

# FEEDING THE ANCIENT FIRES

A Collection of Writings  
by North Carolina American Indians



Edited by MariJo Moore

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THE  
**CROSSROADS**  
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# PREFACE

Writer MariJo Moore describes this volume as "a well-meaning fire built from embers gathered from the souls of those who understand the importance of keeping our ancestral fires alive." That this volume exists is a tribute to the dream and passion that sustained MariJo through the very long period and difficulties it took to collect and edit these writings. Her achievement is profound.

In the summer of 1997, MariJo accepted the invitation of the North Carolina Humanities Council to conduct a series of writing workshops in different parts of the state that could reach North Carolina Indians of all backgrounds. In order to be as inclusive as possible, this meant reaching all North Carolina Native Americans, with or without officially recognized status, as well as individuals of Indian descent. As a non-profit foundation and state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, we could do no less.

During 1997 and 1998, MariJo led workshops in Cherokee, Greensboro, Hillsborough and Dublin. To no one's surprise, least of all MariJo's, she collected far more material from the workshops and word-of-mouth publicity than NCHC possibly could publish. These wonderful writings demonstrate how the voices, visions and stories of North Carolina Indians are rich, varied, insightful and special.

However, this wealth also meant having to figure out the complex and often painful process of which writings to select for publication. Would every self-identified tribal group, officially recognized or not, be represented in the final volume? MariJo worked especially hard to make sure her workshops and the collection would be as inclusive as possible. In spite of her efforts, not every tribe is represented in the final selections. And, as is true for the demography of North Carolina, the selections that follow are heavily Cherokee and Lumbee. No individual has more than one entry in the volume. As MariJo notes, it was with great sadness that she could not publish everything.

Succeeding at writing for anyone is not a given; perhaps, this is true especially for cultural groups whose traditions, language, stories and history have been in oral form. As Walter J. Ong reminds us, the transition from orality to writing can fundamentally reorient the learned, cultural guideposts that shape how we take communication in and how, in turn, we express ourselves.

This shift moves making meaning from an ability that is natural, such as speech, and often through ritual formulas that prescribe and proscribe what is appropriate, to an activity that is being structured by the technology of writing. It is for better and worse, that such a technology frees us from fixed modes of operating to do things we may never before have done or imagined. Significantly, some of this volume's authors recognize this need for self-expression through the written word. In "The Pen Speaks to the Writer," a piece written at one of the NCHC workshops, Ladonna E. Evans

explains that, for her, not being able to write means that "thoughts, ideas bounce off each other in your head with no means of escape, with no hope of helping anyone or making anyone happy. No hope of ever teaching anyone anything. No hope of the truth ever being known."

Even as such statements recognize the realities of centuries of silencing, they cannot be underestimated for the power assumed by the writer, as he or she proclaims publicly, in a visible and permanent way, "this is who I am and I matter." At the very least, this is what is at stake in this volume.

The workshops MariJo led and the effort to bring many of these writings to publication is NCHC's commitment to respond to Ladonna and others willing to write and to those willing to read and hear. To have a written platform finally for expressing one's most intense and intimate feelings about self-identity means this book has filled a major void: *Feeding the Ancient Fires* is the first published collection of writings that feature only North Carolinians. It is a beginning of what could flourish in the future.

MariJo observes that the writings reveal a wide range of emotions and experiences that ring true for Native Americans throughout our state. It is hard for contemporary North Carolinians, indeed for most Americans, to appreciate just how marginalized and stifled American Indian voices have been as a result of over two centuries of cultural oppression and physical decimation. The harsh despair this social history can reach is rocketed at us in speeds too fast to fathom in several of these pieces. Yet, so many of the writings are fueled by a hope that non-Indians can hear, see and acknowledge this history.

The writings that follow represent a full range of style and craft. Some are extraordinary word visions, some are powerful not only because of sentiment and scene, but also because they speak with the gifts of eloquence and mastery of narrative. And some touch because they are direct and simple statements declaring, against all odds, a clarity and conviction of assured identity.

This collection has raised both great hopes and aspirations and equally strong concerns and fears. In a society that has been so successful at erasing not just the words, but the languages, the stories, indeed many of the embers of a burning culture, such small actions can be great achievements. However, from another vantage point, this collection brings to the fore just how difficult a public expression of anyone's declared identity can be to those who witness it as well as for those who make it and for those who feel excluded yet again.

*Feeding the Ancient Fires* illuminates some of the implications that follow when a dominant cultural group has the power to define, name and regulate who someone else is or can be. That "official" government definitions of who is an Indian are so complex and convoluted often serves more to diminish the full human worth of people and foster contentious cultural battles than to promote dignity and cooperation. And, this process is not

unique to the United States or North Carolina Indians; rather, it has been inscribed in the contradictions of language and identity that almost all groups defined by historically shaped cultural markers experience.

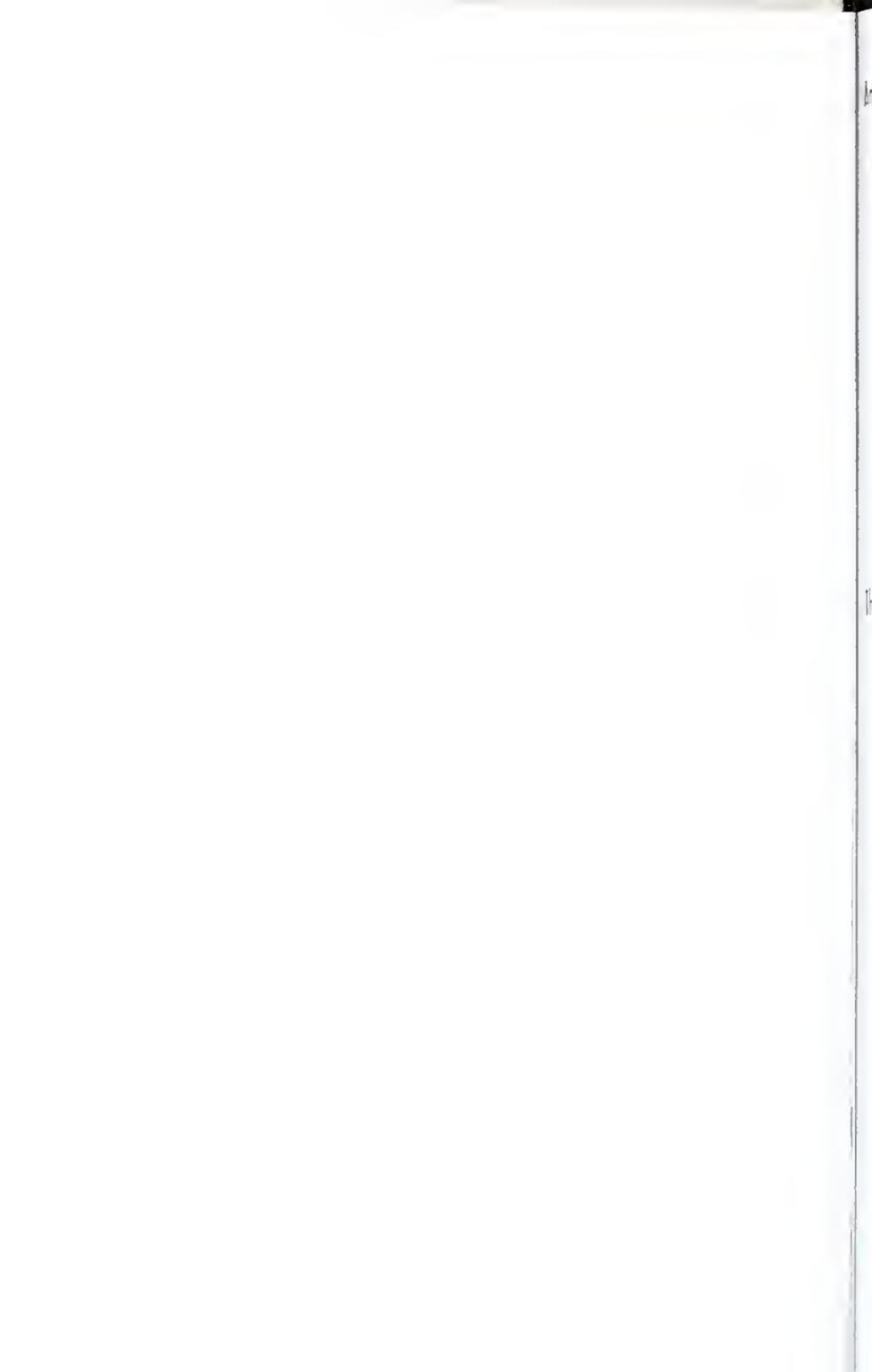
"How long can I hold on to this world that my ancestors left behind?," asks Daystar Dial in one writing. For her, life means "constantly fighting and struggling to keep the Ancient Fires in my mind." And as Native Americans across our state and country engage in this daily struggle, some fear that those on the outside critiquing the inside may never respond with respect and dignity for Indians.

