



# BEAUTY ALL AROUND US

Poetry and Prose on Indigenous  
Food Sovereignty by  
15 Indigenous  
Youth

*Edited by*  
Tommev Jodie

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Helena Austin

Cover Credit: Artwork “Indigenous Food Sovereignty” by Helena Austin (Diné).

The artwork features an illustration of two brown hands gently pouring water onto a growing corn stalk. The background shows Monument Valley at sunset, with soft pink, orange, and purple hues in the sky. A rainbow arcs across the top, connecting both hands. Culturally significant symbols—like horses, corn, and mountains—frame the image along the border.

A decorative border surrounds the central text area. It features a repeating pattern of Indigenous symbols: a butterfly, a cross, a mountain, a horse, and a stylized plant. The border is composed of a dark grey outer line and a lighter grey inner line, with the symbols placed between them.

# Beauty All Around Us

Poetry and Prose on Indigenous Food  
Sovereignty, Land and Becoming  
by 15 Indigenous Youth

Edited by Tommey Jodie

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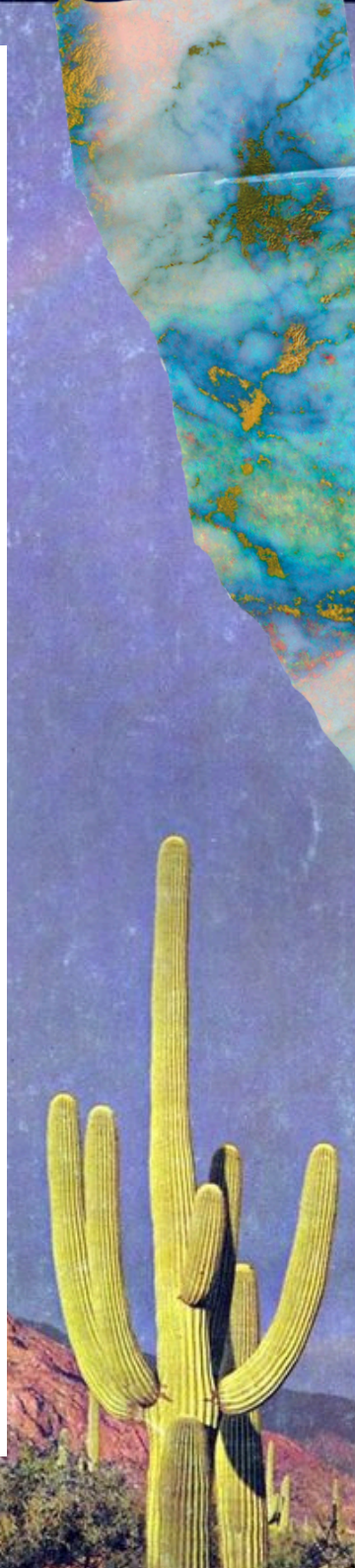
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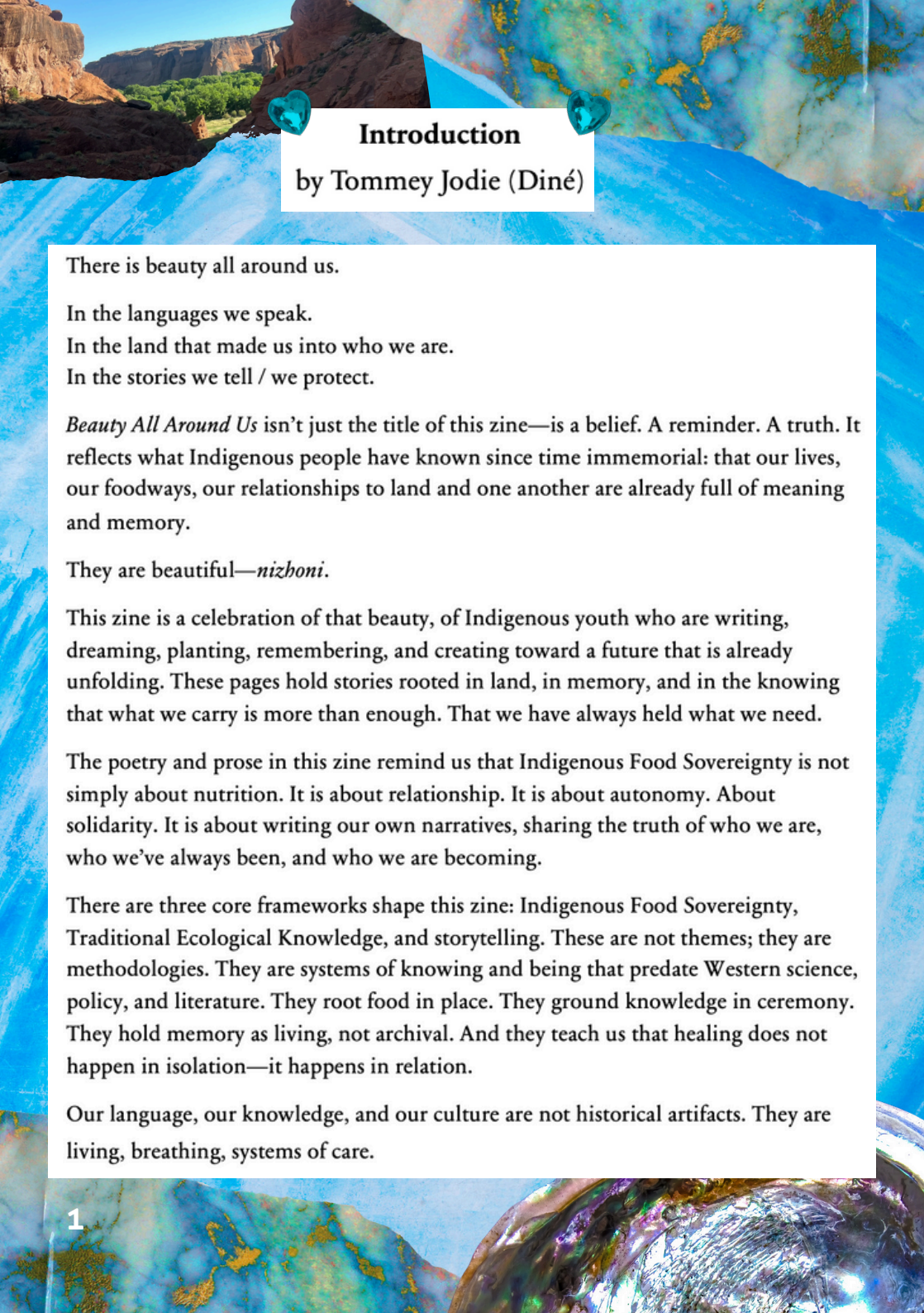
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## Introduction

by Tommey Jodie (Diné)

There is beauty all around us.

