

ARTWORK BY PAIGE PETTIBON



TO OUR FUTURE AFRO-INDIGENOUS KIN

OCTOBER 2021

# AFRO- INDIGENOUS KIN

Welcome to our first issue!

As an Afro-Indigenous run collective, we have seen the lack of awareness and representation of us. Afro-Indigenous people/ Black Natives/ Black NDNS have particular experiences within the settler colonial states Canada and the USA.

The histories and contemporary realities of longstanding Afro-Indigenous communities are often erased and/or hidden.

On Turtle Island, we come from incredibly powerful and resilient ancestries. We exist at the intersection of African Diasporic and Indigenous communities.

This zine is filled with Afro-Indigenous art to honor, acknowledge and showcase our experiences and existences. These poems, paintings, illustrations hold our journeys, our grief, our truth, and our dreams.

# COLLECTIVE & EDITORS



Shanese Indoowaaboo Steele is an Afro-Indigenous, Fat Femme living and learning on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg people and the Dish With One Spoon Wampum. With a Black Father from Trinidad, with roots in Carriacou, Grenada and a Mixed mother of French and Native ancestry with ties to Nipissing First Nation and the Red Sky independent Métis Nation. Shanese is a published writer have also spent the last 10 years as an activist facilitating workshops, creating curriculum,



Anpa'o Locke is an Afro-Indigenous filmmaker. They are Hñjpkapha Lakota & Ahna Dené. They come from the Standing Rock Nation. They have a passion for Native representation within popular media and are curious as to how we can see the way screen sovereignty and self determination affects Indigenous representation across Turtle Island. They are passionate about inclusion and representation in feature film/entertainment media, and in the cast and production team.



Keisha is an urban reconnecting nihithaw kaskitiwiniw from Toronto but who has grown up around the world. They are Jamaican and nihithaw (Woods Cree) from treaty 6 territory and a band member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band. They are passionate about language and an emerging artist. Their artistic focus and passion in life is around reclamation of identities. Keisha was the main editor and graphic designer for this zine.

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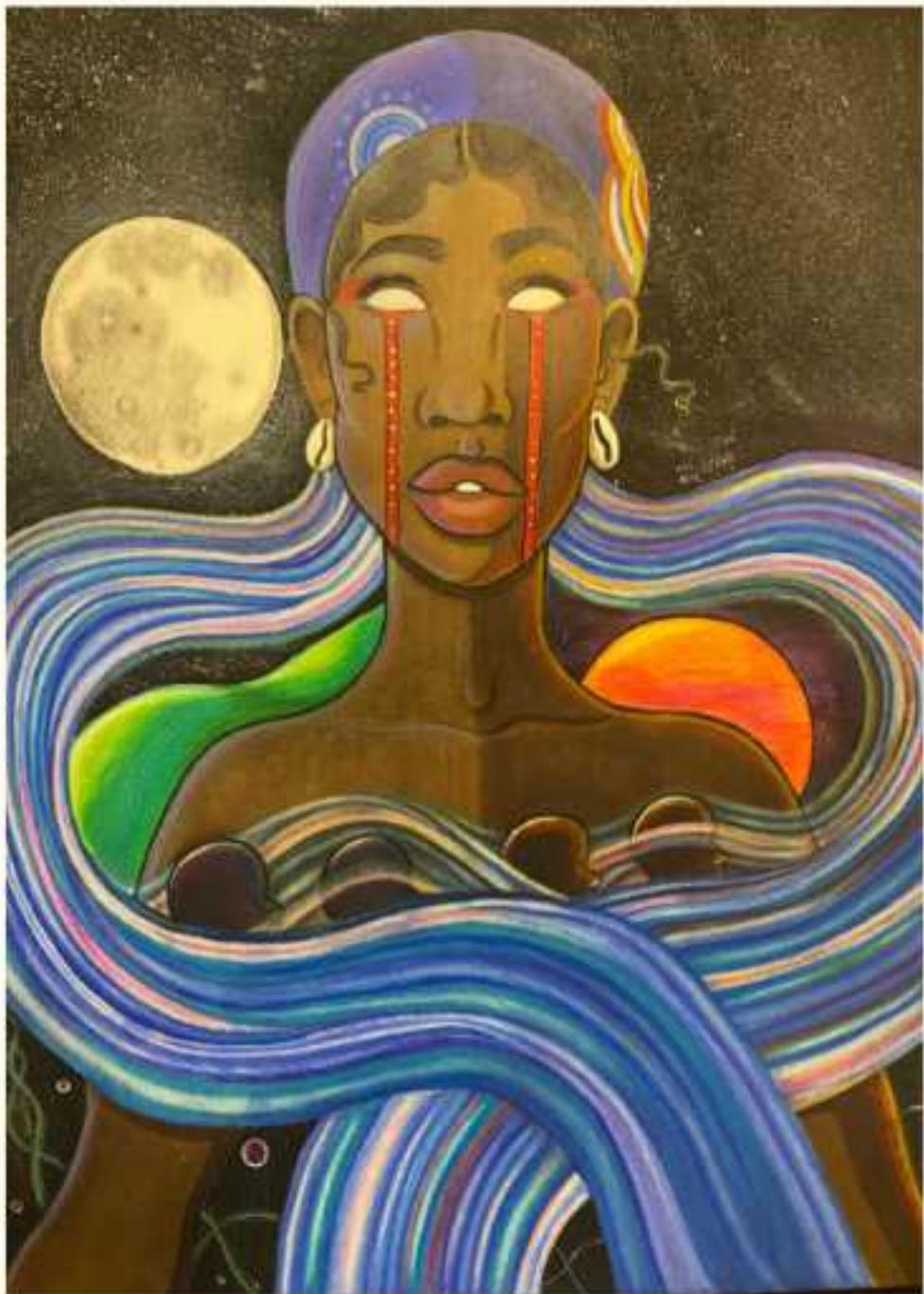
melanin mvskoke  
@MelaninMvskoke

Being Black doesn't disqualify  
you from being Indigenous!

Being Indigenous doesn't  
disqualify you from being Black!