"Don't judge me by what you see, do not assume to know who I am," commands Becky Goins in her writing. "My experiences are not yours to critique...you can never understand where I come from," she continues, and "your words are not a part of my history...the elders teach us who we are. They help us to understand who we are to become."

The original intent of this volume was to provide a safe, public space for the diverse, rich and complex voices of North Carolina Indians and those of Indian descent. At the same time, there should be no confusion about what this volume is not: *Feeding the Ancient Fires* does not convey special status on the self-identity of any author in this volume. That is a matter for other bodies to do and contest. The North Carolina Humanities Council does not and cannot act as the arbiter of someone else's cultural definitions of identity. Doing so goes absolutely against the grain of our mission to bring together people to explore what we present our identities to be and how we imagine ways of getting along in the same place. Inclusion in this volume does not certify or diminish the cultural markers proclaimed by any of its authors. In her writing, Vera Freeman asks, "who will hear what I want to say...?" Inclusion in this volume is one attempt to hear what our fellow North Carolinians "want to say."

In addition to thanking MariJo Moore for the extraordinary job she has done in collecting and editing the pieces of *Feeding the Ancient Fires*, I want to thank the very talented artists who have shared their images with us: Lynn King Lossiah (Cherokee), Darrin Bark (Cherokee), Karl Anthony Hunt (Lumbee) and Roger Willie (Navajo). Our deepest gratitude goes to the authors, who persist in keeping the communal fires alive and courageously demand of themselves and their children that these sparks glow into the future. Special thanks also go to Ms. Barbara Braveboy-Locklear, a current NCHC member, and Dr. Linda Oxendine, an NCHC alumna, who read and critiqued the manuscript and provided careful and helpful commentary along with two anonymous readers. Finally, thanks go to the NCHC Executive Committee for their assistance with this introduction, and, to NCHC's Executive Director, Alice Barkley, who is remarkable in knowing always the distance between staff freedom and responsibility to the larger notion of the humanities.

Harlan Joel Gradin, PhD  
Assistant Director/Director for Programs  
North Carolina Humanities Council  
Greensboro, NC  
April 1999



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*What would you say that the main theme of your poetry is?  
To put it simply as possible, I say it this way: to recognize the  
relationships I share with everything.*

—Simon J. Ortiz

## INTRODUCTION

### ANCIENT RED ANCIENT WHITE

There's a spreading fire flaming inside our souls  
burning bigger and brighter  
and hotter every moment

reaching its tongues to the skies  
licking the dust from living stars  
and spreading sweet ashes on the ground.

This ancient fire is craving long deserved attention from us,  
our children, and our children's children.  
Forevermore.

When I penned the above poem in 1996, I was dreaming of a collection of writings by North Carolina American Indians. For years I have supported the fact that if we do not write our own literature, the stereotyping we endure will never end. It is up to us to speak our truths, share our beliefs, and let others know how it feels to be modern-day American Indians. And one of the best ways to let others know we are not a people of the past is to share our voices through the written word.

The purpose of this collection is to assure that the spiritual inner fires burning inside all Native peoples of this state continue to glow and that respect and acknowledgment of the ways of our ancestors burn on, inside our hearts, everlastingly. The writings are representative of the full range of life for American Indians living in North Carolina. Some are sad, some angry. Some speak of pride, others of disappointment. Some are observations of the world today, and some are accounts of history told through Indian eyes. Nevertheless, all are written from the heart. My only regret is that due to space and subject matter, not all the writings gathered could be included.

I wish to thank the following for their help in arranging creative writing workshops throughout the state: Roberta Simmons, Dr. Donald Wire, and Lawrence Dunmore, III. And I am deeply grateful to Harlan Gradin and Alice Barkley of the North Carolina Humanities Council. They believed in my dream and have helped it become a reality.

Fire is considered a sacred gift from the Creator by American Indians. Flames of well meaning fires are as important today as when the ancient Cherokees kept *Atsila Galvgwodiyyu* (the honored and sacred fire) burning in *Kituhwa* Mound, their mother town.

This anthology is a well-meaning fire built from embers gathered from the souls of those who understand the importance of keeping our ancestral fires alive. May they continue to burn in us, our children, and our children's children.....forevermore.

MariJo Moore  
Spring 1999



*Darrin Bark*  
*Darrin Bark*

Darrin Bark

## American Indian Woman



# WOMEN ARE THE STRENGTH OF A NATION

Constance Lynn Barton (Lumbee)

American Indian women have had many complex times. They realized very early that they do not have to depend on anyone. The Creator created women with the inner strength to endure anything. Women need only to look to their inner selves.

During the 1400s, Europeans met a group of people whom they called American Indians. They lived off the land and found a use for everything. They used plants for food and healing, fish and shells for food and tools. They wasted nothing and lived in harmony with nature. Men were warriors and hunted food and protected the villages. Women were the backbone of the villages. They did the cooking, tanning, disciplining, and building.

Women were the heads of the clans, and when men married, they moved into their wives' homes. Property belonged to the women and they had freedom in choosing their partners and managing their families. This is known as a matrilineal society. Some women spoke in meetings and helped decide tribal matters such as whether or not to go to war.

There were a number of women who made a difference in keeping their societies going. One such woman who upheld her Native culture was Nanye'hi, a Cherokee woman born in 1738 in Chota, a Cherokee town on the Little Tennessee River. She was called War Woman because of her bravery in a battle, and Beloved Woman because of her leadership within the Cherokee Nation. Nanye'hi, or Nancy Ward, as she was known by her white name, died in 1822.

In 1835, Saber Emanuel Locklear, wife of Aaron Locklear, gave birth to Big Joe Locklear in a rail pen in Tennessee during Cherokee Removal. It is difficult to imagine her strength. The mother of two children and pregnant, at full term she was herded into a pen like an animal. She gave birth on the ground in the pen, and then escaped with her husband to walk for days and days. They finally made their way back to Robeson County. The child, Big Joe, recounted the story of his parents' escape in 1876 at New Hope Church in North Carolina.

There is a common thread in these two women. No matter what obstacles were put in their way, they got the job done. These women accomplished something very important which goes to prove that for women, there are no barriers that cannot be overcome.

With inner strength anything is possible. Determined women are definitely the strength of a nation.

*Constance Lynn Barton (Lumbee) resides in Pembroke, North Carolina. She is a 1999 graduate of Purnell Swett High School.*

# PATCHWORK IMAGES

Gaye Simmons Cushing (Coharie)

Images of the Native women are engraved  
forever in our memories—  
the faces, the names, the voices, the sounds and scents  
of the generations that came before us and  
the vision of the generations that will follow.

Bonnets, tobacco fields, farming in early morning dew.  
Canning butter beans, hog killings.  
Sunday school lessons.  
Making a quilt for her children to fight over.  
Studying her Bible, fixing homecoming dinner.  
Nursing a baby, breaking a switch.  
Hair turning gray, holding a grandchild.  
These are the images of our women.

We can hear the humming of a sweet song  
that will last until her work is done.  
Amazing Grace.

Milk. Spit on a hankie. Wet biscuit dough on wet hands.  
Fried fish. Fried chicken. Fried porkchops. Christmas cakes.  
Turnips. Chicken and pastry.  
Camay soap. Sweat. Jergen's lotion on Sunday morning.  
These are the scents of our women.

These images can be heard, felt, seen, smelled or tasted  
in the communities where our Indian women live.

She is farmer, teacher, mother, factory worker, secretary,  
professional.  
Her hair is tinted, gray, short, long. She wears  
housecoats, britches,  
Sunday dresses, power suits.  
Her face is made more beautiful with cosmetics. Her face  
is bare.  
Her skin is soft. Her skin is weathered by years of  
struggle, and tiny, tiny character lines frame her eyes.  
She smells like French perfume. She smells like Mother  
Earth.

The responsibility of being a Native woman was placed upon her shoulders at her birth, blanketed—like a patchwork quilt—around her body. The last generation (and the one before that) hover around her—protecting her from bad spirits. The next generation (and the one after that) wait eagerly for her to share the woman's secret of the Creation.

She will not stumble.  
She will not fall.

*Gaye Simmons Cushing (Coharie) is a native of Sampson County and operates Sports Relay with her husband in Lumberton, North Carolina.*

# WOMAN GREAT WOMAN

Stephen Lance Jaynes (Cherokee)

Woman, great woman,  
you are the mother of me.  
You are part of me and I am part of you.  
Nothing will break the code of my love for you

for it is not a code of words or numbers  
but of spirits and the many souls  
of our people who are inside me  
and you know they are inside you.

So now together we sit  
but I know we are not alone  
for our people are with us  
and if they should ever leave

they cannot take away  
my love and respect for you  
because you are my mother, my second soul  
my spirit that is living and never dying.

You connected me with myself  
and I cannot disconnect  
for you are my mother.  
Woman, great woman.