In the languages we speak.

In the land that made us into who we are.

In the stories we tell / we protect.

*Beauty All Around Us* isn't just the title of this zine—is a belief. A reminder. A truth. It reflects what Indigenous people have known since time immemorial: that our lives, our foodways, our relationships to land and one another are already full of meaning and memory.

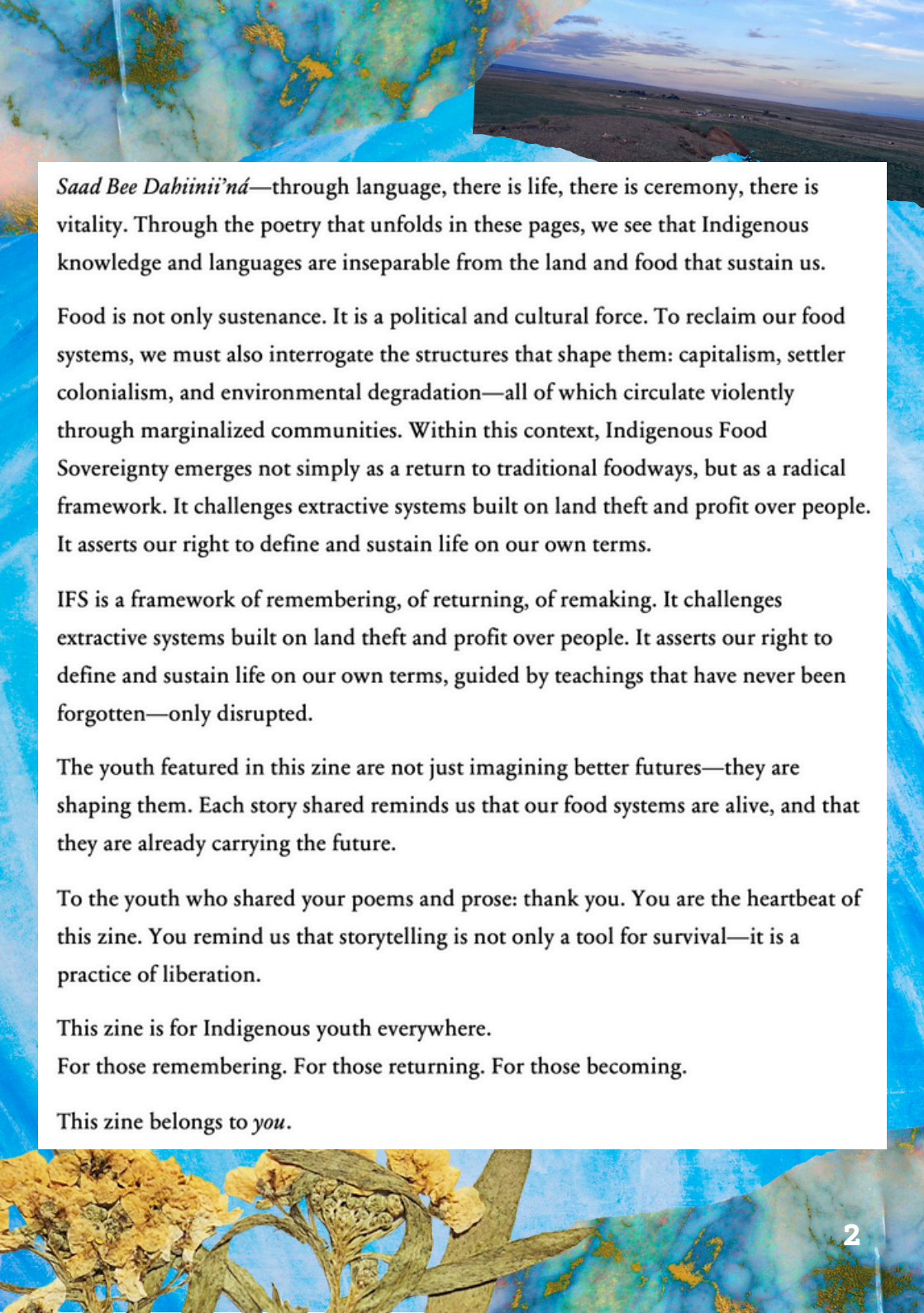
They are beautiful—*nizhoni*.

This zine is a celebration of that beauty, of Indigenous youth who are writing, dreaming, planting, remembering, and creating toward a future that is already unfolding. These pages hold stories rooted in land, in memory, and in the knowing that what we carry is more than enough. That we have always held what we need.

The poetry and prose in this zine remind us that Indigenous Food Sovereignty is not simply about nutrition. It is about relationship. It is about autonomy. About solidarity. It is about writing our own narratives, sharing the truth of who we are, who we've always been, and who we are becoming.

There are three core frameworks shape this zine: Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and storytelling. These are not themes; they are methodologies. They are systems of knowing and being that predate Western science, policy, and literature. They root food in place. They ground knowledge in ceremony. They hold memory as living, not archival. And they teach us that healing does not happen in isolation—it happens in relation.

Our language, our knowledge, and our culture are not historical artifacts. They are living, breathing, systems of care.



*Saad Bee Dahiinii'ná*—through language, there is life, there is ceremony, there is vitality. Through the poetry that unfolds in these pages, we see that Indigenous knowledge and languages are inseparable from the land and food that sustain us.

Food is not only sustenance. It is a political and cultural force. To reclaim our food systems, we must also interrogate the structures that shape them: capitalism, settler colonialism, and environmental degradation—all of which circulate violently through marginalized communities. Within this context, Indigenous Food Sovereignty emerges not simply as a return to traditional foodways, but as a radical framework. It challenges extractive systems built on land theft and profit over people. It asserts our right to define and sustain life on our own terms.

IFS is a framework of remembering, of returning, of remaking. It challenges extractive systems built on land theft and profit over people. It asserts our right to define and sustain life on our own terms, guided by teachings that have never been forgotten—only disrupted.

The youth featured in this zine are not just imagining better futures—they are shaping them. Each story shared reminds us that our food systems are alive, and that they are already carrying the future.

To the youth who shared your poems and prose: thank you. You are the heartbeat of this zine. You remind us that storytelling is not only a tool for survival—it is a practice of liberation.

This zine is for Indigenous youth everywhere.

For those remembering. For those returning. For those becoming.