11:52 AM · 9/11/20 · Twitter for iPhone

BY MELANINMVSKOKE

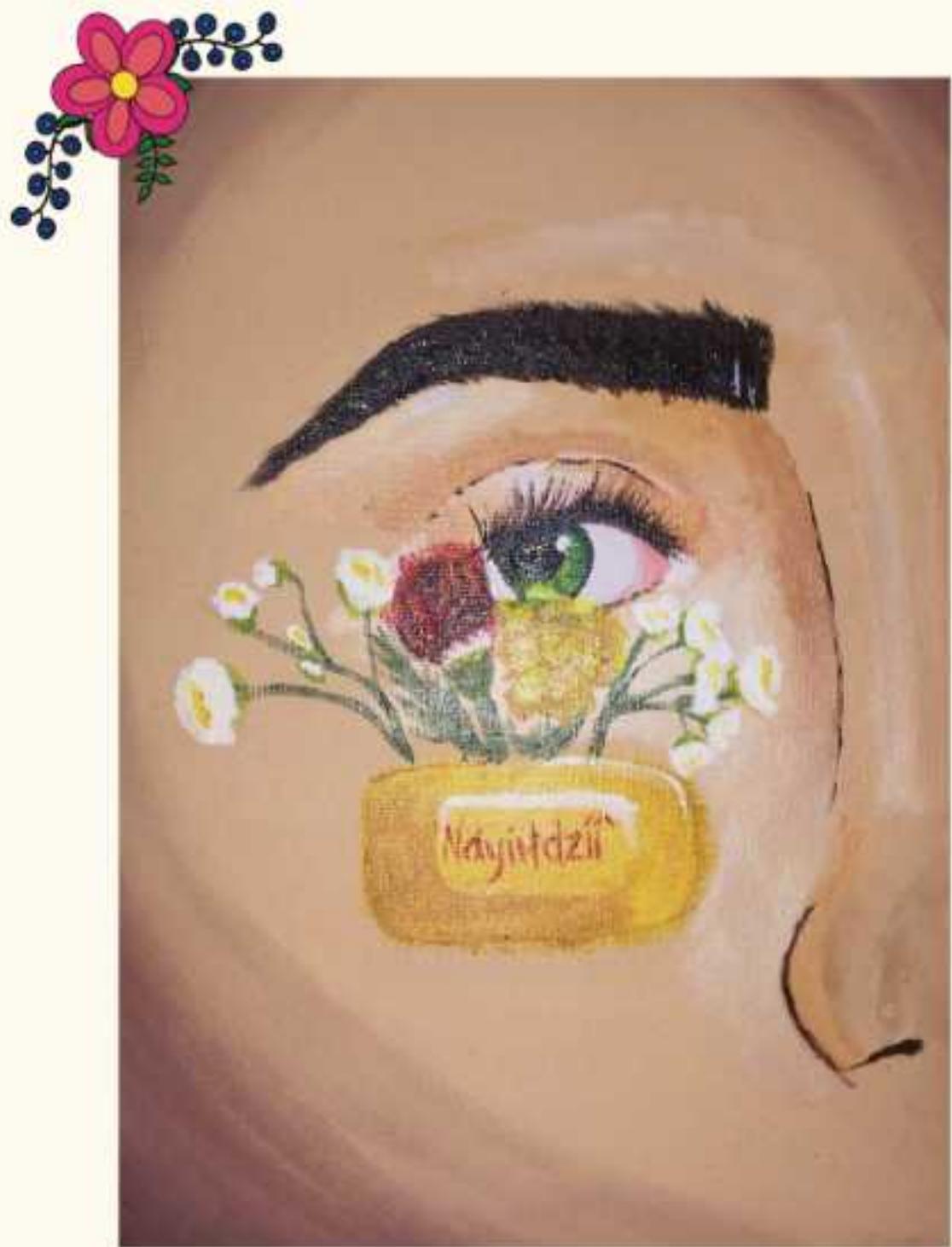


ARTWORK BY DE'ANA  
BROWNFIELD

# BLACK & BROWN

WRITTEN BY JAYDA MARLEY

Black & brown bodies  
Dance around my heart  
In a culture combining circle  
And squeeze my stolen identities  
back into me  
Learn more they say  
Teach more they say  
Remember you  
Remember us  
Remember your mother and her  
mother  
Remember your father and his  
father  
Remember that you are half  
Stolen from your land  
And half on your stolen land  
Reclaim it  
Reclaim it  
Reclaim what is rightfully yours.



ARTWORK BY  
DESTINY MORGAN



I am tired  
But I am still here

The load has been painful  
Psychological scars  
Generational curses  
Systematic trauma

This burden is that of an entire  
ocean  
It's weight crushing

#### I CAN'T BREATHE

The pressure collapsing  
my lungs  
my mind  
all of me

#### I CAN'T BREATHE

It's dark all around  
I don't know if I'll ever make it to the  
surface  
in my own strength  
I reach  
I push  
with all my might  
in every stride

#### I CAN'T BREATHE

The load is too much  
I cry out  
"Creator, why have you abandoned  
me?"  
I wait  
desperate  
A stillness surrounds me  
The moment stretched on  
A moment of suspension between  
this world and the next

I release into the unknown

# THE PROMISE

WRITTEN BY OLIVIA LUCAS

CONTINUED

# THE PROMISE

WRITTEN BY OLIVIA LUCAS

I know nothing else  
So I choose this  
I release  
into what is beyond my control  
I surrender the weight

I soften my body  
My muscles  
I begin to rise  
The load becomes light  
Light breaks through the water  
The waters carrying me  
I float upward  
I feel I am not moving fast enough  
Will I break through this surface?  
I trust  
Not by my own strength will I rise

I will meet the surface of this great  
water  
Infested with many sharks and  
predators  
I will meet the gaze of the sun  
And I will smile  
As he dries my face and warms my  
body  
after the long journey

I smile

This is the promise  
This is my hope  
This is my comfort  
No one will ever steal this from me  
My ancestors will not allow it  
My Creator will liberate me  
My God will free my people  
And bring them into the promised  
land

# SELF REFLECTION

WRITTEN BY  
ENA YOLANDA MAXAM

SELF REFLECTION  
I KNOW WHO I AM  
I DON'T NEED YOU TO DEFINE ME.  
I KNOW WHO I AM.  
I DON'T NEED YOU TO REMIND ME.  
I KNOW WHO I AM EVEN THOUGH  
HISTORY FORGOT TO MENTION ME.  
I KNOW WHO I AM BECAUSE MY FAMILY  
REMINDS ME.  
I KNOW WHO I AM, A BLEND OF TWO  
POWERFUL PEOPLE, THAT SURVIVE  
EUROPEAN RULE.  
DESPITE THEIR RIDICULE WE STAND  
TALL AND PROUD TODAY IN MANY  
DIFFERENT WAYS.  
I KNOW WHO I AM BECAUSE I LOOK IN  
THE MIRROR AND I LOVE MYSELF EACH  
AND EVERY DAY.

E.Y.M





Being Afro-Indigenous is complexity beyond measures. It's walking in two worlds; one being a world not made for us. A world designed to oppress and suppress our every being. Being Afro-Indigenous, you need to explain the nappy curls on your head and why our cheek bones are so high that when we smile our eyes squint. Being Afro-Indigenous comes with a strenuous obligation to make sure that both our cultures are represented appropriately and not allowing historic oppression and systematic racism oppress us everyday.

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SENTILLA BUBB  
@SENTILLAB

BY SENTILLA BUBB



ARTWORK BY  
JALEN BRINK



**YOUR BLACKNESS  
IS SUFFICIENT**

**YOUR INDIGENESS  
IS SUFFICIENT**

@MELANINMVKOKE

BY  
MELANIN MVKOKE



ARTWORK BY  
KAYA JOAN

# AFRO INDIGENOUS

WRITTEN BY FAITH CAMPOS

Confused stares as a dark girl holds the hand  
of an Indigenous woman.

As a dark girl says "sister" to one with fair skin  
Repeated questioning of where I am from  
and "making sense" once my parents step in  
the room "but are you sure you're...?"

How can you question?

Being told I am too light to be black yet too  
black to be Indigenous

Feeling as if I am not allowed to stand up to  
the rights of my people

Because I am not fully them

Not fully Black

Not fully Indigenous

"pick one", they say because I cannot be both  
Needing to explain the origins of slavery that  
flows through my roots

Mixing that with colonization

Because that's what I'm made from

The survival of both slavery and colonialism  
combined makes...me

A beautiful Black, Anishinaabe woman

Not as a half but a full

A full Black

A full Indigenous

# WE WILL BE FREE



wapahkesis

ARTWORK BY WAPAHKESIS

## THE UN- CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIP FROM WHICH ALL- ELSE STEMS.

WRITTEN BY SUZANNE SHOUSH

Anyone who has read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2013), the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), or the UN report on African Canadians (2017), knows that race and racism has played an integral role in defining 'Law and Order' in Canada. Canada is a country that was founded on a relationship of explicit non consent with Indigenous and Black people

Our laws, policies, institutions, markets, and value systems – the very structures that police are expected to "serve and protect" – were not designed with Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) and Black voices, and did not take into account Indigenous and Black humanity. Indigenous and Black people did not write the laws that police enforce, nor were they given an opportunity to define themselves in society before racial bias defined them.