*Stephen Lance Jaynes (Cherokee) resides in Asheville, North Carolina, where he works with autistic people. His poetry has appeared in The North Carolina Literary Review.*

# WOMAN

Sarah Jerabek (Lumbee)

There is a woman coming down the snowy road in  
moccasins.

Cold and as pale as the sky on a cloudy day, she shivers.  
Holding a basket in one hand, she huddles to herself to  
keep warm.

She becomes colder and colder, then falls.

As her knees hit the hard, frozen ground, she looks up  
and says,

"It will not always be like this.

Times will get better.

It will not always be like this."

She has hope. Hope for the future of her people.

*Sarah Jerabek (Lumbee) is a student at Ben L. Smith High School  
in Greensboro, North Carolina.*

# MY MOTHER IS INDIAN

Joel M. Rogers (Lumbee)

My mother is different from your mother.  
Not because she cannot read or write or run a computer  
or do any of the other so-called civilized things.

No, there is another reason, more important than any  
other.

My dear, beloved mother has the guidance and  
profound

wisdom not found in society today.

She has the knowledge of the Great Spirit and a  
kindness toward

fellow human beings that cannot be found in this cruel  
world.

She has the gentleness of a flowing stream, the  
freshness

and generosity of a cool summer breeze.

She has the grace and beauty of tall pines and cypresses  
of her native Robeson County.

She has the love for its dark, moist fertile land

where she has played and worked in the hot summer sun.

She is at peace with Mother Nature instead of at war.

You see, my beloved mother is different from yours

and because of this I am very fortunate.

My mother is Indian.

*Joel M. Rogers (Lumbee) is the author of Original Poems by Joel M. Rogers. He resides in Mt. Airy, North Carolina.*

# THE SEED THAT CARRIED THE SECRET CODE

Darlene Stanley Garvin (Cherokee)

It was dark and I was alone. I began to hear noises, to see a woman. She was beautiful as her hair flowed around her plump face. Standing tall for a 4' 10" woman, she wore an apron and shawl that wrapped her broad shoulders.

Over me, her silhouette hovered. Her soothing voice began to sing the old songs to me, with me. I felt soothing, flowing warmth coming from within my heart and soul. As the tears flowed from my eyes, she began to fade away.

Later.....

As I sat on the stump around the fire pit, I marveled at the strength and work it had taken over the past ten years to graduate from college. Memories came back to me of the experiences over the years. Then, as if a veil appeared, I was in another time, another place. There before me was my grandfather. He was smiling, so proud of me, and he began to tell the story.

"A long time ago," he said, "go back, remember what you hear and know in your heart is true. Trust it, trust it as much as you always trusted me. I left you early, at a young age, but now return to you often guiding and helping you. Trust this. You are a reflection of my blood, my flesh, and the fibers of my grandfather. You have learned this, walked this. Continue to trust this. Be open to continue the listening. Our voices are coming. Quietly, quickly. Take heed."

I left the yard and walked into the house. I stopped as I passed the mirror. I looked again. Was it? It was. I saw my grandfather's face in mine.

*Darlene Stanley Garvin (Cherokee) works with the North Carolina Native American Women's Prison Project in Raleigh, North Carolina, and resides in Greensboro, North Carolina.*



*Roger Willie*

## The Circle of Life



# KEEPING THE CIRCLE

Barbara Braveboy-Locklear (Lumbee)

Keeping the circle is....

Singing the songs. Dancing the dance.  
Claiming the heritage. Telling the stories.  
Molding the clay. Weaving the baskets.  
Following the seasons. Planting the seeds:  
tobacco-corn-beans-squash.  
Speaking the language. Listening to the river.  
Burning the sage. Knowing the medicine.  
Practicing the religion. Building the fire.  
Giving. Loving.  
Procreating the nation.

Keeping the circle is not....

Silent drums. Voiceless songs.  
Motionless stomp. Unlearned history.  
Unclaimed heritage.  
Unstitched quilts-beads-dresses.  
Unmade lye soap. Untold stories.  
Unplanted seeds. Unmolded pots.  
Unwoven pinestraw.  
Sacrificed religion. Littered paths.  
Polluted streams. Shunned poor.  
Neglected elders.  
Sloth. Greed. Intoxication.  
Discreation of the nation.

*Barbara Braveboy-Locklear (Lumbee) is a free-lance writer and independent American Indian studies consultant in Angier, North Carolina.*

# THE UNBROKEN CIRCLE

Ladonna E. Evans (Haliwa Saponi)

Our ancestors are the people who came before us. They were descendants of those who came before them. It is our nature to survive, to carry on as those before us have done. We pass on to our children so that we ensure our survival and know that our lives can continue in those who will follow. Just as my grandmothers live on because of me. In us, they have planted the seed; a seed to grow. But the seed is really a part of them that will grow as we grow. They will never die long as we live. As long as we plant the seed within our children.

We are the ancestors of the future generations. We are the descendants of those who have gone on to the spirit world before us. Like a spiral trickling down forever or a circle that goes round and round. An unbroken circle which is where we live and where we die and through our children we live again. Therefore, we never really die, do we?

Plant a seed. It will grow and will be beautiful. As the autumn winds come and the petals fade, as they turn brown and crumble, falling gently to the earth, they seem to die but as the winters pass and the springs come, they turn green only to come to life again. I am a seed from my grandmother, the flower. I am from her but I am her. She has gone on long ago but she is still here. She lives on in me. And when I have daughters and granddaughters of my own, when I have died and gone on, I will not be dead but alive for they will still be here in this never-ending circle.

I live and I die. But I never really die, do I? The way my grandmother lived, the pain she felt, the tortures of her live on in me. And one day, they will live on in my own child. I am her ancestor, she is my descendant. She is an ancestor. And the circle will never break and my grandmother is not dead. The circle will never break. The circle will never break. The circle continues on forever.

*Ladonna E. Evans (Haliwa Saponi) is a 1994 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has been a fancy shawl dancer for the past 18 years. She resides in Hollister, North Carolina.*

# ENDLESS LAND

Karenne Wood (Manacan)

I.

Flying west to Albuquerque across endless land, I  
imagine  
because I am Indian, the long Appalachian range  
carved by its glaciers in the prehistoric dark, the  
ancestral beings who struggled, on four legs or two  
or swimming or flying across primal rivers and  
mountains, through eons, to bring us this far east.

II.

Among other Indians, I wonder at the way we relate, we  
who are related,  
how we divide ourselves into parts with our  
quantums and quorums, our scientific facts to discern  
"recognition";

every Indian I meet needs to validate himself—all of us  
wonder how we deserve to call ourselves true, then deny the  
necessity  
to prove some deep urge to remain here,  
written in blood that should have died out years ago, our  
existence a slap to the genocidal face.

(Where I come from, people  
are judged not by color of skin but by surname, so that  
no face  
escapes: girls have longed to marry out of their origins;  
boys  
have known they would have to become men with  
other names.)

III.

I see this endless land and know what we wish that  
could never  
have happened, how we are still  
bowing heads, our eyes on the ground, its  
markings known to be here,

then lost  
that grief

the dispossessed fact

our faces etched in the  
frozen-mouthed horror of Bigfoot at Wounded Knee,  
photographed  
in death

so that some of us fall forward out of bars onto the  
nearest black earth, as though we need to get back  
to our beginnings, and other, younger ones  
look at endless land and  
put guns to their lives....

IV.

Now, flying over the plain of my relatives' homes,  
I remember how our bones have turned with ancient  
knowings  
no one ever told us, how our blood runs under  
dry river beds, past petroglyphs on mesas where the plane  
touches down and the Rio Grande bends itself to  
flow through this city where a Southeastern woman,  
Cherokee or Creek, trips over heavy ground and falls,  
face-down drunk, and tilts her head back  
to the daze of half-being.

We meet with our  
eyes, with the flicker  
blood demands and remember another life, footprints  
dragged west  
across Appalachian snow, how we walked backward  
then, faces  
turned home, walked west and crossed the great river,  
where gold plain gave itself to new mountains, west  
to Indian Country

where this place  
speaks to us, where I say  
I have seen rivers rage over their  
dams, flood  
across the endless land that could not help itself  
it cannot help us,  
sister we could rise, too  
to know the

true circle of voices that  
call to us over this ground  
open-mouthed in the snow  
voices of  
mothers and fathers, those earlier ones who ask us to  
hear the earth's  
singing, to lift faces up  
where we find ourselves already  
home.

*Karenne Wood (Monacan) has had writings published in News From Indian Country and Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples. A former resident of North Carolina, she now resides in Fredericksburg, Virginia.*

# A SHELL...

Thomas Belt (Cherokee)

Constructed from the internal machinations and magic of a solitary life form, it spirals eternally counter-clockwise, inward, toward the infinity of all creation. Carefully prepared and designed with linear poles, its center sweeps the horizons of the universal four sacred directions with an ornate complexion, deep and clear, while facing inward, opaque and inscrutable. Outwardly to the unknowing as if in mockery.