This zine belongs to *you*.

by elladiss winter, sault tribe of chippewa indians

blueberry blood

last summer back home on maashkinoozhe lake      picking miinan between bakery  
shifts with mama and nookomis and her boyfriend      who didn't understand the  
devotion of being on your knees      for something so small      for so long

who only understood the fidelity shared between lips and a cigarette      lungs  
turned to ash      his bad habit catching up to him

did you know wild blueberries aren't blue? and when you cook them down

miinan      ozhaawashkwaa  
they bleed purple bursting between fingers

miinaande  
staining my palms

squish. splat.

just like every summer before my nineteenth one— summers of dancing with  
nookomis in the kitchen      the hiss of jam thickening on the stove      windows  
yawning open      air laced with pine      summers of bread from the church pantry  
because the nearest grocery is a two-hour drive and the truck gave out  
and gas is too expensive      summers of mama coming home from her shift at the  
diner rousing me for a late night swim      we'd return, water-drunk      trailing  
gichigami in our hair      eating toast spread with last year's communion

mama pressed the mason jar into my hands      a silent prayer that I wouldn't  
forget her      told me to take it with me to university where the winters bite  
deeper— but not in temperature.      where home would be only a taste

the blue university— its imperial banners rippling. names carved in stone  
that do not belong to us      names of presidents who played Indian      a promise  
of progress paved over our bones      bones held in the museum down the street  
the street with high-rise apartments they call villages      the closer to the  
sky, the closer to advancement— that's what they tell me

mama, a boy threw himself off one last tuesday      fell into the busy street  
below      squish! splat!  
just to measure exactly how many floors of evolution we've built

mama, he was the color of my palms in summer

nimise called today      told me nookomis' boyfriend flatlined from the cancer  
I ask her if she thinks there's anything after death      she's quiet

mama's jar of blueberry jam      sits on the highest shelf of the kitchen in my  
frigid basement apartment.      tonight, I break the seal      smear summer onto  
maize-and-blue pantry bread      let its bitter-sweet weight linger on my  
tongue      too afraid to swallow

but I do.      I swallow home down      so it can't leave me      like I left it



me! my cuzzins shimasani



Her grandmother's skirt.

By: Danielle Shandiin Emerson

Diné

Swaddled, baa jé'íínishná,  
like the newborns from bighandí,  
her hometown  
hospital, crying as air entered lungs  
for the first time,  
cradled in brown agáán.  
Fabric soft like dried ch'il  
growing, aging in the backyard,  
circling the ditch shimasani jumped into  
when Jóhonaa'éi  
spent too much time leaning against her shoulders,  
turning them maroon.  
Dark, like hashtl'ish,  
that stuck to the soles of feet  
while out running with cuzzins,  
around and around the family dá'ák'eh.  
Where fall harvests arrange  
themselves on the ground as stray leaf memories,  
and the stove hasn't warmed faces in years.





The girl will join her masani in the skies,  
with her  
shimasani's,  
shimasani's,  
shimasani's  
shimasani's  
arms wide  
open.

Lighter, than her shaded bitsii,  
tied back with sheep ligai  
yarn and tightened by years and years  
of intergenerational love,  
passed down in enduring pink  
abini's, amidst four tall mountains,  
praying for youthful wellbeing.

When she cries,  
the skirt soaks up all her tears and drops them back into her stomach.  
Because sobbing starts below the heart  
before reaching up  
with silken tendrils into the anaa'  
and throat.

Shimasani's voice, sweet like dinilchii',  
a nostalgic aroma of worn flea market dootl'izh.  
Her skirt sings with birds, hopping along  
power lines and trees, picking at juniper berries.  
And, as promised, someday,



Find full bio on page:33

# WALK WITH ME

BY SETH STILL SMOKING (BLACKFEET + LAKOTA)

Kitáikiihpa?  
What are you doing?

Take my hand  
Walk with me  
To the prairie  
Where bison breathe life  
Where ground plums hide  
Where turnips point at each other

Walk with me  
To the river  
Where fish paint the water  
Where bull berry branches bend  
Where wild mint perfumes the air

Walk with me  
To the mountains  
Where birds gossip  
Where wildflowers dance  
Where trees reach for the sky

Walk with me  
Let's gather our medicine  
Let's laugh  
Let's sing

Walk with me  
Back to the lodge  
Na'a is cooking  
Can you smell that?  
Let's hurry





## Crop Rotation

By Jamie Ayze (Pueblo and Navajo)

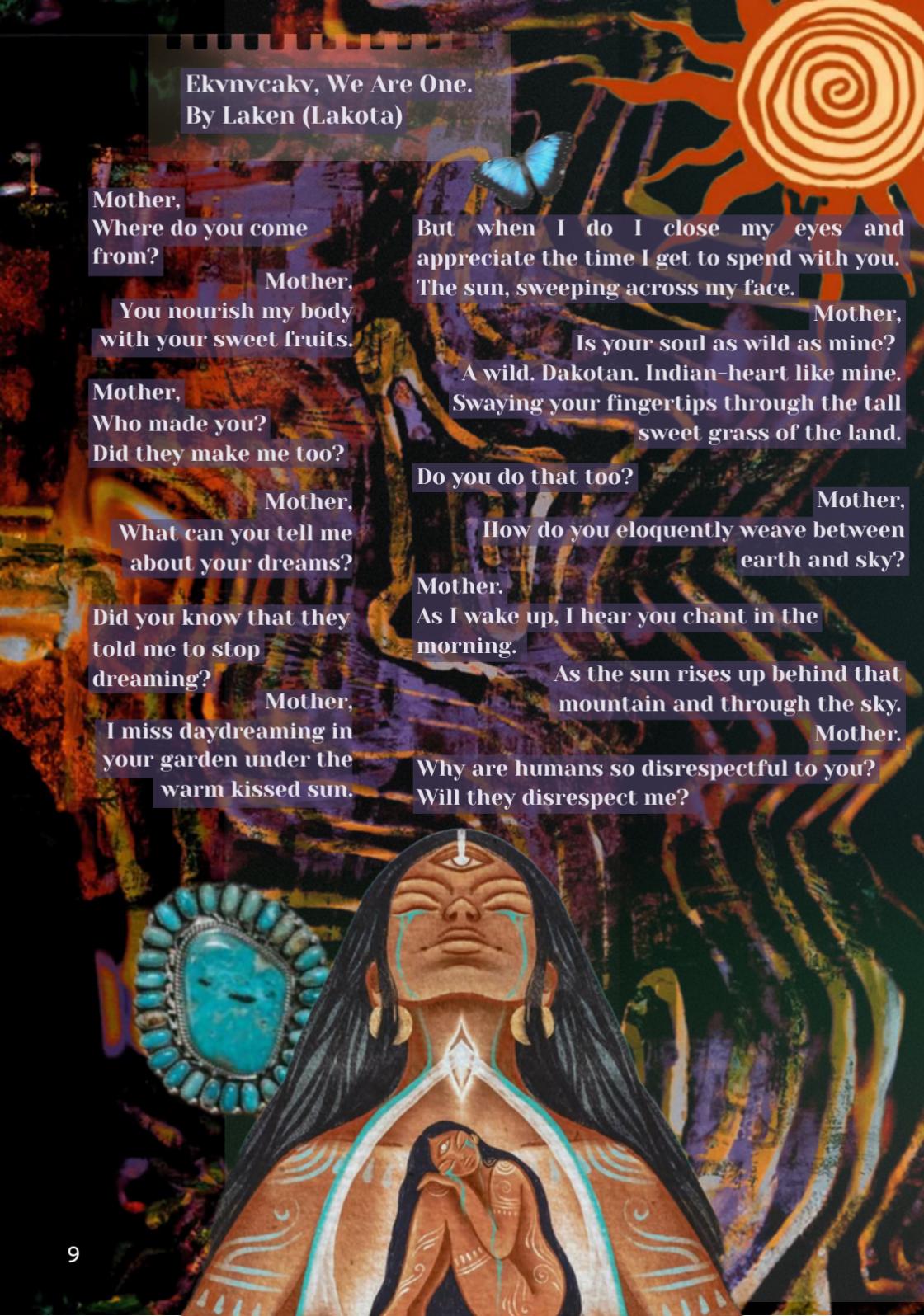
Newborn seedlings reaching out toward morning light,  
For now, they all look the same, it doesn't matter if you look left or right,  
Snuggled in warm beds so carefully mixed compost, soil, and hints of dolomite,  
They will grow up together based on plant family, garden age, and soil type.