This is structural violence that took centuries of aggressive stereotyping and disenfranchisement. As a result we are now in the midst of a serious public health crisis: a culture of Anti-Indigenous and Anti-Black racism, mirrored in police violence.

# CONTINUATION

WRITTEN BY SUZANNE SHOUSH

Expecting the police to reform their way out of systemic racism is not only unfair, it is impossible. Police do not and did not write our laws. That role is reserved for parliament and legislatures, and historically our laws were written to protect property and the privileges of those in power.

Thriving, safe and healthy communities can only exist in the context of a consensual relationship between police, the public and the society that creates the laws. Without this consent, the relationship will always be one rooted in violence and injustice that begets more violence and injustice.

There is ample evidence that police themselves understand there is an inherent violence in policing Indigenous and Black communities that cannot be mitigated through reform. In a fascinating 2019 doctoral thesis, *'To Swerve and Neglect: De-Policing throughout Today's Front-line police work'*, former police officer George Roy Brown details his interviews of more than 4000 police from Canada and New York City. An overwhelming majority - 79.2% - stated that they perceive interactions with visible minorities to be "riskier" than those with white citizens. Apprehension surrounding the personal and professional risk of a citizen interaction in which they may become the 'next viral video' face of police brutality has led to a phenomenon known as FIDO - "Fuck it, Drive on".

When public demands for transparency and accountability are interpreted as an attack on police we must acknowledge we have a deeper issue. Individual police cannot be solely accountable for police violence - this only pushes the false paradigm of individualism. There can be no justification that the line between 'normal police conduct' and 'catastrophic, career ending police brutality' should be so razor thin. This is not fair to police, and reflects the reality that the police are not, and cannot be, the solution to everything. Community Based Policing, which rests on the expectation that police can rely on intuition to prevent crime forces police to use Canada's baked in racial biases as a decision making tool.

Police are expected to respond to mental health crises, overdoses, domestic crises, broken down cars, lost cats and acts of terror, shootings, threats, abducted children and manage homelessness, clean up vagrancy, monitor petty crime, and prevent crime and investigate and solve crimes after the fact, and on, and on. We must stop and ask: What is the strategic rationale behind which police are deployed in our communities with such an un-attainable mandate? It is no wonder the budget keeps climbing - because this task can never be completed through policing. We have set the police on a fool's errand: the more we de-fund communities, the more 'in need' of policing the community becomes. More policing means bigger police budgets at the expense of community resources. The dog is chasing its tail.

# CONTINUATION

WRITTEN BY SUZANNE SHOUSH

The safest communities are not the communities with the most policing. They are the communities that are empowered and well resourced. In Canada, the number one predictor of income is race. The number one predictor of health is income. Our COVID hotspot maps mirror our low-income hotspots which mirror our highest police and emergency services use neighbourhoods.

My mother, whose family was ravaged by the Indian Residential School system, started marching for Black Lives in the 1960s. My father, a Sudanese writer and poet raised us on tales of the Mahdi revolution. In 2014 my heart broke as I watched my 1 and 3 year old sons march down University Ave chanting "Black Lives Matter" in their beautiful little baby voices. It is 2020. I am now mother to three sons, whose father descends from Haiti; the world first self-liberated slave colony. My immediate family alone has spent more than 70 years fighting for transformative change, while Black and Indigenous peoples have been at this fight for centuries. We cannot let the structures that led to the deaths of Regis Korchinski Paquet, Chantal Moore, George Floyd, or Ejaz Ahmed Choudry remain in place. I cannot tolerate a society in which my sons' beautiful skin, hair and faces are a threat to their lives.



ARTWORK BY WAPAHKESIS

By the strength of this mass movement we now have an opportunity to create a solutions based approach to our social woes by stopping, reflecting and #DefundingthePolice. This notion is neither novel nor radical. Defunding the police involves re-allocating limited resources of our budget in an intentional manner that begets solutions.

We can and must capitalize on this opportunity to evoke transformative change. Policing must be a response to the needs of the public, and at this moment in time the public is speaking loudly, clearly and passionately. We cannot police our way out of systemic racism and systemic poverty. Defund the Police. Resource our communities. Invest in education, recreation, health, climate change mitigation, housing, mental health and cultural resources, designed for and by Indigenous and Black people.



ARTWORK BY  
WAPAHKESIS OF NENOOKAASI

# 2.

WRITTEN BY  
KARMELLA CEN BENEDITO DE  
BARROS

IN THE MORNING  
I WOKE  
WITH KNOTS IN MY HAIR  
AND DIRT ON MY FEET

LONG DAYS  
DON'T HOLD SPACE  
FOR THIS SPIRIT.

FOR TIMELESS BEING

-  
SING ME TO SLEEP AND I'LL DREAM OF  
YOU LOVE

-  
KOKUM BRAIDS MY HAIR LONG LIKE  
SWEETGRASS

WHISPERS STORIES FROM PLACES  
SPIRIT GOES  
WHEN SPIRIT LEAVES

I AM FLOATING PHOSPHORESCENT  
DANCING  
SOUL LIGHT REFLECTIONS





ARTWORK BY  
KRIS BAUGHMAN



PROUDLY BLACK AND NATIVE  
RIBBON SKIRT BY WAPAHKESIS

WRITTEN BY KARMELLA CEN  
BENEDITO DE BARROS

slave ships crossed the atlantic  
you cross my mind  
my mind lost the translation  
i still long for you  
you hold so much magic  
songs carry through the night  
night holds stars in the sky  
beyond this smog shiny  
city  
city witnessed my birth  
i don't want to die here  
here the cold water cleanses  
pains from longing for  
home  
home hold us just right  
see two hands fit  
together  
together never really happens  
keep having these dreams  
dreams of a big ocean voyage  
of a different kinda  
livin'  
living here feels so lonely  
lonely longs for the timeless  
i keep trying  
to find it  
please keep  
calling me home



# 2/ UNTITLED

WRITTEN BY  
ANISA FLOWERS

You're not allowed to call us resilient.

Resilience isn't the medicine song I want to hear after waking up in cold sweats, panicking, at the sound of a police siren's death march. Resilience isn't the party I want thrown to celebrate my sigh of relief each day that my dad, too joyful, too loving, and too quick to extend his too Black helping hand, walks back through the door. Nor is it the hand I wish to squeeze tightly when he leaves.

Resilience isn't the amount of likes I want to see on a photo of my people protecting sacred land while RCMP holds guns to their heads and chokes our trees with chains.

You're not allowed to call us resilient because we have, only by mere coincidence, survived another day in the world that built a wall between yours and mine, and then tucked your children in at night to bedtime stories of your resilience in the face of our savagery.

You're not allowed to call us resilient while you watch us slam into the walls of this maze you've built, that you continue to place barricades in, and then marvel at us as we somehow manage to turn around and drag ourselves in the right direction.

You're not allowed to call us resilient because we outran the bear—the one that you trained to chase us, and then loosened its cuffs.