The echoes of song and sound exist and emanate from deep within the confines of its spirals. The echoes of a million songs and the ghostly audio premonition of a million songs to come...but only to those who listen. Made to exist in the salty-teared world of the Creator, it beckons the ears and eyes of the lost of the open sky and those born of the wind to come and join the dance within the protective hardness of its inward journey.

*Thomas Belt (Cherokee) resides on Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina, where he is a language instructor at Cherokee Elementary School.*

# WINTER SLEEP — THE GRAY BEAUTY

John Blackfeather Jeffries (Occaneechi Saponi)

Winter...the air is crisp and cold...the trees are asleep...limbs are bare...lifeless to those who fear death...colorless to those blind to nature. But trees are green, bound with lots of leaves in shades of green, brown, red, purple—in radiant beauty.

Mother Earth is speaking. "I'm cold, lifeless, yet I am alive. My limbs are bare. The innermost soul of my bosom—the trees—are my leaves, my rib cages. Some see my womb in barren grays, blacks, whites. But I am life. My breast is heaving, my belly swelling under the blanket of leaves covering my body."

I understand Mother Earth's beauty. It is as the life of the Indian before we were considered "cool." But always the trees have been our life from whence comes our food, shelter and clothing. We must always respect the trees.

*John Blackfeather Jeffries (Occaneechi Saponi) is a traditional elder of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation. He resides in Hillsborough, North Carolina.*

# PURPOSE OF THOUGHT

Angel Lilly (Cherokee)

Thoughts separate us from others  
and from our Creator.  
Ideas of revenge, hate, lust and deceit.

This is what pollutes our world today.  
Workings of minds cluttered with thoughts  
that we never should have had.

We have forgotten our purpose,  
the reason we were all created.  
We have lost our way.

We were a gift of love  
from our mother to our father.  
A gift from our ancestors and a promise of tomorrow.

We are here to keep the earth,  
to love our Creator  
and to raise the precious gifts left for us.

We hold such a special place.  
We have thought!  
We have choice!

Our thoughts can change the world.  
We can create a place  
where the Creator can walk with us again.

*Angel Lilly (Cherokee) has had poetry published in numerous journals and magazines. She resides in Rowland, NC.*

# WINDOW OF DREAMS

Tellie Parker (Occaneechi Saponi)

I look through my window into a field of dreams. This is a place where dreams can come true. It is a way to the future—not just any future but yours, mine—anybody's future.

This field holds the nutrients that make things grow and strive to reach the sky. Soil is life and from which all things come. Without it, everything dies. This is what we call Mother Earth.

Blue is the sky which is unlimited to any bounds. The stars are never ending, they go on into infinity. The sky is unyielding, open to everyone and every animal on earth.

My window is an open door to nature that is free to grow wild, to be and do anything. Nature that is fresh and pure, where nothing can harm. Nature that is beautiful and holds all the trees, flowers, animals and other critters who abound in this world.

This is my window of dreams. If I will dream of success, I can do anything.

*Tellie Parker (Occaneechi Saponi) resides in Mebane, North Carolina.*

# MY-ODOGY

Beverly Jo Payne (Occaneechi Saponi)

Is it true or is it false? Mythology is the true spirit world that many cannot see. That is why they cannot share with me. In two worlds I walk. To them one world cannot be. So I silently talk to the trees, the stars, the moon, and the skies. I thank them all, and the Creator, for letting me share this world.

Into your souls I see, through your eyes I see. I read you like a book. It is the part that others don't see: mystery, mythology. The truth in our minds. Our other lives past and present. What was, what is, and what is to be. Mythology. My-ology. Our-ology.

*Beverly Jo Payne (Occaneechi Saponi) is employed by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and is Tribal Treasurer for the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation. She resides in Hillsborough, North Carolina.*

# SOLITARY

Tara J. Reel (Arapaha)

Twisting and turning, yet it remains silent.  
Barely breaking the ocean's surface, it is touched by light.  
A mere piece of driftwood has traveled the sea waters,  
seen all the sights, withheld many secrets.

How many stories lie beneath those dark ridges?  
Tomorrow, a mother will die.  
Next week, a new baby will be born.  
This small obsolete piece of wood contains endless  
memories.

It will encounter many creatures with more stories to  
share.  
Carvings cover its body from a time beyond our knowing,  
to a time beyond our reach.  
Solitary but never alone.....

*Tara J. Reel (Arapaha) is nineteen years old and resides in Raleigh, North Carolina.*





*Lynn King Lossiah*

## Ritual Power and Cultural Survival

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# CEREMONY

Claude Lowry, Jr. (Lumbee)

The ceremony has its place and purpose among American Indians wherever they may be located. All have talents that they can contribute whether they be young or old. Be it dancing or drumming, they give of themselves to the task. Ceremony is a thing of duty and a form of worship that gets everyone involved in offering true allegiance to the Master.

Ceremonies are held throughout the year to give thanks and honor for all occasions such as birth, death, planting or harvesting. For it is written "In all things give thanks."

*Claude Lowry, Jr. (Lumbee) is a retired USDA SCS/Natural Resource Conservation Engineer. He holds a 1955 BS in Engineering from Clemson University. Originally from North Carolina, he now resides in Columbia, South Carolina.*

# ANCIENT FIRES OF TRADITION

Jacque Mooney Garneau (Cherokee/Choctaw)

The ashes of the ancestral fires are long since cold.  
The ancient fires have ceased to burn except in our hearts.

Smoke no longer rises from tribal fires  
to carry prayers of the ancestors to the Creator.

The voices of the warrior have long since been silent.

But the fires of tradition still burn brightly  
in the hearts of those of us who are THE PEOPLE!

*Jacque Mooney Garneau (Cherokee/Choctaw) has been a traditional storyteller and cultural consultant for over 30 years. She is the author of Rattlesnake Singing and the forthcoming Night Wisdom. She resides in Burnsville, North Carolina.*

# GHOST DANCE: THOUGHTS OF A MODERN-DAY MIXED-BLOOD WOMAN

Kathryn Robertson Brickett (Cherokee)

Maybe the Indian people got it right with the  
Ghost Dance.

We dance at pow wows to honor our ancestors  
and our Grandmother Earth.

Are we not in our hearts asking for a renewal?  
For a time of peace for our Grandmother?  
For a healing?

We did not dance the Ghost Dance  
as a war dance but as a prayer.

*Kathryn Robertson Brickett (Cherokee) works with the North Carolina Native American Women's Prison Project in Raleigh, North Carolina.*

# NOW WE DANCE FOR RAIN

Carolynn Carson (Cherokee)

We are cousins, closely related.  
We pray to the same Creator.  
We have the same roots,  
perhaps.

Similar colors, similar ways,  
the same heartbeat of the drum  
stirs your people and mine.  
Yet you dance for rain and know the power of the sun.

We know the power of the rain  
and pray for enough sun to give us corn.  
At least our grandmothers did  
and our grandfathers.

You dazzle us with your beautiful rainbow colors.  
We treasure yours  
and so do others.  
Some of ours have faded.

You fought to near death the invaders  
from your sanctuary—the West  
after the news spread from us of the danger.  
After we were conquered by the goodness of our hearts.

Now we are dancing for rain  
for the color of our ancestors  
to feed the corn  
which is us.

*Carolynn Carson (Cherokee) was born in the hills of Eastern Tennessee, has traveled around the world, and now resides in Cary, North Carolina.*

# TO WALK THE SKY PATH

Sunale Crowe (Cherokee)

To walk the sky path  
You must believe in yourself.  
To walk the sky path  
You must have a clear mind.

To walk the sky path  
You must have a clean heart.

To walk the sky path  
You must follow the bright moonlight.

To walk the sky path  
You will have a guide from North, South, East and West.

To walk the sky path  
You will have love from God above.

To walk the sky path  
Is a feeling you will never forget.

*Sunale Crowe (Cherokee) attends Cherokee Middle School on Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina.*

# HEALING

James Cooper (Cherokee)

Do we have to heal ourselves before we can help others? When I consider this, I realize for a long time I have never really believed it. Now I am forced to. The clichés which lay in the recesses of my mind are there for a reason. For a long time fear has been my companion. It follows me and blinds me. I know now I must heal myself in order to break the fear that has so long bound me. I must heal myself so I can help others.

*James Cooper (Cherokee) is twenty-one years old and resides in Raleigh, North Carolina.*

# CORN WOMAN ON WOODEN SPOON

Marianne Jacobs (Lumbee)

I stare at the people as though they are real.  
I symbolize nature and revere the earth and all its  
treasures.  
I am middle aged with a body of corn and husk.  
My hair is pure silver and I grow from the  
nourishment of the sun and earth.  
My ancestors are connected with the harvest.  
They partake of my fruit and give back to the earth.  
I am the center of my world although I am viewed as  
though I am not real.  
But I am.