Now the sun is high, and seedlings stand tall with delight,  
Garden beds increase in Fahrenheit,  
Chaos ensues, wilting begins, these seedlings are terrified,  
Needing to be attended to, it is no surprise that the garden and the gardener reunite.

Soon enough, a brisk mist coats each garden bed and makes things alright,  
The seedlings learn to stick by each other's side through this tiny fright,  
Nadaáá, Naa'ohí, and Naayízí will solely rely on one another in only a Fortnight,  
For they are now sisters of birthright.

Sitting in the serenity of the garden feels Hózhó, Godlike,  
There is no need for any Western form of herbicide,  
Only healing through seeds that have seen a similar genocide,  
The gardener once again learns to Coincide.

Find full bio on page 31



Ekvncakv, We Are One.  
By Laken (Lakota)

Mother,  
Where do you come  
from?

Mother,  
You nourish my body  
with your sweet fruits.

Mother,  
Who made you?  
Did they make me too?

Mother,  
What can you tell me  
about your dreams?

Did you know that they  
told me to stop  
dreaming?

Mother,  
I miss daydreaming in  
your garden under the  
warm kissed sun.

But when I do I close my eyes and  
appreciate the time I get to spend with you.  
The sun, sweeping across my face.

Mother,  
Is your soul as wild as mine?  
A wild, Dakotan, Indian-heart like mine.  
Swaying your fingertips through the tall  
sweet grass of the land.

Do you do that too?

Mother,  
How do you eloquently weave between  
earth and sky?

Mother,  
As I wake up, I hear you chant in the  
morning.

As the sun rises up behind that  
mountain and through the sky.

Mother,  
Why are humans so disrespectful to you?  
Will they disrespect me?

# YOUR SOUL AS WILD AS MINE?

YOUR SOUL AS WILD AS MINE?

Because they do.  
Mother.

When will they realize that you are essential to our survival?

To have a relationship with you is to have respect for this world we live in called life.

Mother.

When do we tell them that we are to stand alongside them and not beneath.

Mother.

We are unwriting universal laws.

We are so disconnected from you it's becoming a crisis.

Mother.

Why can't anyone understand that?

Having a relationship with you is the only religion.

It is my religion.

Mother.

What is life other than to be present with you?

Instead of spending Sundays in an illusion pushing an agenda.  
I'd rather you hold me here in a summer daze.

Grounding my energy, my life, my presence because there is no beginning and there is no end, there's only memories and imagination.

Ekvncakv,

I come from you.

We are one.

Find full bio on page 32



# Tepeyi-Atzin

by Alexis Clifton

(Lipan Apache, Wixárika)

There is a lightness to your step this morning. Your feet don't weigh quite as much as they did only weeks ago; something is different. You are an image of a phosphene—flittering and falling along a beam of light that pierces the window and warms your face. You were positive you could jump to the moon in a single bound if you tried.

You greeted the morning without words, finding a magic you'd lost within the simplicity of stirring sugar into your coffee. You were grateful for the hands you'd been given—for the gifts life and Earth had given you. You thanked her with the first sip falling to the ground of your backyard, giving a portion in return. Your ancestors danced til the morning light for the rain, and you gave sugared coffee to the grass. There was a difference but you knew the meaning held the same density. The trees, the bushes, the wind, the animals—they saw you. "Here!" They said, "This one knows what we share."

You walked down the pathway your family had etched into the ground over slow time, a route made by consistency. Your feet greeted the dirt beneath you, carrying you towards the water's edge where you placed your coffee mug on a rock. Water; atzin. You lowered yourself and leaned in towards the glass surface, seeing your image cradled in the hands of the water. You smiled, first out of joy, and then to check your teeth. Your complexion was soft and warm-toned around your lifted cheekbones, and there was summer written in freckles on your nose.

Tepeyi was a word of your people that echoed in your mind. To spill, to fall, to spread, like the leaves to the ground, or water from a pitcher. Only for that moment, there wasn't a physical spreading, per se. More so, there was a spilling of your heart—the warmth that continued to grow as the Sun god Tayau made his round of morning kisses to each living thing as he rose, shimmering gorgeously across the water. All around you, the land was breathing and sprawling in many shades of green, morning doves cooing to each other from across the water. Boats of many sizes sat in silence in their designated spots, waiting to be woken for a day on the main waterways. A feeling brewed in a place within your heart—stirred together and spilled to the ground like your morning coffee.

You remembered that from the oceans of Earth is where you had risen, and back to oceans you would fall and spill again. A cycle of life carried on through the generations before you.

Tepeyi-atzin; spilling water.

April

WED.	THURS.	FRI.
3	4	5
10	11	12
17	18	19
	25	26

# REMEMBRANCE

BY AANDEG KETHER MOHAWK-ANISHINAABE

the nights i hold closest are the warmest  
clasped in my feeble hands so tightly as to never forget  
the hum of katydids and cicadas  
star dazzled dark skies  
dibiki-giizis shining bright with a thick band of rainbow  
flowing as if she too had her own skirt  
it's dad in the kitchen cooking thick slabs of september's venison  
pickled ramps in the fridge he taught me to forage from our gilded valley  
the sweet berries from the mountains picked just right  
wafts of sticky sweet miinan compote coming from our rickety stove  
these meals turned into his stories  
transformed into beading on the carpeted floor  
i understand it now  
how despite the lack of words  
the love was in all he did  
all he passed down

dibiki-giizis - the moon  
miinan - blueberries

find bio on page 33





# WE ARE ONE

*Mochi River*  
(Kickapoo and Muskogee)

I WANT TO LIVE ANOTHER DAY.  
I KNOW YOU THINK THAT LIFE ENDS,  
BUT DEATH DOES NOT SCARE ME.  
WHEN I DIE, I WILL REST EVEN WHEN  
THE RESISTANCE CONTINUES.  
I WILL LIVE AGAIN TO REMIND YOU  
THAT LIFE IS  
LOVE, PATIENCE AND KINDNESS.  
LIKE YOU, LIKE ME, I REMEMBER YOU.