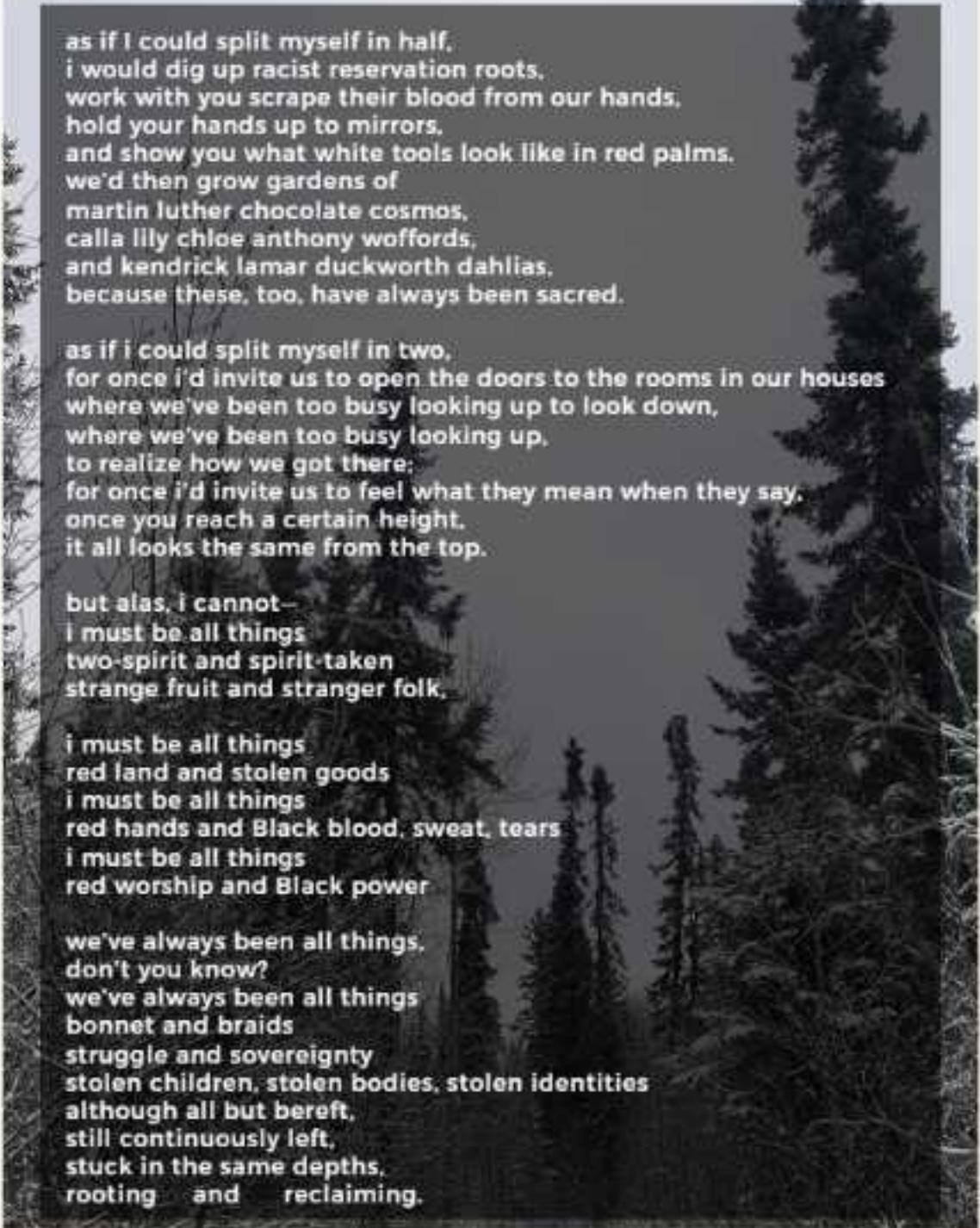
Resilience, a heavyweight that hangs from my chest when it's given by you, is a badge of honour when given to me by my mothers, and their mothers.

And even then, I choose equity, justice, access, and life, over resilience.

You're not allowed to call us resilient until you call us equal, and mean it.

## 2/ UNTITLED CONTINUED

WRITTEN BY  
ANISA FLOWERS



as if I could split myself in half,  
i would dig up racist reservation roots,  
work with you scrape their blood from our hands,  
hold your hands up to mirrors,  
and show you what white tools look like in red palms.  
we'd then grow gardens of  
martin luther chocolate cosmos,  
calla lily chloe anthony woffords,  
and kendrick lamar duckworth dahlias.  
because these, too, have always been sacred.

as if i could split myself in two,  
for once i'd invite us to open the doors to the rooms in our houses  
where we've been too busy looking up to look down,  
where we've been too busy looking up,  
to realize how we got there:  
for once i'd invite us to feel what they mean when they say,  
once you reach a certain height,  
it all looks the same from the top.

but alas, i cannot—  
i must be all things  
two-spirit and spirit-taken  
strange fruit and stranger folk,

i must be all things  
red land and stolen goods  
i must be all things  
red hands and Black blood, sweat, tears  
i must be all things  
red worship and Black power

we've always been all things,  
don't you know?  
we've always been all things  
bonnet and braids  
struggle and sovereignty  
stolen children, stolen bodies, stolen identities  
although all but bereft,  
still continuously left,  
stuck in the same depths,  
rooting and reclaiming.



ENDLESS FREEDOM  
BY MARIA HIRSI



ARTWORK BY  
NICKOLE KEITH

## To be both Black and Indigenous is to live with a panther wrapped around your heart

By Alexandra Lawrence (Kiyaska Ya:mahiye:se)  
 (Senegambian, Kongolese, Saponi/Monacan (Yesah), Tuscarora, English)  
 written under the Green Corn Moon (August 2020)

ading

At night, I fall asleep with a panther wrapped around my heart.

He growls, prowls, asé:pi-black and familiar around the beaming red essence of me; he is purple green, diving into the water and grinning copper teeth when he resurfaces. Claws extend, scratch my skin and draw blood. The lines fade; my injury was only imaginary. In the cool yellow light of my television's power, I wake and think of him.

I first became Indigenous last year; before that, I was always 'part native' fractured becoming Indigenous made me whole.

My panther dives into cool water, disturbed and deep. Bubbles of oxygen emerge, slip by. I fear the resurfacing, but it comes more often now — I am challenged to explain myself. Before, I explained why; now, I explain why not.

Why did I not claim myself before? Why was I so afraid of quills that don't sting, teeth that don't bite? Why did I conform myself to suit the molding of a genocidal state, intent on my removal? I am who I am. On whose shoulders should I have been expected to stand but my own ancestors? Whose name could I claim but theirs? But my own?

Panther resurfaces, clutching old bones.

I am walking across the grass at a family wake; this is my father's mother's family, those distant figurines of rural life who I barely know, never recognize, and when pressed, do my best not to be noticed or thought ill of by. Aunt Katie is a hunching mass, darkened by the medicine and the Apex sun. She assesses me briefly: "Hmph. That must be the Indian side." I am still there, but I am proclaimed, and dismissed. Panther swims.

I am lying half-asleep in the afternoon on my great aunt's sofa, the sister of my mother's sacred mother, in her wood floored living room where light always streams through soft curtains and the cold weather outside is far, and irrelevant. She is moving through the kitchen, and her radio is playing softly from the basement. She plays it all day down there, to ward off the strangers. I do not consider that she can be afraid; I am a child, and she is my auntie. She is fearless, yearless. Powerful. She knows all the past ways of being. I close my eyes and count her steps, hear her go make the water ready for drinking — this is a ritual. My panther paddles through the shallow water.

I am leaning against the doorway in the basement of the Quaker meeting house where we all come to drum together and practice being ourselves. All the faces look pale and unfamiliar. Panther flicks her tail, and I cagily describe my family history. My body warms when I get to the migration; I am always safe in the story of the migration — always sure of names and dates and paths. I have the authority of my aunt behind me. My panther swims ashore, shakes terrifying quills out from her back and bares teeth. I am welcomed, or, at least, accepted.

To be Black and Indigenous is to be born with a panther swimming around your heart. My Indigeneity is at the core of me, at the heart of all my doings and imaginings, a shelter and a monster, terrifying me as often as it shields me. The panther reminds me that I am weak, uncertain, human — that the stories inside my heart are to be saved, protected, and to remain unshared. Sharing is for meals, and community, and land. Stories are for the dead. Even now, my panther swims circles around my constricting red core, light touches of guidance or threat — I am never sure. I am in the shoals, far from shore and clinging to her back.