*Marianne Jacobs (Lumbee) attends Purnell Swett High School in  
Pembroke, North Carolina.*

# DEAR GRANDPA

Shieka K. Locklear (Lumbee)

Long painful days have passed  
With many memories built to last.  
In my heart you will stay,  
I am loving and cherishing you more each day.

Good times and bad times passed so eagerly,  
My heart hurts knowing you are leaving me.  
But I've faced the fact and grew up a long time ago.  
If you worry about me forgetting our beautiful  
    memories,  
The answer is "No."

Still I'll hurt and I'll cry but never say good-bye.  
When you get to those crossroads, look to your left and  
    your right  
Until you have my daddy in sight  
And tell him I'm all right.

I'll love you both until the end.  
I'm waiting for the day  
Until I can see you again.  
Love, Shieka.

*Shieka K. Locklear (Lumbee) is a senior at Pembroke High School and resides in Lumberton, North Carolina.*

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Pamela Young-Sutherland (Waccamaw Siouan)

As the spirit of my grandmother soars like an eagle  
I am convinced that everything touched by it is made  
better.

So as we live our lives guided by the Great Spirit  
all that we touch should be made better.

We are summoned to stay in touch  
with the spirits of our ancestors  
guided by their wisdom from the Great Spirit  
to pass down the history of our people, the true history.

So I shall look to the sky, land and seas  
as the Great Spirit speaks to me to make a difference  
in a world filled with differences.

*Pamela Young-Sutherland (Waccamaw Siouan) is a traditional dancer and a former Miss Waccamaw Siouan. She resides in Bolton, North Carolina.*

# THICKEST BLOOD

Victoria Oxendine (Lumbee)

American Indian blood runs deep in the heart of America, affecting the nation in silence. Our blood is thick, strong and passionate. In the past, settlers and pioneers tried to put an abrupt end to our chain of life and heritage, but as a people we linked back together and survived.

We have strength like the eagle we prayed to in the past. Like this ancient guide, we can fly to the highest mountain of life, above all the troubles of the world. This strength and heritage we hold dear. So we forgive the ignorance of others even though they came to our land and didn't ask to join in our knowledge of life. We pardon the stereotypes, prejudices, and rudeness of the eternal guests of our land.

*Victoria Oxendine (Lumbee) is a senior in high school and resides in Lexington, North Carolina.*

# WE MUST

Daphine L. Strickland (Lumbee)

We must be runners, messengers to all the people.  
We must tell, talk, teach and communicate to the world  
the stories of all the people.  
Our people.

We must pass on what we believe.  
We must pass on what our ancestors taught us.  
We must tell what the spirits of those who have passed  
on into other worlds are telling us to say NOW.

We must do our part in keeping alive the stories, the  
dances,  
the language, and the humanity of the people.  
We must listen with our hearts and speak the words  
that will connect the circle.

We must be the circle that unites our people as one.  
We must.  
I must be a voice of myself and my people today,  
tomorrow and always.

*Daphine L. Strickland (Lumbee) is pursuing a degree in Justice and Policy Studies at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. She is a traditional storyteller and resides in Jamestown, North Carolina.*

# THE CRACKS ON THE TURTLE'S BACK

Robyn Denise Reed (Cherokee)

This story was told to me a long time ago.  
The turtle's back has cracks on it.

Once turtle could put things together.  
Every animal would come to him for help.

One day a rabbit wanted something new.  
The turtle told the rabbit to come back another day.

Then the turtle went out for a walk to think.  
On his way he bumped into the rabbit.

The rabbit got angry and pushed the turtle into the river.  
The turtle's shell fell off and broke into pieces.

The turtle gathered up the pieces and put them back  
together.  
Ever since the turtle has walked around with cracks on  
his back.

*Robyn Denise Reed (Cherokee) is ten years old and attends Cherokee Elementary School on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina.*

# THE BEAUTY OF THE PAST

Brian Brayboy (Lumbee)

The past gives us the energy and motivation to move forward. Remembering what comprises the past of our ancestors is reason enough to never forget who we are. We all have a story to tell but our audience usually influences the way in which the stories are told. We often spend too much time wondering what others think of us.

We must be proud of our heritage and our ancestors. Because of them, we exist today. Our values have contributed immensely to the world, yet few people realize this is true. We are often tested and bribed by others unlike us. We must remember to never give away our hearts. Being proud of our accomplishments should give us the motivation to feel joy when we say we are American Indians.

It is very important that the elders of our people continue teaching the traditions and values they were taught. This will ensure our existence into the next millennium. Remembering and being proud of our past is the key to moving forward.

*Brian Brayboy (Lumbee) is from Robeson County, North Carolina. He is a student at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina.*

# ONE GREAT PEOPLE

Yvonne Barnes Dial (Lumbee)

We will not die, we will not cease to exist.  
This is the request of our ancestors who knew  
they were human and created by the Great Spirit.  
The white man looked upon us as heathens  
with no heart, no mind, no spirit.  
Why was something or someone who was different  
considered ungodly?

They pause at our dress.  
They pause at our language.  
They pause at our worship.  
They pause at our belligerent manner difficult to tame.  
Why must we yield to their ways that we find so wicked?  
The Creator brought the wind to teach my people the  
beauty of truth.

And now the young ones have learned to lie, to steal, to  
cheat, to waste,  
to become greedy, to be selfish!  
We are coming back to the ways of our elders.  
Remembering, learning, respecting our past.  
We will not be destroyed.  
Our blood runs deep like the rivers.

Our great grandfathers and great grandmothers hid their  
treasures.  
Today their spirits dwell within us,  
feeding us and making our minds and souls  
see, hear, feel what we are, what we need to be,  
what we will become.  
We are strong like the eagle soaring with freedom and pride.  
The trails of our blood expands beyond eternity  
for the Great Spirit sends his wings above us leaving us as  
one great people.

*Yvonne Barnes Dial (Lumbee) resides in Pembroke, North Carolina and teaches English and Journalism at Purnell Swett High School.*

# ON BEING INDIAN: OPEN LETTER TO A FRIEND

Kathryn Cooper (Cherokee)

I understand exactly how you feel. And I don't mind listening to you when you feel dissatisfied with what life gives you. Sometimes, being Indian is just too much to carry. I tried one day to not be Indian. I figured if my ancestors could pass as white then I certainly shouldn't have any problems since I know that I am so much fairer than they were. But the lesson in that one was that it isn't really about how you look, it is all about how you see.

I actually woke up and tried to forget all of this and before I could get out the door to go to work I found myself back into the ways. I wondered at that. I kept thinking what if I were an addict, how would I ever kick the addiction if I couldn't even change my way for even an hour? Then it occurred to me that somewhere in the West there was a council fire of my ancestors and they were all having a good laugh at my expense. Because when they said they "passed as white" it really meant that they deceived all those around them. It didn't mean that they had given up who they were just to survive. So, in a private way, they passed all of this down to me and I am giving this gift to my children.

We will never or can never be anything but who we are. And I guess that is why my uncle used to say, "These Indian ways are hard." I thought he meant learning the songs, or doing hanblechya, or fasting. Heck no! He meant having those ancestors up there just laughing around the fire at our trying to be who we can never be. We are Indian. Despite the color of our skin, or the freckles, or the color of our hair or eyes. And like it or not, this "Indian life" is ours. So load your basket full and join me at the river and we will just keep entertaining those spirits as we go along. I love you and it is good to know that your ancestors sit at the same council fire as mine.

*Kathryn Cooper (Cherokee) home schools her four sons and works with the North Carolina Native American Women's Prison Project in Raleigh, North Carolina.*

# FIRE ON THE INSIDE

Kat Littleturtle (Cherokee)

If I could speak  
would you know who I am?

If my wings opened wide and I could fly  
would you know who I am?

If my tail feathers fluttered and my beak opened wide  
would you know then what is inside?

I know the problem in your vision.  
You see me still and black.

Look into your memory.  
I am red and move swiftly across the land.

*Kat Littleturtle (Cherokee) is a storyteller and regalia maker. She resides in Lumberton, North Carolina.*



*Karl Anthony Hunt*

The Power of Change from Contact



# OUT OF CANAAN...INTO THE LAND OF EGYPT

Daystar Dial (Lumbée)

My childhood was full of love, peace, joy and security. It was a time of milk and honey. I often wandered around in the woods and fields looking for a different bird, a different herb, a different tree to identify. My grandmother and I would go fishing in Hodgins Pond from sunrise to sunset and always come home with a mess of slimy fish. Life could not get any better than this. I was one with the Creator and the Creator was one with me. I was sure this was heaven.

In 1968, my whole world changed. My life was transformed from an eagle who could see clearly from many aspects of life to a jumping mouse who could not see beyond its whiskers. The bondage began. The ending of the Vietnam War and the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy were the principal headlines. Peace marches were springing up everywhere. There was trouble in the land. I felt sure that the end of time as I had known it was at hand. Times could not get any worse.