Patience  
Kindness  
Love  
Healing

find bio on page 34

## FRYBREAD PRIDE AT NAMING CEREMONY FEAST

by Ana W. Migwan (Keweenaw Bay Indian Community)

Before the medicine man arrives,  
combine sugar and quick-rise yeast.  
Wash berries. Breathe. In, out. Wait—to bloom.



Measure flour and baking powder in palm.  
Heed cousin's *loosen up, my girl!*  
over sounds of bubbling manoomin

and start to sway. Lift up those beaded  
heels, feel the heart's rhythm, and sprinkle  
in some of that good ode' medicine.

Take care shaping each dough ball. Drop into  
sizzling oil until glistening  
and golden. Balance plate stacks in hands

and dance them over to the table  
set with venison and whitefish.  
Answer each knock on the door and pack



relatives into old folding chairs. Swat  
berry-snatching fingers and wait  
to stitch up immemorial wounds.



Find full bio on page 33

# (DE)SEEDED

BY: MARIANNA G. M. COTA

[YAQUI/YOEME & PINAVI/KAMPANGAN]

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FIND FULL BIO ON PAGE 34

A mouthful of mango bones and living gemstones;  
little black pearls of promise encased  
in juicy, sweet watermelon meat.  
Here I am, moon-faced...

swallowing fruits whole. What's self-control  
for a dragon who can't wait for things to be dried or salted?  
Yet, borrowed wisdom is hard to suppress, even when bodiless.  
Soon, they will re-emerge, fertilized by the decay of the once exalted.

**WHEN WE SAVE SEEDS AND ENGAGE IN TRADITIONAL FOOD PRESERVATION OR PREPARATION PRACTICES, WE HONOR AND TEND TO OUR KINSHIP TIES WITH THE HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN WORLDS THAT NOURISH US ACROSS GENERATIONS.**

My poem seeks to remind us that seeds are the technological and biological vessels created by plant ancestors to impart knowledge of the past and present to their descendants. Like our plant kin, we ensure the survival of future generations by sharing information through the vessels of the respective genetics and cultures we come from. Such cultural vessels include our stories, songs, dances, practices, medicine, crafts, and dishes.

Hence, in the poem, I nod to a story in Filipino cosmovision that urges us to understand and collectively prevent the darkness that a single being's ravenous appetite brings. By alluding to the Bakunawa, the serpent-like moon-eating dragon, I call forth the need to examine and reimagine settler colonial mindsets. These are the mindsets that beckon for speed, convenience, and exuberance at the cost of our humanity and sovereignty, including those to come and who have been.

Now is the time to remember the everyday acts of ceremonial care embedded in traditional foodways, embody the wisdom within, and re-establish right relations with all kin.

**"PEOPLE WHO DENY  
THE EXISTENCE OF  
DRAGONS ARE OFTEN  
EATEN BY DRAGONS.  
FROM WITHIN.**

**URSULA K. LE GUIN**

# Body Poem

by Jamie John (Anishinaabe / Grand Traverse Band)

I was born when the world and sky was in transition between the bear and snowcrust moons—which is to say I am familiar with being two things at once.

I am reckless with my body in that I give too much of myself away to any man who makes me feel wanted desired beautiful seen

I am fetishized used and discarded

I can feel the love I give go unreciprocated and unrealized.

The land and the body I hold are the same in that we still continue to give gifts to those who do not respect or value us. I have no desire to write poems about nature but writing about queer sex isn't revolutionary anymore.

I am transsexual

I am a man and a boy ; a woman and a girl

I am the sands of the shore and I am the waves in the water

I am both the flower, the root, and fruit of the trees

I am the stars that burn in the far cosmic sky and I am the darkness in the womb of the night

I am both the spider and the prey in her web

I am prairie plains with tall sweeping yellow and green grasses for hair, dry desert canyons and plateaus for skin

I am the icy tundra and the snow capped mountains that reach towards the sky to fill their heads with clouds

I am the ocean currents that carry whales and the krill that feeds them.

The sun glows red orange pink purple like the fading blood of a bruise on the dark skin of the sky. We forget that the sun is a star too. I pray to transsexual gods of my own making, making them in an image all of my own and swallowing the sunset whole in the hopes that it might burn holes through my esophagus and stomach. Dreaming of eating is saying a lot when my early teenage years are punctuated by periods of starving myself in an effort to disappear completely— to evaporate like water into air.

but a transfer of energy isn't the same as disappearance.

Acts of metamorphosis come natural to me

Sometimes I dream about shapeshifting into a spider spinning a web of silk that catches morning dew drops, golden hour sunlight and live prey for me to feast upon

Or becoming a tall green praying mantis in search of a mate knowing that after fucking him I will be the one who separates his head from his shoulders with my lips and teeth. I daydream about being the one who gets to eat instead of the one who gets eaten.

Commodity foods like frozen beef and pork, lard, peanut butter, canned fruits and vegetables, powdered milk, raisins, white sugar, and corn flakes put the generations before me at increased risk for diabetes and heart disease.

After removing the Natives from the land and forcing us to sign treaties under duress violence war and starvation, the newly formed U.S. government sought to replace not just our traditional foods but sought to replace our rituals, our ceremonies, our seeds, our bodies, and our sovereignty with commodities and capital.

My auntie's kitchen is half empty with meager rations of vanilla Oreos, a half empty red bag of Doritos, Diet Coke, and peanut butter ice cream.

I think of starvation as colonization and what it meant to go through my teen years starving myself when feasting is tradition and abundance has always surrounded me

This too, will burn holes through you

The moon glows neon emerging from red raspberries and shines down upon Anishinaabe aki and reflects off the water. The wild rice has grown long and strong enough to reach beyond the surface where the water meets the air.

It's been said to me that Anishinnabe women are at their most powerful during their period, older aunties will call it your moon time. The uterus lining sheds and cleanses the body of what is not needed anymore in a river of red between the legs.

Hormone replacement therapy halted my moon time but it did not end it completely It's not once every 28 days anymore but there are still times my organs become too heavy and I bleed for days and days. My lower abdomen cramps and cramps and cramps.

My moon is a loaded reminder that I was born a life-giver in more ways than one.