Together, we dive, and I am underwater with just my Indigeneity and the cold and terrifying freshwater sea. I can't see where we are, but her eyes glow and her fat mouth shimmers like an abalone shell. I don't know what we are, the panther and I, but she seems to have some idea.

I introduce myself in my language — Kiyas̄ka Ya:mahiyé:se m̄jklakéwa. Corey makes his disapproving sound. M̄jklakéwa, he corrects. They call me. My tongue feels fat and awkward in my mouth.

The panther laughs her statue-faced, toothy laugh. Copper falls from her mouth. A hundred times later, I introduce myself to my classmates and make no errors. Panther sits, watches me with those jewel-thief eyes, a dragon and a sigil.

I am my own sigil, I decide. I am my own emblem, and icon and definition. I hear two drums, dance twice for every event. I am doing the dance in front of me, shawl spinning, wings wide; I am also dancing between avoidances, between obfuscations, between promises and accountabilities. To whom am I accountable? To everybody, everybody. Do I count my Anglo ancestors? Hardly, but I speak their language every day, and eat their food and roll my eyes and think about money when I wake up. I suppose that could be my African ancestors, too — counting gold while the first ships sail away. Or perhaps my ancestors were victims? Stolen from the interior and dragged to the coast to be found guilty and tried, sent seven times around the tree of remembrance, then mailed off across the world. Forget this place. But how? Panther observes, and she is not smiling. I fall asleep listening to Biaka flutes and dreaming of the central African rainforest.



My elderly dog has hurt his leg, and I need something to help him. In the store, a girl smiles at my earrings. "Are you Native?" she asks, and I am too shocked to be polite. Panther puts her ears back and I hold on to her quills. I make up for it with conversation at the register -- she was, too, but from the southwest, and she laughed and told me about her auntie, and her friends -- they were Saponi, like me. She was proud to have known me. I felt like a rare bird, spotted. My panther warmed, and swelled.

Why did my ancestors move? Why did they migrate, cross mountains and rivers and the Appalachian plateau to make new homes in Indiana and Ohio and New York and Maryland? Or perhaps this was never a migration at all, only a temporary visit before a reversion to type; perhaps they were waiting for the place to call them back. I am back now, and I am here. My panther barks a happy noise at the smell of the pine forests and the sight of familiar rivers and creeks. She splashes in the Banister River while I drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway. I am learning the names of the land around me. In class and online, my skin becomes currency, I am dark enough to be taken seriously, not so dark as to be dismissed. I monetize (moni-tize?) this, as my ancestors did -

I commodify my blood and my color and myself in search of some form of settler-colonial validation. Or perhaps in a misguided attempt at survival. My panther scowls at me, prowls off into the darkness. For the first time, I am afraid of being hurt, afraid to feel her claws tear through my skin. Hers is the voice of the disappointed mother. I feel ashamed.

I learn to say yehni and my favorite word, wòlaxkai. At night, I wonder how I would have fared if I had been my ancestors, and they had been me. I dream of tall brown men and the smoky smell of a homeplace in a cedar copse. I long for Maryland's hills, and a time when things were simpler. But none of this has ever been simple; these stories have always been unfolding. Panther warns me to unburden my heart, to live free. I read books about liberation and wonder what I missed when I majored in Biology instead of social movements at Howard.

In the car on the way to my first sweat, an auntie elder looks over at me. "You look familiar." She says, blunt and certain. We've never met before, but she insists. "No," she says, turning to look out of the window, sure and therefore disinterested. "You look familiar. I know who you are. I know you."

I am here, both claimed and loved. Panther flicks her tail, and wraps around my heart.





LOVE AFTER EMPIRE BY AYA CLAPPIS

I burned down the empire in my dreams last night  
as I wept I made clay from the ashes:  
looking out at a world reborn,  
I placed the clay in my palms  
and sculpted my first child.  
It is the first time I feel love without fear.

You learned to walk as the embers still flickered, that is what  
I will tell you one day.



I will teach you that all the water you can see  
and beyond the horizon,  
is where we come from.

And that this is our lifeline, our  
oldest grandmother.

I will teach you to pay homage to  
the place where our soles meet  
the earth.



# KITASKINAW

ARTWORK BY & WRITTEN BY  
KEISHA ERWIN

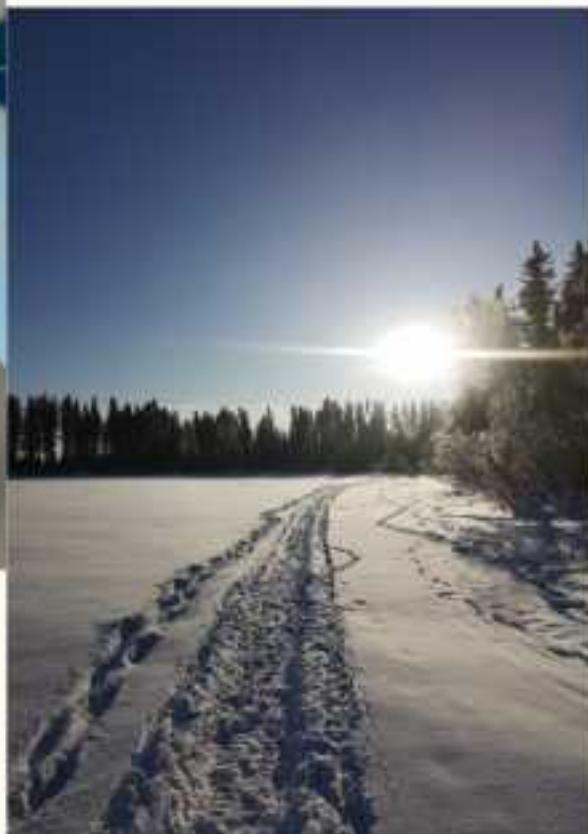
None of my cousins on the rez can comprehend what it means to be visibly different than how my nihithawak ancestors looked.

I am proud of my afro that defies gravity.

But my hair does not look how the White man's Indian's hair looks like. It does not fall straight like in those stereotypical paintings of Indigenous peoples.

My hair does not react well in -40 degrees weather, however I long to live on these lands that my ancestors have been on since time immemorial

I remember nohkom becoming frustrated with it and trying to pull it out.



I allowed shame to sit in my body.

. I-mithonakwan kitaskinaw.  
ninanāskomon anohc Twi-  
wapataman piponihk, kika-mitaht  
tipahkan oma, I aplyān  
sakahikanihk maka tahkāyāw. Niwī  
kiwān

Klyapich ōta nitayānān kiyam wītha  
ika i-nanaspitawakwāw

I might not look like my ancestors,  
and yet, we are still here.

# DEAR O,

WRITTEN BY  
OSCAR BAKER III

DEAR O.

I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL! YOU'RE 16 NOW AND PISSED OFF AT THE WORLD, WONDERING WHY YOUR FATHER ISN'T IN YOUR LIFE? AND WHY DOES YOUR NANNY SEEM SO MEAN TO YOU? YOU MISS YOUR MOM BUT YOU'RE ASHAMED OF HER MENTAL ILLNESS.

ONE DAY KWIS, IT'LL START TO MAKE SENSE. YOU'RE IN PAIN BECAUSE OF THE SWELL OF LATERAL VIOLENCE ALL AROUND YOU. YOU'RE FAMILIES HURTING FROM THE CONTINUED COLONIAL VIOLENCE.

YOUR NATIVE STUDIES CLASS WILL UNDO SOME OF THE INTERNALIZED STEREOTYPES YOU HOLD OF YOURSELF YOUR OWN COMMUNITIES.

