle

Rush C.

CHICKASAW

BASE LINE

NATION

1st Standard Parallel South

Ft. Holmes

Stonewall

Winchester

Boggy Depo

Ft. Washita

Preston

Henrietta

Guinesville

Sheridan

Blankets of Shame

Maria Campbell (Métis)

Maria Campbell's great-grandmother, whom she called Cheechum, was a niece of Gabriel Dumont, a Métis leader. Her whole family fought beside Louis Riel during the North-West Resistance at Batoche, Saskatchewan, in 1885. She shares what her great-grandmother taught her about how Indigenous people protect themselves from prejudice in society and the shame that comes with it.

My *Cheechum* used to tell me that when the government gives you something, they take all that you have in return—your pride, your dignity, all the things that make you a living soul. When they are sure they have everything, they give you a blanket to cover your shame. She said that the churches—with their talk about God, the Devil, heaven, and hell—and residential schools taught children to be ashamed: we're all a part of that government. When I tried to explain to her that our teacher said governments were made by the people, she told me, "It only looks like that from the outside, my girl."

She used to say that all our people wore blankets, each in his or her own way. Someday, though, she said, people would throw them away and the whole world would change. When I got older, I understood about the blanket; I wore one too. I didn't know where I started to wear it, but the blanket of shame was there and I didn't know how to throw it away.

But the years of searching, loneliness, and pain are over for me. *Cheechum* said, "You'll find yourself, and you'll find brothers and sisters." I have brothers and sisters all over the country. I no longer need my blanket to survive.



***Enrollment** by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath/Modoc)*



two braids

Rosanna Deerchild (Cree)

on my first day
of kindergarten

mama weaves
two braids

so tightly
as if they will never let go

too tight i fuss pull
at my temples

she loosens stitches
spit shines them

into long perfect arrows
wraps and wraps

tips into exclamation
points memories

entwined
of her first day at residential school

of falling wisps of hair
of never going home

mama kisses my forehead
lips a warm berry

on my brown skin

sends me on my way
i wave smile back

my braids bounce
behind me

a reminder of who i am
always pointing me

back home

Illustration by Danielle Daniel (Métis)





My Parents' Pain

“I don’t see trauma as a downfall or a weakness. I see it as a lesson and a way to build strength. Through Ceremony I faced myself and saw my pain for what it truly was (intergenerational) and not my or my family’s fault. My parents’ pain is directly connected to residential schools. I know why my family is fractured. I can’t imagine going through what they did. I don’t blame them. I was born to them to show them love and to be the love that they never knew or never received.”

Madelaine McCallum (Cree/Métis)





#LittleSalmonWoman

Lianne Charlie (Tagé Cho Hudän)

I come from salmon & lattes lodgepole pines & townhouses
fish head soup & Danish pastries