There were whispers in the wind of something happening to Hawk-Eye School. My grandfather had built this school for the Indian people in our county. I could see and feel the concerns of my grandfather when he talked with the teachers who would often come by our home after school. I could not imagine what was happening.

I asked, "Dad, what's going to happen to Hawk-Eye School?" I could hear the dread in his voice as he answered, "Well, Baby, our government is planning to combine the school systems." I eagerly asked, "Whose school systems?" He answered, "Blacks, whites, Indians—everyone will be going to the same school. You know, integration!" He added this with a hint of accomplishment for finding the right word.

A thousand thoughts must have raced through my mind in a matter of seconds. What will I do? Will they like me? To whom do I turn for help? I felt like Dennis Banks, a Chippewa activist, who had said concerning the Vietnam War, "I didn't start this war, so I choose not to participate." Then he fled to Canada. I fled to my bedroom and began to ponder, trying to visualize what this new world would be like. And I cried.

Not only did we lose our school, we also lost the name Hawk-Eye. Some folks did not feel that it was an appropriate title for an integrated school.

The first day of integrated schools came in the fall of 1969. As we were getting off the bus, a person who looked in charge of something instructed us to assemble in the auditorium, but I did not hear where it was located. I just followed the crowd, wondering if I was marching to a slaughter house. There was a rush of the kids, mostly boys, as though they were going to get free candy. Or maybe they had heard some great news such as the government had changed its mind. I soon realized it was neither.

The principal, with a stance like a drill sergeant, had a welcoming speech for his new students. I will never forget his words as long as I live. "Well," he said, "I welcome all of you to your new campus. I know this is different for you, but I'm sure we will all get along just fine. I noticed some of you students were running," he added fiercely. "First of all, I do not want ya'll running on campus like a pack of wild Indians."

There was total silence in the air. In the same breath, the principal apologized. He had forgotten that at least twenty percent of his new students were American Indians. I have never seen anyone turn so red. His stance faltered and he looked a little faint. I am sure he was sorry, but he could not take back the pain that he had imposed on us. Some of the boys never returned to school. That comment changed the course of their lives forever. I was sure this was going to be hell.

I wondered if I would be able to make this new journey. As I struggled, I wondered if anyone cared. I could not understand a single word Mr. Harrison, my health teacher from Boston, said. I could not understand the dialect of many of my teachers. Most of my school lessons were learned at home in the privacy of my bedroom. I looked forward to graduation day—a time when I knew this horror would cease.

It was not until my senior year of high school that I began to feel at ease with my environment. By then I was able to understand what people were saying. This made all the difference in the world. I learned later that there were other people of different races who had experienced the same wilderness in school as I had. That year I realized, for the first time, that I was not alone.

*Daystar Dial (Lumbee) is majoring in American Indian Studies at University of North Carolina at Pembroke and resides in Red Springs, North Carolina.*

# UNTITLED

Nakesha Bradley (Cherokee)

I remember the Vodka Summer when I was only eleven. My sixteen-year-old sister left me alone to raise two boys we called brothers while she drank my aunt's bitter water in beautiful bottles. I struggled to learn how to make fried eggs so the brothers would not starve. I aged twenty years in one summer and I haven't seen my childhood since.

That summer I listened at the bathroom door to the lurching of my sister's stomach. I secretly denied the heredity of alcohol in my genes—braided, twisted, entwined, fused into my DNA. I cried, hoping it would drip away with my tears. Drip into the clothes I wore and be washed out in the laundry. The alcohol stained my sister's womb and you can still smell the liquor on her son's breath.

Today as I watched her coolly twist open another bottle, I noticed it was the same color as her eyes. Beer-bottle eyes. I almost laughed to myself. I almost cried out loud. As she stood there and so unladylike gulped down a bottle of self destruction, I wanted to slink away and find a mirror. Just so I could make sure my eyes were still the deep green they were when I woke up this morning and everyone was sober.

Shattering my thoughts, a bottle of cold apple wine is slipped into my hands. The smooth glass reminds me of the roughness of my own palms. Rough with over forty years crammed into my eighteen year-old body. I feel the cold glass of that cheap bottle of wine deep inside and I cry. I cry for all those who were handed the same legacy, and died trying to keep it alive. Maybe I will die before it does, but it will never kill me....

I can feel the explosion of glass and cheap wine on the hot asphalt release me from a five-hundred-year-old burden.

*Nakesha Bradley (Cherokee) resides on Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina. Her poetry has appeared in Shifting Winds: A Literary and Arts Publication of Cherokee High School.*

# MY PEOPLE'S DREAM CATCHER

Sharon Oxendine (Lumbee)

Everything he owns is in that red Marlboro duffel bag:  
Dirty underwear, a few pair of torn jeans,  
A couple of packs of smokes.

I keep looking at him,  
Tall, black hair, brown smooth skin  
And think of a time when he had power,  
Held court for others,  
Kept the council fires burning.

Now, he's waiting to see the judge  
And he wears no regalia —  
Only a gold chain a white girl bought him  
To try and keep him home  
And a leather coat thrown in for insurance.

I look at him and see the chief he was,  
Look at his scarce belongings.  
I am thinking, "Is this all there is for you?"  
He drops a syringe out of the bag  
As if hearing my thoughts.

I quickly realize  
Yes, there is the chief, the power —  
That is where all my people are going for their dreams.  
Our eyes lock,  
His as if to say, "So what will you do?"

I stand frozen, not willing to move  
And he scrambles to put his dream catcher  
Back in his pocket.

*Sharon Oxendine (Lumbee) has had writings published in numerous publications including Raising Voices: A Cafe of Our Own Anthology. She resides in Weaverville, North Carolina, where she is a counselor at a community mental health center.*

# CAMOUFLAGE

Annette Bird Saunooke (Cherokee)

Since the casino came to town, my last name, my family tree, my heritage have all become questionable. "You've got blue eyes. Your hair isn't black. Is Saunooke Polish?" I hear these questions a lot.

I never asked to be born where I was, but I'm lucky. I get to see how other races really feel about American Indians without the restraint of political correctness. I can't express how many times peers make racist comments without realizing they are offending me. I used to lead two separate lives, but those lives were so conflicting. I now refuse to keep quiet when the football captain calls his teammate a "drunken Indian" and then pats him on the back for winning the game for the team. And I absolutely refuse to embrace silence when a girlfriend accuses another of "only dating Indians." What is that supposed to mean?

It is almost comical to see their startled reactions when I confront them. Their eyes stretch, showing more white than color. Their mouths sag low, grasping for apologetic words in the tense, thick air. And there appears, always, those tiny beads of sweat that collect across their foreheads in an attempt to cool their embarrassment. They stumble over words and ultimately make an attempt to justify ignorance. But I can't blame them. I've met their families. These children are mere scraps cut from the hateful quilts of their parents.

Sometimes I wish I was darker, but then I could not see the truth of both cultures. My skin is a camouflage and my eyes, though blue, are magnifying glasses of stereotypes.

An example of this stereotyping is a little Indian doll with a Hollywood history. Would anyone ever pick out this little Indian doll for Christmas? I doubt it. She's not wearing a pink, silky dress and she doesn't have bleached blonde hair. And she certainly doesn't come with a convertible.

But how do you sell a little Indian girl? Easy. Instead of sexy Barbie, she becomes a hopeless orphan of society. She wears her "Native" dress of polyester fringe and lacy bows and her eyes are naturally pink and purple-rimmed. Her lips are genetically stained pink. Sure! Didn't you know that the early Natives always wore their hair in curly pigtails? And her little pug nose is so realistic!

But there stands some truth to her. Over the years, signs of gray have crept amid the midnight locks of stereotyping. She's a doll but she's had struggle. Imagine how she's had to worry about being the last doll on the shelf at Christmas time. And there's truth in the small speck of blue on her right plastic limb. It's her scar. Everyone has scars. This might be from that time Susie slammed her into the toy box after she tried to steal Ken away from Barbie.

I wonder why we always see these dolls alone. They never travel in herds like other dolls. They don't come with predestined families. They don't own dream houses. But they are here to amuse tourists. And oh how they do! These dolls portray cuteness but never strength.

This little Indian doll is one among many. You can see how she's cut from a pattern because the plastic still dangles off her arms and legs. She has lost her individuality.

When faced with the images of our society, we are ultimately faced with the truth of ourselves.

*Annette Bird Saunooke (Cherokee) resides on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina. She has won numerous awards for her writings.*

# LABORING PLANET COLLAGE

Sarah Harvan (Blackfoot/Cherokee)

Look! I am your planet  
Spewing forth my pain  
Strip-searching justice  
I call you each by name.  
Thunder Beings menace me  
Fiery, singeing glows  
Hammering new frequencies  
Masked warriors...UFOs

Corn-dancing pueblos  
Straddles 32 cent stamps  
Where have all the tee pees gone  
Their peti-zhan-zhan lamps?  
Painted face Maori  
Eying wisdom stars  
Ancients groaning answers  
How long, how far, war?