My first moon came while I was dancing and I did not have cedar in my shoes. I did not fulfill my berry fast that summer because I could not bare the thought of becoming a woman and e never being a girl again

I wonder if parts of me will forever be a girl who did not go through her right of passage.

I wonder if she will always be scared of womanhood. I wonder if I knew that I would be taking away her ceremony by wishing so badly I had grown up a boy.

I am still learning to honor my body like I do the land in all its seasons and changes. Every curve, scar, crease, scrape, and fold in my skin reminds me of the forgotten medicine within me waiting to be called home.

My survival is a constant reminder of the failures of genocidal settler colonial conquest. I am alive and here to dismantle this colonial paradigm.

I will never starve myself again

**Find full bio on page 33**



# NANA'S BLUEBERRY SLUMP

By Kiara M. Tanta-Quidgeon (Mohegan Tribe of Quinatatucquet)

***Nana's Blueberry Slump is a work of fiction inspired by the author's heritage and kinship.***

Ashanuk didn't get to say goodbye to her grandmother before she died. She had been "too busy" to answer Nana's call on Monday, where she would have told her she wasn't feeling well. Had Ashanuk answered, she would've immediately gotten in her car and driven straight to be by her side. But after an exhausting day at Riverside Community College, where Ashanuk was studying Nursing, she had worked a shift at the Cardinal Diner, desperate for the tip money. When Nana called, just as Ashanuk was finally getting home, a much-needed shower and long overdue homework weighed on her body and her mind.

So Ashanuk let the phone ring unanswered. By the time the sun rose on Tuesday morning, Nana was gone. She had passed in her sleep.

Ashanuk's mother appeared in the doorway of her bedroom, framed by the dim, yellow light coming from the hall of their single-story home. "You ready, Ash?" Ma asked.

No, she thought. "Yep," she responded in contrast.

Ashanuk and Ma drove a quick five minutes through the Matoosit Reservation before arriving at Nana's cabin. Even though the pine structure still stood atop Matoosit Hill full of her belongings, the cabin felt hollow and empty in the absence of her presence.

So did Ashanuk.

She couldn't believe she would never see Nana again, never hear her voice again, and never eat one of her home-cooked meals again. She was going to miss so much about Nana—her warm laugh, the way she braided her hair with gentle fingers while telling her stories, but most of all, Ashanuk would miss her cooking.

Nana had a way of blending the traditional foods of their Matoosit ancestors with contemporary New English dishes, utilizing the best ingredients that the Connecticut shoreline and woodlands had to offer. She made a rich and briny clam chowder, filled with chunks of fresh quahogs and diced potatoes that tasted like the ocean. She served smoked salmon with succotash, a dish made with the Three Sisters—corn, beans, and squash. She baked cornbread spiced just right and sweetened with maple syrup tapped from the trees behind her cabin. She made venison stew and blueberry slump, which was Ashanuk's favorite, and each bite was filled with warmth and love that reminded Ashanuk of home and made her feel complete.

But now, Nana was gone, and she would never taste her blueberry slump again.

The thought made her chest tighten and her breath catch, but she swallowed the lump in her throat as she stepped through the threshold of the cabin.

Ma had brought her here to complete what was truly a simple task, but it was a task that Ashanuk had been avoiding for nearly three months since Nana passed—they needed to go through her belongings.

Ma decided that she would sort through the living room while Ashanuk organized Nana's bedroom. Anything they didn't complete that day, likely the kitchen and the bathroom, they would come back for the next.

Ashanuk walked down the narrow hallway that connected the entryway and living room with the rest of the cabin, passing generations of Matoosit men, women, and children in the framed photographs that lined the walls. When she reached for the wooden handle and pushed the bedroom door open, a mixture of juniper and sage and tobacco lingered in the air—Nana's signature scent.



The space was simple and cozy but filled with personal touches. A thick mattress rested on a large, wooden bed frame that stood at the center of the room. It was covered in feather-stuffed pillows and layers of handwoven blankets. To the left of the bed was a small, sturdy pine table with a kerosene lamp, half a quahog shell filled with dried sage, and a bookmarked novel Nana would never finish reading. To the right of the bed, a guitar rested in a dusty case, propped against the wall. Like every room in the cabin, Nana had decorated her bedroom with artwork by Matoosit artists and other Indigenous creators. There were extravagant pieces of beadwork framed in shadow boxes, paintings of rivers and forests that blended traditional symbology and storytelling with modern styles, and intricate pyrography designs burned into wooden slabs hanging from the walls.

Ashanuk had no idea how she was supposed to go through all of Nana's belongings in her bedroom and not put everything in the "keep" pile. How was she supposed to let go of all these stories and memories?

She didn't have a choice.

There wasn't enough space in her and Ma's small home to store it all, and with the ongoing housing shortage on the Matoosit Reservation, Nana's cabin would soon become another tribal member's home. Therefore, keeping everything was not an option. So, she got to work.

Ashanuk started with the artwork on the walls, carefully deciding what she wanted to hang in her own bedroom, what she would convince Ma to put in their living room, and what could be given to other Matoosit families who would appreciate them just as much. Then, she organized Nana's blankets and clothing. Ashanuk kept all of Nana's traditional wear, promising herself she'd find space for it in her already crowded closet. The rest, she placed into neat piles to be donated, keeping only two sage-scented quilts and sweaters for herself and Ma.

Opposite the bed, pressed against the wall, was a long bookshelf that stretched from one end of the room to the other. Ashanuk went through each book with the same method she had used for the artwork, sorting them into piles. She was familiar with these books—many of them had kept her company during quiet summer afternoons at the cabin—but one stood out to her. It was different from the rest, with no title or author name written along the spine. The leather cover was smooth and worn, as if handled often, yet it had been tucked away between the other books so neatly that Ashanuk had never noticed it before. She carefully removed it from the shelf and opened the cover, causing her breath to catch. It wasn't a book. It was a journal.

It was Nana's journal.

When Ashanuk returned home later that evening, she climbed into bed with the journal.

Determined to read every word and feel closer to Nana, she flipped to the first page.

The earliest entries were brief, diary-style reflections.

*8 January 2009*

*Woke up with the sun today. Sat on the porch and watched the winter birds fight over the feeder. A stray cat came by. Gave it some fish scraps.*

*27 January 2009*

*Ran into Wilma at the market today. She told me about her new grandson.*

*That stray cat came by again. Gave it more scraps. Poor thing's still too thin.*

The entries were from over five years ago and spaced weeks apart. They were mostly just small glimpses into Nana's life, and as Ashanuk flipped through the pages, her eyes grew heavy. She was just about to close the journal and set it aside until the morning when she turned the page and noticed that the date at the top of the next entry was much more recent—just one year before Nana passed. She also noticed that her handwriting was different here. It was still Nana's, but more careful and less rushed. Unlike the previous entries, she wrote in complete sentences.