M'KMAQ STRUGGLE TO WORK BECAUSE WE WERE EXPECTED TO JUST DIE OFF. DR. VERMETTE WILL EXPLAIN WE WERE PLACED INTO SWAMP LANDS WITH NO OPPORTUNITIES TO FARM AND BECOME DEPENDENT ON THE MEAT AND BREAD POLICIES. THEY RESTRICTED US FROM HUNTING, FISHING AND TRAVELING OUR ANCESTORS ROUTES IN HOPES WE'D BECOME DEPENDENT ON THE SYSTEM. WE WILL RESIST.

WHEN YOU HEAR OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA IT'S ALREADY CLEAR YOUR MOM'S FAMILY HAS THAT TRAUMA WRITTEN ON THEIR FACES. FROM RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS, THE SIXTIES SCOOP AND INDIAN DAY SCHOOLS THIS COUNTRY PUT YOUR FAMILY THROUGH HELL. AND HEARING YOUR MOM'S STORY YOU KNOW JUST SURVIVING AS AN INDIAN IN THIS COUNTRY IS A HEROIC FEAT.

AFTER YOUR FATHER TALKS ABOUT THE TERROR OUR BLACK FAMILY FACED IN THE SOUTH YOU START CONNECTING THE PIECES. MAYBE WE'RE SO HARDENED FROM THE TRAUMA WE SUFFER. MAYBE SEEING THE KKK BURNING TIRES AND SHOOTING UP BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS ISN'T NORMAL AND JUST MAYBE THAT TRAUMA LED TO YOUR FAMILIES COARSE SURVIVAL WAYS. BLACK MEN CAN NEVER BE SOFT BECAUSE THE WORLDS TO DANGEROUS TO HAVE BLACK SKIN. BLACK WOMEN FIGHT ALL THE SAME BATTLES AND THE PATRIARCHY. MAYBE THE TRAUMA IS THE REASON SO MANY OF OUR FAMILY WERE INCARCERATED. WE WILL RESIST THOUGH.

YOU MAY NOT KNOW IT YET BUT WHEN MALCOM SAULIS EXPLAINS TO YOU THAT WE'RE ALL MEDICINE YOU BEGIN TO SEE HOW TOXIC YOU ARE YOURSELF. HAVING THE POWER TO HEAL OR HARM IS AN IMMENSE RESPONSIBILITY AND WE MUST BE GOOD MEDICINE.

WE'RE 29 NOW AND STILL HAVE A LOT TO HEAL FROM BUT WE'RE WORKING ON OURSELVES AND IT MAKES IT VERY CLEAR HOW MUCH HATE YOU INTERNALIZED. YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL KWIS AND KNOW OUR L'NU CULTURE BELONGS TO YOU TOO.

I KNOW IT MIGHT NOT HELP RIGHT NOW FEELING POOR AND A VERBAL PUNCHING BAG TO SEEMINGLY EVERYONE AROUND YOU BUT ONE DAY YOU'LL LOVE YOURSELF AND THINGS WILL GET BETTER.

KESALU! AND AP NMULTIS 31'NM

We are Black and Indigenous  
We are creation of two races that challenged  
colonization  
Our ancestors fought for us to live  
We are resilient people and will continue to  
decolonize  
We must stick together and hold each other up  
Your presence acknowledge  
You are accepted here

Dear Friend,

I am Indigenous and Black  
I do not have to explain how I am Indigenous  
Do not question my Indigeneity  
Do not question my knowledge or teachings  
Do not ignore me or talk down to me

Please make me feel welcome in this space

BY  
EDAN MAXAM





ARTWORK BY  
PAIGE PETTIBON  
AS SEEN ON COVER

# RACE SOLO PERFORMANCE

AVIONA RODRIGUEZ BROWN

I realize-

Everyone past, present, and future lives in me.

I am here.

I am there.

I am everywhere.

Hair curls- which battle and intertwine, packed with knowledge beyond my years and intuition to keep my third eye wide.

Eyes filled with the hopes and wants my ancestors dreamed of me

I wonder if I am the only one in this wyndy bloodline to which anxiety infects my mind from time to time.

If stress could be found in piles of pulled out hair threads, bitten off fingernails or paper torn to shreds?

Skin- brown from the minute I emerged- Were you dismissed for being too far sunkissed?

For generations you stood up so I could sit and drink and marry whomever I choose.

For generations you listened to the voices in your head and tried to make sense of what was being said

For generations you have explored ways to express the feelings you hold within your chest

For generations you have reached out

For generations you waited, cried, screamed, dreamed of me

For generations you have been waiting patiently for someone to say the words I say on bent knee

Here, now, with these friends as my witness

I welcome my ancestors to guide me, to warn me, to help me, to use me, to be in- around- and through me

I welcome you and the great spirit to express our message to the world in every avenue we choose



BY  
SHALOM HAILESELASSIE

**BEING BLACK AND  
INDIGENOUS AREN'T  
MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE  
IDENTITIES!**

**YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO  
EXIST FULLY, AS BOTH.**

@MELANINMVKOKE

BY  
MELANIN MVKOKE

# I AM HERE

WRITTEN BY  
NYAME OUITTEN-JOSEPH

Why am I here? Why am I here? Why am I here!

Is it to only sink within myself, cutting those whose red rivers flow  
divided by where they'll go?  
The currents of fate push and pull, push and pull, push and pull! With no regard  
for my cascading soul.

Robbed of breath, I hold my chest and feel my still-beating heart, my  
still-beating heart, my still-beating heart!

A rhythm so essential that all of creation knows its sound in endowed  
life upon that which was without.

There is no end, there is no, there is no end!

Unless I dare to think the unthinkable to give what is unforgivable.  
I scream as my body dissolves at the seams red and blue streams water  
shall I be, water shall I be, water shall I be!

I flow unseen out to sea, I sing a song of reclamation, a declaration that I  
am still here, I am still here, I am still here!  
Within me lies the strength to rise with lunar tides in hopes of meeting  
black skies.

Each constellation representing a nation,  
Each star being a flame burning so bright that only truth can be found  
within its light, found within its light, found within its light!

I wave with reverence and crash in prayer.

I dream of life and call down thunder my trickling thoughts now only  
filled with wonder

I hunger to remember.  
So with abandon I kiss red shores knowing that my gratitude can never  
be washed away by no platitude for I am here, I am here, I am here!

## Afterword

I originally wrote the first iteration of this poem back in 2017-2018,  
during which I was still in high school and a part of an Afro-Indigenous  
focused arts program at the Children's Peace Theatre. The very first and  
only Afro-Indigenous space that I've been a part of outside of my family  
of course which makes this poem all the more special to me. I've made  
some changes to the work since but overall the essence remains.



ARTWORK BY  
WAPAHKESIS

# ON THE OUTSIDE OF EIGHT YEARS

WRITTEN BY  
MIRA HARMON



I CRAWLED FOR EIGHT YEARS  
THROUGH MAN'S SNAKE TRAPS  
CHARMING FLUTISTS THEY WERE, EVEN IF OFF-KEY  
EMPTY NOTES WERE PROMISES LINGERING  
ALWAYS LEFT ME WANTING AND NEVER FULL  
SO, I ENDURED  
MY IDENTITY BATTLING THE WEST

IN THE FIRST YEAR I LEARNED TO LOVE MY HAIR  
I COULDN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE  
SO, NO MORE STRAIGHT PERMS, I SAID  
SEVEN HOURS OF WHITE CHEMICAL MASKS  
COLONIZING MY STRANDS  
THAT'S MY PAST  
CELEBRATE THE FRIZZ AND PATTERNS THAT TANGLE  
AND KNOT  
RINGLET CHAINS ARE THE ONLY ONES THAT OCCUPY  
MY BODY

ALL THE YEARS IN-BETWEEN WERE  
A DOWNWARD SPIRAL INTO RECOVERY  
MY CURVES AND INSIDES WERE PILLAGED...  
THAT WAS MY "FIRST TIME".  
I COULDN'T LAY ON MY STOMACH TO SLEEP  
BECAUSE HE HAD ME PINNED THERE  
WITHOUT CRYING SO SOFT TO MYSELF  
FROM HEARTBREAK AND GRIEF

OH, GREAT SPIRIT.  
I PULLED MYSELF THROUGH  
PICKING UP AND NURTURING DIVINATION  
AND BLURTING OUT CHANTS. NOW  
I'M BURNING INCENSE ON A GLASS ROOF  
WHITE MAN'S STARING UP MY SKIRT  
WHILE I'M TWIRLING MY CURLY LOCKS, AND WISHING I COULD  
FALL THROUGH AND CRUSH THE PIERCING EYES  
THAT DEEM ME EXOTIC; I AM NOT COMMODITY  
I AM NOT OTHER

I AM NOT CRAWLING ANYMORE.