Death down in his corner  
Women, babies run aground  
Enemy wind came a -twirlin'  
Stomp-danced buildings down.  
Eon-timed petroglyphs  
Shaman powers strutted  
Prayers praise the sky father  
But Earth's been deeply gutted.

Blistered gray Tree Nations  
Topping solitary hills  
Acid-rain decapitated cousins  
Decomposing, soundless, stilled.  
Sacred spiraled handprints  
White smudges flaming rocks  
Stigmata for "The People"  
Priests have been defrocked.

Faceless lost feminine  
Breasts belly thighs wide  
Isolated battered daughters  
Lie lusting for She-eyes.  
Once Brown Madonna  
Birth, talk us through  
White Buffalo Calf returning  
Mother Earth WILL BE RENEWED!

*Sarah Harvan (Cherokee/Blackfoot) is a writer/artist and resides in Durham, North Carolina.*

# RELIGIONS LOST

Shelby Jean Conley (Coharie)

From the beginning, the spirit self has been connected to the total life experience. The spirit life of Native peoples is not separated from the other aspects of one's self, one's life, or one's environment.

Changes are taking place: new ways of talking, new ways of viewing and seeing things, new ways of thinking, new kinds of work, and different kinds of people with whom to interact.

Experiences are changing: redirecting, reconstructing, redefining, progressive, revolutionary, and evolving. All are making a difference, moving us away from the old ways. Moving us toward new ways that are breaking the spiritual connection and creating a weapon with which the denominations judge and misjudge, hate and fear, condemn and confuse, break and recreate the spirit.

*Shelby Jean Conley (Coharie) is a former elementary school teacher who resides in Kernersville, North Carolina.*

# FULL BLOOD

Stan Watty (Cherokee)

Straight as an arrow  
Young Native watching his brother  
choke on the smoke and drink,  
seeing his people dying,  
he stops to think:

What does it mean to be a Full Blood?  
Lying? Dying in the mud?—with only a bottle at your  
funeral?

Smoking and toking, drinking instead of thinking,  
When the medicine man tells the drunks to stop  
They laugh, take another shot, and pretend he's joking.  
Full Bloods falling, running out  
With every swallowed drop.

I choose the straight edge instead of the death camp  
they're joining.  
Visions come to me in the night  
telling me my people are disintegrating  
that I must help them fight!

To those who gave up the addiction for life,  
Never let the pain get into the young warrior's sight!  
Let's work for the pure nations  
That the Full Bloods of long ago believed in!  
Never let the death and pain of addiction win!  
Fight to never give in!

*Stan Watty (Cherokee) is a 1999 graduate of Cherokee High School on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina. His writings have appeared in Shifting Winds: A Literary and Arts Publication of Cherokee High School, and Talking Stick, a publication of Amerinda.*

# WHO WILL HEAR?

Vera Freeman (Cherokee)

Who will hear my stories?  
Who will read my words?

Who will hear what I want to say?  
Who will answer me?

Who has heard the songs I have heard?  
Who knows all the words?

Who will sing with me?  
Who has walked the path I have walked?

Who knows where I have been?  
Who has felt the joys I have felt?

Who has been there too?  
Who has hurt like I have hurt?

Who has felt the peace?  
Who?

*Vera Freeman (Cherokee) was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and now resides on Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina. She has been an elementary school teacher in four different districts.*

# WHO ARE YOU?

Becky Goins (Lumbee)

Don't judge me by what you see.  
Do not assume to know who I am or what I am about.  
Though we are similar we are different.

My experiences are not yours to critique.  
Until you have lived through my eyes  
You can never understand where I come from.

What gives you the right to deny the words of our  
grandparents?  
Are they all telling lies?  
Generation after generation the story is the same.  
We are who we are.  
A fact you cannot change.  
Pass a law, present a bill, sponsor a proposal.

Your words are not a part of my history.  
The elders teach us who we are.  
They help us to understand who we are to become.

You should learn to understand your world.  
Where do you come from?  
Who are you?

*Becky Goins (Lumbee) holds a BA in American Indian Studies from University of North Carolina at Pembroke. She is a Southern Traditional dancer and resides in Lumber Bridge, North Carolina.*

# CHEROKEE: THROUGH EYES OF GREEN

Cynthia Crowe (Cherokee)

The hue of my skin screams Irish.  
The blood pumping in my heart beats primitive.  
The uncontrollable spiral of my glory  
is so very hard to accept.

I live in the present yet long for the past.  
We must go forward but our culture must last.  
His warm brown eyes, his gentle voice  
captured my heart and left me no choice.

Soft suede leather.  
The wind in his hair with an eagle feather.  
A testament at his feet, a bowl in his hand.  
Whatever happened to the promised land?

Culture shock, oh, how can it be?  
Society, the fast lane and the Statue of Liberty.  
In search of my roots, the elders have passed on.  
I must look forward to a new dawn.

The Medicine Wheel, the Sacred Path,  
Give me the strength to control my wrath.  
Custer, the Cavalry and President Grant.  
I try to forgive them, but it seems I just can't.

Cherokee is changing each and every day.  
Chief Terrapin's Campground has been bulldozed away.  
Block buildings now stand, hindering the view  
where the vast cornfields so long ago grew.

Once Sim was the local medicine man.  
Try and remember back then if you can.  
Walker's up Big Cove teaching our young  
the prayers, the dances and songs once sung.

Jerry Wolf passes down the stories he heard as a child.  
They're funny, scary and even a bit wild!  
Our grandparents were sent to the boarding schools.  
DON'T SPEAK THAT LANGUAGE, INDIAN, YOU MUST  
OBEY OUR RULES!

They snuck to the woods to talk to each other  
in the language they learned from their fathers and  
mothers.  
Many years have gone by and the language has slipped  
away  
but Tom Belt has a vision that the language must stay!

Principle People, listen to my plea.  
The children are important, don't you see?  
Spend time with them, love them, teach them all you  
can.  
So each will grow up to be a responsible young woman  
or man.

*Cynthia Crowe (Cherokee) works with children and adults with "special needs" and resides on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina.*

# CHILDREN ON THE TRAIL

Issac Welch, Jr. (Cherokee)

Along the way are scattered the bones and dust  
of thousands of people who lived in the way of the  
Earth.

Humble but proud. Like winds of the mountains,  
the souls and spirits of generations were irrevocably  
uprooted to be removed from the soils of their  
ancestors.

Following the stream of humanity out of the foggy mists of  
the blue and on to the open and rolling valleys  
sweltering with heat.

Some children played and some cried.  
Darkness found them exhausted and fitful in weary  
slumber  
as the aches and pains of their young legs eased.

Gradually the fun ceased and was replaced by numbing  
misery.

The young aged and followed as the calf follows the cow.  
Eventually some of them fell and were left to perish.

Listen.....to the whisper of the willows.  
You can hear the happy chatter of the children.  
Listen.....to the oaks and you can hear the sniffles  
and silent whimpers of the weary children.  
Reach.....toward the horizons and you can feel  
the pain and sorrow of the young.

The children, the children.....the children.....

*Issac Welch, Jr. (Cherokee) was born and raised on Qualla Boundary  
in Cherokee, North Carolina. Retired from the U.S. Army, he now  
resides in Asheville, North Carolina.*

# TO LEARN YOUR LANGUAGE

Julia Lowry Russell (Lumbee)

To learn your language,  
I bartered my own.  
Sang your songs until  
I no longer heard Earth's harmonies.  
Said your prayers and  
Lost the sacred paths of my ancestors.  
Read your great thinkers who  
Instructed me in your tongue.  
And what did they teach?  
That the people define language and  
Language defines the people.

Now I sing.  
No one hears.  
I pray.  
My prayers echo between worlds.  
And I?

I am lost in the void.

*Julia Lowry Russell (Lumbee) holds a Masters Degree in English, and has had writings published in the Native American Anthology Earth Song, Sky Spirit and Pembroke Magazine. She resides in Lumberton, North Carolina.*

# MIGRATION

René Hilbish (Mohawk)

Winter blew its chilled breath of indifference  
into the faces and hearts  
of the men, women and children.

For they walked, hearts heavy with grief,  
for the last time upon the earth  
that embraced the bones of their old and young ones.  
Those who had crossed the river into the spirit world.

Their wearied souls left behind all they had ever been  
to find refuge in the land called Canada.  
For they were Mohawk and all this implied  
but now only exiles in their own land.

There was a time when as far  
as their eyes could see was Mohawk land.  
There was a time when the only people to  
walk these lands were the Iroquois.  
Now the land of the People of the Longhouse  
belongs to others and is called New York.

Warriors, clan mothers, babies—  
all the people are now walking the frozen path.  
Feeling the chill, the loneliness,  
the heart sickness of what has been lost.