3 April 2013

*I went to the doctor today, and they found something. They say it's cancer.*

Ashanuk's heart pounded, and she sat up, suddenly wide awake. Why hadn't Nana told her? Why had she kept this to herself? Ashanuk gripped the edges of the journal and kept reading.

*I don't know how much time I have left; the doctors say about a year. I want to leave something behind for Ashanuk, my beloved granddaughter. I know she will always have the memories we shared, but I want her to have knowledge too. Stories. Lessons. I want to share with her what my grandmother shared with me, so that the ways of our People are never lost.*

*As Matoosit People, we have always understood that knowledge is not meant to be kept hidden. We believe it is meant to be shared, carried, and passed down. That is how it stays alive.*

*I thought I would have more time to teach Ashanuk, but since I don't, here is what I know.*

Ashanuk's hands trembled as she stared at the page. She swallowed the lump in her throat and turned to the next, and what she found in the subsequent entries were not diary reflections... They were lessons.

Lessons that Nana left behind for her.

A passage about the best time of year to gather sweetgrass. A note about the meaning of certain symbols in Matoosit artwork. And, of the utmost interest to Ashanuk, a recipe for Nana's blueberry slump, with a reminder to always use wild or home-grown berries, not the store-bought kind. Within the pages of the journal, Nana had shared dozens of recipes and information on planting and harvesting traditional Matoosit foods, who in the community to purchase meat and quahog from, and other tips.

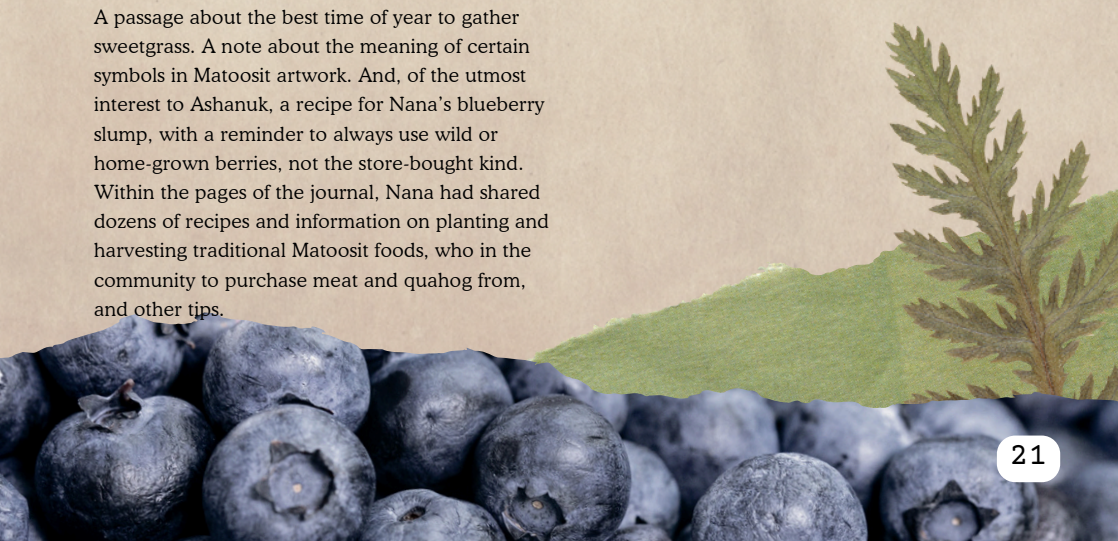
Using Nana's notes as her guide, Ashanuk could plant a garden at Ma's house and buy protein from local Matoosit hunters and fishermen. With this knowledge, she could recreate the meals that had once filled Nana's kitchen with warmth and love. And in doing so, Ashanuk would keep her spirit alive.

In the following weeks, she did just that. With Ma's permission, Ashanuk spent early mornings before class clearing a patch of land behind their home. She followed Nana's careful instructions on when to plant, how to care for each crop, and which plants grow best together, sowing the Three Sisters just as her Matoosit ancestors had for generations. At night, after long shifts at the diner, she gathered the ingredients needed for Nana's recipes.

One evening, as the sun dipped low behind Matoosit Hill in the distance, Ashanuk and Ma sat at the small wooden table in their kitchen over two bowls of blueberry slump. The sweet scent of berries and vanilla and cinnamon wrapped around Ashanuk like a warm embrace. She took a bite, and for the first time since Nana passed, she felt at home. She felt complete.

***Thank you to Paul O'Neil for peer-reviewing this story and to Jason Yip for the design support.***

***Find bio on page 33***



# THE CALL OF WATER

BY AANDEG KETHER

MOHAWK+ANISHINAABE

the sun shimmers on sweet waters

kissing it full of abundance

the lake waves and dances

calling us to her

apakweshkwayag sway in the wind sending their hellos

my father's canoe pushes us gently along

bawa'iganaakoog

sticks of life and rebirth

shaking the essence of the earth from each tender reed

manoomin colored memories

we are always provided with what we need

take no more, spare most, save the rest

this how we continue the cycle of the blessed.

manoomin - wild rice  
apakweshkwayag - cattails  
bawa'iganaakoog - ricing sticks/flails

find bio on page 33



## Grandma's Mountain

by Daelyn M Nez (Diné)



Made from the clay of high desert rain,  
She smells of wool, juniper smoke,  
And the sunbaked earth after monsoon.


She walks before the dawn awakens,  
Boots pressing against yesterday's footprints,  
Leading sheep through the sagebrush trails,  
Her voice filling the crisp morning dew  
Carried by wind, through mountain ridges.




She becomes the land—  
Wrists dusted in blue corn, blue bird flour,  
Hands pulling roots from the red rusted Arizona earth.  
Careful, with intention,  
Turning the harvest into stories, into song,  
Into the steam of morning coffee, into bread,  
Into us.

By the fire, she grinds blue corn,  
Deep as midnight, outlined in flickers of gold,  
Stone moving against stone,  
A rhythm, a cadence,  
An echo of earth beneath her hands.  
Her voice weaving between each pass,  
Low and soothing, like thunder before rain,  
Rolling through the valley,  
The same songs her mother hummed,  
The same one I hum now.







She bundles Navajo Tea,  
Hands moving through the wild dried leaves,  
Sweetness rising, filling the air,  
As she steeps the pot until it deepens  
To the color of the Northern mesas,  
An amber warmth of home.



She stirs the chilchin, thickening,  
Crimson and rich, tart as summer's kiss,  
Summers thick with laughter,  
Stories stitched into the heat of the land.  
Times when we were all together,  
When my cousins and I would play pretend,  
Laughter and stories shared in this land.