I BOW TO MYSELF IN THE MIRROR  
RICH BROWN SKIN, ROUNDED NOSE, CUTTING JAW  
BOUNTIFUL THICK DARK TRESSES  
THAT CURL DOWN FROM THE NECK OF MY INDIAN MOTHER,  
AND DESCEND FROM THE HEAD  
OF MY NANTICOKE AND BLACK FATHER

# KARONHIÀ:KE (THE PLACE IN THE SKY)

WRITTEN BY  
MAHLIKAH AWE RI- ENML'GAT-SAQAMA'SGW

THEY MANEUVERED  
THEY MANEUVERED  
PURPOSELY  
DIRECT  
UNABASHED  
\*SKÉN:NEN  
\*SKÉN:NEN

SEEKING THEIR POWER  
YEARNING FOR HOME  
UNROOTED FROM MEMORY  
UNHINGED FROM EXPECTATION  
WHEN THEY SPOKE TO THEIR POWER  
THEY TURNED ON THEIR LIGHT

\*KHA:WIS  
THE ACT OF FORGIVENESS AS AN ACT OF HEALING IS HOME  
\*KHA:WIS  
THE UNSETTLED VOICE NEVER IRRELEVANT FOR IT HAS SURVIVED IS HOME  
\*KHA:WIS  
MEDICINE AS CREATIVITY HEALING OUR WOUNDS  
AS WE SHARE OUR STORIES OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN IS HOME

THE FIGHT IN OUR BONES AND THE WAR IN OUR BLOOD  
THE FIGHT IN OUR BONES AND THE WAR IN OUR BLOOD  
IS HOME

THIS FIGHT  
THIS WAR  
GIVES US THE STRENGTH  
THE RELENTLESS RESOLVE  
TO WEAVE THE INNARDS  
THE FACELESS FORGOTTEN FRAGMENTS  
TO PIECE TOGETHER THE EMPTINESS

SCRAPS OF SCARS  
SEVERED TONGUES  
SCRAPS OF SCARS  
SEVERED TONGUES  
  
TO WEAVE OUR WORTH  
BACK INTO EXISTENCE

BENEATH \*A'NÓ:WARA SHELL  
WE STRAIGHTEN THE STITCH OF OUR SPINES  
WHERE SKY WOMYN FELL

# KARONHIÀ:KE (THE PLACE IN THE SKY)

WRITTEN BY  
MAHLIKAH AWE:RI- ENML'GAT-SAQAMA'SGW



SO WE GAZE AT \* KARONHIÀ:KE  
THE PLACE IN THE SKY  
AND WE ARE REMINDED  
THAT OUR JOURNEY BEGINS  
BY LOOKING WITHIN  
TO WHERE WE ARE NOW  
AND WHERE WE HAVE BEEN  
TO WHERE WE ARE NOW  
AND WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

AND WE REMEMBER  
WE REMEMBER WE ARE CONNECTED TO ALL THINGS

AND IN THIS WAY  
THIS WAY

THERE CAN NEVER BE ANY SEPARATION  
NO SEPARATION BETWEEN US  
EVEN WHEN WE ARE APART

\*SKEN:NEN: SERENITY & PEACEFULNESS  
\*KHA:WIS: I AM CARRYING  
\*A'NÓ:WARA: TURTLE  
\* KARONHIÀ:KE: THE PLACE IN THE SKY

# CONTRIBUTORS

## Alexandra Sutton Lawrence

### Miha Kiyeska Yaximahiyesse

A 30something wildlife biologist, African-American (Congolese, Senegambian), Anglo & Ohio Saponi (with a little NC Tuscarora mixed in).

## Amber (Melanin Muscokē)

Amber Starks (aka Melanin Muscokē) is an Afro-Indigenous (African-American and Native American) activist, organizer, cultural critic, decolonial theorist, and budding abolitionist. She is an enrolled citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and is also of Shawnee, Yuchi, Quapaw, and Cherokee descent. Her passion is the intersection of Black and Native American identity. Her activism seeks to normalize, affirm, and uplift the multidimensional identities of Black and Native peoples through discourse and advocacy around anti-Blackness, abolishing blood quantum, Black liberation, and Indigenous sovereignty.

## Anisa (Anē) Flowers

Anisa (Anē) is an Afro-Indigenous daughter and protector; this is not only the lens through which she creates, but the anchor she uses to live in alignment, both through thoughtfulness and courageous action, with her own truth. With heart-delivered vulnerabilities that require you to drop in deeply, both with them and your own, Anē uses poetry to walk herself home. Her work is to create space for her communities to feel seen, safe, and celebrated; by writing herself into these pages, she, maybe for the first time, wants you to find yourself not between the lines, but within them.

## Aya Clappis

aya 'λopisim' clappis is an afro-indigenous/somali-nuučačiul artist who currently resides outside her homelands on the territories of the lekwungen speaking peoples.

Through written word, film, photography and video, aya weaves together ancestral memory, anti-colonial resistance and an investigation of afro-indigenous futurisms through the lens of her (day)dreams and deep love for her people.

## Aviona Rodriguez Brown

Aviona Creatrix is a generation Mexican-Indigenous and first-generation African American weaver of words and sounds. They are based on the lands of the Duwamish instilling inclusivity and accessibility, by creating multidisciplinary art to tell stories surrounding being multiracial, exploring queerness, working through mental illness, stress, navigating drug addiction, and homelessness.

## De'Ana Brownfield

De'Ana Brownfield is an artist that is based in Oakland, California. They are passionate about healing, learning more about ancestral ways of living and reconnecting with my Afro-Indigenous roots through a multi medium practice. Creativity has been a way for me to explore and reclaim what it means to be African & Indigenous when there are so many complexities. As well honor my ancestors' stories of being freedmen from the Choctaw & Chickasaw nation being African & native descent to be visible and not forgotten. By interweaving my cultural traditions & embracing my indigeneity has been the compass that has guided me & my ancestors to thrive in the world.

### **Destiny Morgan**

"Y'a'oteeh! My name is Destiny Morgan. I'm 20 years old and a third-year student at Fort Lewis College. When I was a little girl, I would have dreams that I became this carefree woman loving all of her features and being comfortable with being herself. As I continue to grow, my reality is becoming as beautiful as my dreams."

#### Contact info:

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### **Edan Maxam**

Edan Maxam is an Afro Indigenous (Afro Cuban, Caymanian and Mi'kmaq) multidisciplinary artist. She works with analog and historical methods of photography to discuss themes of identity, family history, oral storytelling, healing and activism. Edan has recently graduated from OCAD U with a BFA in Photography with a Minor in Art and Social Change.

#### Contact info:

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### **Ena Maxam**

Ena Yolanda Maxam is a mother of 3, a 3rd degree black belt in Tae-kwon-do and a Cancer survivor. Ena recently returned to university to fulfill a long time dream. She is a current student at University of Toronto studying Indigenous Studies with a Minor in Spanish.