For them, winter will never cease.

*René Hilbish (Mohawk) is from St. Regis, New York, and presently resides in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where she works for the Title IX Indian Education Program.*

# A LETTER

Merv G. Hayes (Occaneechi Saponi)

Dear Editor:

I am writing you about the growing concern among my people, American Indians. My concern being that of a people tossed aside like a cheap rag by a government not exactly sure what to do with us. We were placed on reservations while the government took the land inherited from our great ancestors.

Indian heritage wasn't something spoken of very often until recently and that is due to films such as "Geronimo" and "Dances With Wolves." These movies brought out people from all walks of life, claiming to have 1/2 or 1/4 Indian in their blood inherited from their grandparents. All I want to know is where were these "skeletons in the closet" when being Indian wasn't popular?

Now archaeologists want to dig up the remains of our ancestors for their museums, and hobbyists come to our pow wows to dance in our sacred inner circles and wear our regalia as if it were Halloween costumes. Most people do not realize that you can't just enter the circle because of a feeling or yearning to be something you're not. Not only are others dressing in our regalia, but they are also making our arts and crafts for their gain, playing our drums, and singing our chants. They are making a mockery of our Indian traditions.

Years ago, our ancestors didn't try to be any other race but their own, yet they were forced to adopt the "American" society's language and culture. I am asking that our culture and ways be respected and we will respect yours. Quit using us as mascots, and stop masquerading as someone you are not. Most importantly, the archaeologists need to leave our sacred burial grounds alone.

I will leave you with this to ponder. How do you think archaeologists would feel if someone dug up their grandparents or relatives and placed them in museums or sold them to the highest bidder? We don't want to segregate our race from any other race, we want you to learn of our ways and culture. For you to learn and respect our ways is truly an Indian's dream.

*Merv G. Hayes (Occaneechi Saponi) is originally from Mebane, North Carolina, and now resides in Manassas, Virginia.*

# INDIANS OF THIS GENERATION

Jefferson Currie (Tuscarara/Lumbee)

The young, that's the focus...the key for the future. But this generation of young cannot do it alone. Their efforts must follow the elders—the wisdom of the years and experience. The world view of the past, the power of its simplicity, the strength of its complexity. All seem dualistic. Sometimes I wonder where are the people my age who are making an effort?

Today, we have disgruntled people in a world of speed. A lack of open observance and listening. Will the American Indians of the present generation see the sadness of the future if we stay on the course we are on?

"Some major efforts must be made by the Indians of this generation to demonstrate the view of the world that their tradition teaches has an integrity of its own and represents a sensible and respectable perspective of the world and a valid means of interpreting experiences," wrote Vine Deloria, Jr. in the seventies. The Indians then evidently didn't make the efforts to their own children or the outside because the activism and action seems to be less now than then. There is more awareness in a broad sense: the past history is being revised somewhat. But the specific contemporary awareness seems lacking. Indians of the past aren't "noble savages" as they were considered in the public fifty years ago. However, contemporary Indians are still not understood or accepted. We are still stereotyped.

Can the youth of this generation bring back the traditions and integrity of the past for their own lives as well as relating this to the "dominant" culture? I hope so. I look around and see people my own age and being mixed, I sometimes feel alienated from both cultures because they are much the same. The elders hold the knowledge and wisdom but it is up to the young ones to ask for it, listen, and open their hearts. To look critically at what the "dominant" culture gives us and compare it to traditions. Where are the differences and how can we bring the future back around? Before we can demonstrate the Indian view of the world in its integrity, we should reach many of the present youth and bring them back into this view.

*Jefferson Currie (Tuscarora/Lumbee) is a 1998 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. He resides in Red Springs, North Carolina.*

# UNITY

Wendy Moore-Cummings (Lumbee)

Under the blue-veiled watch of the Creator, American Indians have embarked upon a search for a more elusive prize than the proverbial "Indian money"—a search that has more diverging pathways than the currents of a river whose seduction has proved deadly. It is here we have broken the spirits of our own.

Still we search.

Now, more than in previous years, we have seen how we exalt powers of authority, less than our own, seeking the answers that only we can impart. In doing so we attire ourselves in whitewashed literary guises, loosely woven in oxymoronic fashion, that bear our nakedness with indignation's swift twitch.

Still we search.

Instead of "The People," we are now brother against brother whose jealousies beguile even the most cunning of thieves. We have become the pawn of society's game of poker, always lost in stacked decks dealt from the bottom.

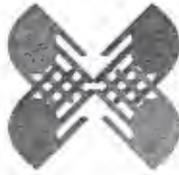
Still we search.

To ourselves we question how we have wandered so far off course, never taking into consideration the booby traps that have been strategically placed to divide a people, and make ready the conquest.

Still we search.

Yet, I yearn for a time when we shall be One People with One Voice, who will search no more. Until such time, Father Sky will continue to close his eyes for Mother Earth's silent slumber, while I pause to pray, and shed a tear for us all.

*Wendy Moore-Cummings (Lumbee) is the author of Talon Tracks and is gathering material for an anthology of Lumbee Indian writings. Her writings have appeared in Carolina Indian Voice and Pembroke Magazine. She resides in Pembroke, North Carolina.*



## North Carolina Humanities Council

*Weaving Cultures and Communities*

The North Carolina Humanities Council (NCHC) is a non-profit foundation and state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Our primary mission is to support free, public programs that address fundamental questions about who we as human beings are and how we live in the world we share. NCHC's programs emphasize historical understanding and critical thinking skills essential for participating in a pluralistic democracy. North Carolinians of every walk of life, hue and creed engage in these activities by examining what we value, how we relate to each other, how we cope with change and how we express ourselves. In particular, the Council encourages programs that explore North Carolina's rich diversity by examining the culture and traditions of specific groups as well as programs that foster cross-cultural understanding.



Photo by Beth Carter



MariJo Moore (Cherokee) is the author of *Spirit Voices of Bones*, *Crow Quotes*, *Tree Quotes*, *Returning To The Homeland*, *Stars are Birds*, and the forthcoming *Red Woman With Backward Eyes*. In 1998, she received the North Carolina Distinguished Woman of the Year in the Arts Award from the North Carolina Department of Administration Council for Women. She resides in Candler, North Carolina.

## About the Artists

Darrin Bark (Eastern Cherokee), resides on Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina. His work has appeared in numerous publications including *Shifting Winds*, *Tree Quotes*, and *Rattlesnake Singing*. He was awarded first place in the Congressional Art Exhibition for his penciled portrait of Maggie Wachacha, Beloved Woman of the Cherokee.

Karl Anthony Hunt (Lumbee-Cheraw) is a native of Robeson County, NC. He is a self-taught artist who finds his inspiration in the richness and diversity of Native American cultures. Karl Anthony began creating art in response to an urge to share with the rest of the world his love for his people and the beauty he sees in them.

Lynn King Lossiah (Cherokee), is the author/artist of *The Secrets and Mysteries of the Cherokee Little People*. She resides on Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, North Carolina.

Roger Willie (Navajo) is a member of the Wateredge Clan on the Navajo reservation. A graduate of Fort Lewis College in Colorado, Roger came to North Carolina in 1990 where he served for four years in the U.S. Army. Roger also has a degree in American Indian Studies from UNC Pembroke. He receives his inspiration and strength for living and creating art from his religious and spiritual beliefs, his parents and family, his cultural heritage and his conviction that "life is a sacred journey." Married to a member of the Lumbee tribe, Roger has gained national recognition for his detailed artwork.

*MariJo [Moore] understands the necessity of American Indians being given a voice in defining themselves through the written word. In order for Native peoples to survive, communal effort is mandatory. This book is a marvelous example of such effort.*

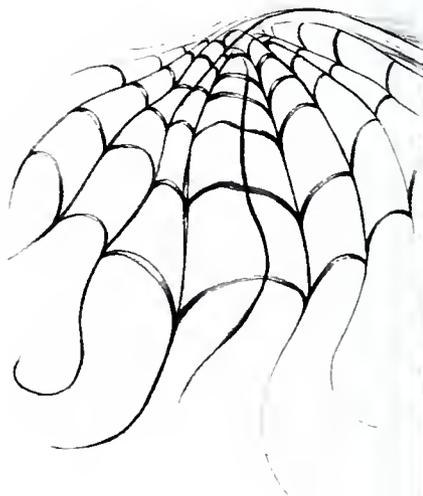
Vine Deloria, Jr.

Author, *God is Red* and *Red Earth, White Lies*

*In her own ancient wisdom, MariJo Moore has uncovered long-ignored, hidden treasure in Feeding the Ancient Fires. An eclectic compilation from North Carolina Indians, the collection includes some who have never written before. Especially significant is the opportunity to hear the spirit of indigenous Americans—ten years old to elders—for the first time in their own voice, creating their own literature.*

Michael Hice

Creator/Editor-in-Chief of the former *Indian Artist*



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