### **Faith Campos**

Faith is a 23 year old poet, fancy shawl dancer, a beader, and a creator of many things!

#### Contact info:

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Beading IG-faithbeads

### **Jalen Brink**

I am a 14 year old mixed girl from Lakefield, ON Canada, who just graduated, with honours, and is heading to The Arts Program in High School next year. I have faced exclusion and isolation because of my skin colour. School has always been a very white space for me to learn in and finding real friends was difficult. While staff were polite, they didn't address the whole me. Race, colour and the fact that I was 1 of 4 mixed kids in a population of 650+ students, never took the risk to address the issues that I had to overcome by myself.

### **Jayda Dominique Marley**

Jayda Marley is a young nationally acclaimed Queer Afro-Indigenous poet, youth activist, and community healer from Toronto. She works with the Community Healing Project, and is a youth facilitator and event organizer with "One Mic Educators" & "Develop me youth." As a former competing poet, Jayda holds the 1st place National championship title of "Voices of Today 2018." She is also the founder and creative director of the new open mic series "For The Queer Coloured Girls After Me."

### **Karmella Cen Benedito De Barros**

Karmella Cen Benedito De Barros is an inner-city Indigiqueer with Treaty 6 Mistawasis Nêhiyaw and Afro-Brazilian ancestry. They are a Multidisciplinary Artist, Writer, and Community Worker born and raised in diaspora as a guest on the unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam territories. Karmella currently supports the Indigenous Brilliance reading series, a collaborative series between Room Magazine and Mastry Books, celebrating Indigenous women/2SGLQ storytellers.

#### Contact info:

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### **Kaya Joan**

Kaya Joan is a multi-disciplinary Afro-Indigenous (Vincentian, Kanien'kehá:ka with relations from Kahnawá:ke, Irish, Jamaican) artist born, raised and living in Tkaronto, Dish with One Spoon treaty territory. Kaya's work focuses on healing, challenging linear notions of time, blood memory and relationship to place. Black and Indigenous futurity are also centred in Kaya's practice, framing methods of making as ancestral tools to unpack and transform buried truths, opening portals 7 generations into the past and future.

Kaya has been working in community arts for 6 years as a facilitator and artist.

### **Kris Baughman**

Cherubunque is the pen name of Ld. Kris Baughman. They are a self-taught, Afro-Indigenous Artist, who expresses themselves through illustration and short comics about their experience as a queer and disabled person of color. Oftentimes, this includes a discussion around their own journey to learn about their culture as an orphan raised in the foster care system."

#### **Contact info:**

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### **Mahikah Awe:ri Enní:ge:t Sesqam'sgw**

Mahikah Awe:ri (Kanien'kehá:ka & Mi'kmaw), is an acclaimed-award winning, Afro-Indigenous Poet, Activist, Arts Educator, Performance Artist, Futurist Writer, Digital Artist, Moon Medicine Carrier & Mindfulness Coach. Based in Tsi Tkaron:to they are a Transformative Change Catalyst with the Centre of Learning & Development, Red Slam, The Art Gallery Of Ontario, and the Wildseed Centre's Black Arts Fellowship.

#### **Contact info:**

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### **Maria Hirsi**

This collection titled 11 Main Street gives you access to a place many people have not seen; This being the basement walls of a reserve home.

15 paintings capture these walls and the fascinating details of scrapings, holes, doodles, graffiti, and random splatters. There are memories and traditions on these expressive walls. Maria Hirsi wishes to share an intimate story on each canvas. These stories are about dysfunction, the commitment to family, compassion, and pathways to reconciliation. In making these paintings, she hopes others can see their own basements and homes represented. She says it's important for her to represent contemporary indigenous art, so that other young people can feel inspired to share their unique perception. These paintings are inspired by her grannies home in Meath Park.

#### **Contact info:**

IG: Maria.hirsi  
Tik Tok: Mami\_0\_miha

### **Mira Harmon**

Mira is a Black, Nanticoke, and Punjabi poet and film-buff hailing from Lansdale, Pennsylvania. She is inspired to use creative writing as a tool for empowerment and catharsis, especially advocating for underrepresented voices. Mira is currently writing creative nonfiction that reflects on toxicity, racism, and letting go.

#### **Contact info:**

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### **Nickole Keith**

Boozho, My name is Nickole Keith my Anishnabe name is Wasnoday which translates to Northern Lights. I was born and raised Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S. by a Potawatomi mother and a African American father. I submitted a mural committed to the Black Lives Matter movement, I incorporated the "Kente" material and some of the Native traditional geometric and color arrangements we use in our Native culture.

### **Nyame Outten-Joseph**

My name is Nyame Outten-Joseph. I'm a Queer, Afro-Indigenous, twenty-something, arts-educator and knowledge keeper hailing from Toronto, Canada. Self-described as a "hoe that's ready to fight for some civil rights", Nyame can't ignore the struggle, feels radical like Malcolm X even if sometimes he can't get out of bed. They're about liberation > assimilation, creating those spaces for Queer, Afro-Indigenous, BIPOC... all my relations, equipping them with the tools through education to break the chains of systemic oppression.

#### Contact info:

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### **Olivia Lucas**

Olivia Lucas is a Nova Scotian Black, Cree-Métis, Algonquin actress and poet from the countryside of southern Ontario. From a small community in Lavender Hill, Olivia spent her early years growing up on a farm, whereafter she moved to Toronto to pursue her theatrical training. Olivia now resides and works in Vancouver, British Columbia. Olivia's focus has always been to use her craft to give voice to the untold stories of her ancestors and communities, through the lenses of a mixed race woman.

### **Oscar Baker**

Oscar Baker III is Black and Mi'kmaw from Eelipogtog FN and St. Augustine, Fl. Baker is an award-winning writer. He received the David Adams Richards award for nonfiction writing and was nominated for a personal journalism award at the National Magazine Awards in 2019. He is a freelance journalist and homemaker working from his home in Indian Island First Nation.

#### Contact info:

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### **Paige Pettibon**

Paige Pettibon is a Tacoma-based artist who incorporates her Indigenous and Black culture in her work. She has identified as a painter from an early age, but has added sewing, creative writing, digital art, and jewelry making into her repertoire. Pettibon's studio practice centers around building community within culture and identity with various art forms.

#### Contact info:

IG- @paige\_pettibon

Beading IG- @plain\_to\_sea

### **Suzanne Shoush**

Suzanne Shoush is Coast Salish and Sudanese. Suzanne Shoush is a family doctor, an Indigenous and Black mother, an equity advocate and co-founded doctorsfordefundingpolice.com.

### **Sentilla Bubb**

Tawashi wiyawow Sentilla ni shinakashoon, Li terre Treaty 1 d'oochtochtown akwa aani Nwayri pi aani Michif neyya. Hi everyone my name is Sentilla. I am a 23 year old afro-indigenous educator from Treaty 1 territory currently residing in Treaty 4 territory. I began discovering and reclaiming my culture about 5 years ago. Seeing so many empowering Afro-Indigenous women, girls, two spirited plus individuals has been beyond empowering and has opened up so much vulnerability in my own life.

### **Shalom Haileselassie**

"I'm trying to journey back to some version of home that feels right, that celebrates all of me. A place I can be imperfect in my knowledge and language. Somewhere that accepts that all I have, as of now, are bits and pieces of the abstract puzzle my ancestors laid out for me during their many journeys. Hesci, Shalom cwhoefloz tas (hello my name is Shalom) and I come from a lineage rooted in the Muskokee (Muskogee) and Eastern Band Cherokee nations. I enjoy making abstract drawings and paintings, as well as film photography. I hope you enjoy!