She plants prayers beneath the mountain's gaze,  
Watches the cattle move like storm clouds,  
Tends to the sheep with hands that never waver,  
Strong, steady— always tending, always keeping,  
Always nurturing, always making sure  
We are full, body and spirit,  
A strong Diné woman.



And I wonder if she knows—  
How much of her lingers in me,  
How her hands move through mine  
Each time I touch the earth.

Find full bio on page 31

# HANDS

BY SETH STIL SMOKING  
(BLACKFEET + LAKOTA)

Your hands  
Soft and innocent  
The blessings given by Creator  
Made to learn  
Made to create  
Made beautifully

Your first offering to the land  
Your first berry  
Your first piece of dry meat  
Your hands

Scratches from wild roses  
Digging roots  
The earth that painted them  
Braiding fragrant sweetgrass  
Stirring the pot of soup  
Your hands

Many winters gone by  
Always in use  
Cut and bruised  
They heal  
Your hands





nds

The touch of love  
Those new tiny hands  
All familiar  
Our hands

Offering them tobacco  
Berries  
Dry meat  
Roots  
Braided sweet grass  
Making that soup  
All over again  
Our hands

Walk with me  
Reach out  
I'll remember it all  
Our hands



# *A message to and from our people*

*by Savannah Prince (Witsuwit'en)*

*As you are using your power for greed  
Lusting after power and riches  
Our nations are in need...*

*The money you throw at our bands  
Is not healing our hearts  
We want a coat, not just strands*

*As you are breaking the Earth  
A lot of our people are returning to it  
As if the land is our worth*

*Our youth are dying  
In the chaotic world colonialism brought  
But your focus is on the stocks you are buying*

*God forbid when we stand up  
To fight for all of our futures  
Because that makes us crazy, fucked up*

*Media states we are making a scene  
But of course i want to shut shit down  
After our voices are unheard, our presence unseen*

*They tried to destroy our way of life  
But we are the biggest threat  
If we all stand up we can break out of strife*

*We can revitalize our land, culture and voices  
We do not have to sit and watch  
The future depends on today's choices.*

*The sorrow we collectively feel can't be undone  
We can heal, the people and the land  
Healing and unity is how the battle is won*

# The Maya's Maize

by Wendy Matias-Pablo (Maya Mam)



Today in the state of cornfields and homogeneity  
Nearly a home away from home,  
Regardless of what come my way,  
This part of me will never be erased.

Though I may live far away,  
This part of me remains alive through my hands.  
As it spreads through my fingers and tucks inside my nails,  
All before it's washed away.

This nightly routine I vow not to forget  
Remains a tradition that puts my endurance at stake.  
Every night I grow closer and closer to taming that fire.  
Like the inexpressive expression that saves lives, Maya  
women have fought the evils of hunger.

My brown hands clash against the white medium:  
Rolling, molding, flattenning,  
Turning, and shaping.  
In this instance I'm the one in control.

May it be one of the few things I can regulate, For  
not much has been granted for us to determine. The  
maize turned masa I hold to craft into tortillas, May  
it one day resemble my people's power.

For now though, as I battle the life-long frustration that grows,  
The childhood polygons seem to be no more. As I stack the  
crisp, round tortillas one by one on the tortillero, I proceed to  
make the call: "It's time for dinner."



"take me back to shimasani's farm"

By: Danielle Shandiin Emerson

Diné

Every September, my family picked corn from my grandmother's fields. My siblings, cousins, and I followed our cheii through the dirt, weaving around corn stalks. My shimasani guided her beaten, Ford truck down the wide rows—tailgate wide open. We gathered as much corn as we could and threw it into the back. The evening sky loomed over us, the threat of nightfall our ticking-time clock. My shimasani's farm grew corn, squash, watermelon, cucumber, and honeydew.

Picking corn was a family event. I had cousins, aunts, and uncles who all lived on my grandmother's land. We each came together for a couple evenings to divide the work. As night fell, we'd gather around the mud oven, and I'd watch as the adults threw the corn into the opening. Early the next morning, we'd have freshly roasted corn, ready to eat and share.

Roasted corn, mutton stew with squash, frybread, and watermelon became a common family meal. After a full day of rock climbing and mud house building, my cousins and I would return to shimasani's hogan ravenous and hungry. "Wash your hands!" She'd smack our heads lightly, dusting off bits of dirt. "Go tell your cheii it's time to eat."

Find full bio on page: 33

by danielle shandiin emerson

I'd race my brother outside, nearly tripping over gravel. Our cheii was either tending to the crops or tinkering in his workshop; a rickety shed, homemade and constructed out of wooden planks and tires. We found him in the shed that evening, "Cheii, the food's ready!" He'd nod and slip off his work gloves, "Aoo'." Then, we'd race back.

There wasn't room at the dining table for all of us, so all the children sat on the floor—while the adults sat in chairs. We'd sprinkle salt over fresh squash stew.

Our Cheii always spoke Navajo at home. He'd turn to my younger brother, "Ashii shána'ááh / Pass the salt." Eventually, my brother caught on. This soon became an inside joke as my brother continued to learn Diné Bizaad.

Farming brought us together. Traditionally, Diné farmed corn, beans, and squash. There are four sacred plants in Diné culture, shadowing the existence of the Four Sacred Mountains—corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. This connection to our culture brought us closer to the earth and our traditions. We all respect the value of these foods and the livelihood it's been able to provide for my family as growers and harvesters.

our  
crops

My  
cheii

A specific photo of my cousins, siblings, and me exists. My one of my aunts used to enter our crops into the yearly Northern Navajo Nation Fair harvest competition. That year, we won first place for our watermelon. To celebrate, shicheii smashed the winning watermelon on the dirt floor, and gesture for us to help ourselves. This photo depicts my cousins, siblings, and me gathered around our cheii, shamelessly eating broken pieces of watermelon—faces sunburnt and sticky.

To this day, my family likes to share laughs about this picture over dinner. I carry memories of my shimasani's farm, because food is, it's creation, cultivation, and partaking, is an essential part of our livelihood as Diné.

After the death of my grandparents and aunt, our farm dwindles. We aren't brought together in the same ways anymore. But memories of those moments, harvesting, roasting, and eating, strengthen my family. We're held together by shared tastes, textures, smells, and experiences. Whether we continue farming or not, nothing can take these cultural and familial connections away.

Official  
ROAD MAP

Home of  
NEW MEXICO

# Contributors

*work on page 14*



Ana W. Migwan, 22  
(Keweenaw Bay Indian Community)

Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in West Trestle Review and L I M I N A L . S P A C E S .

*work on pages 23-24*



Daelyn Mary Nez, 24 (Diné)

is from Indian Wells, AZ, within the Navajo Nation, where she was raised on a small ranch. Surrounded by the teachings of her family and community elders, she grew up learning from the animals and land, cultivating a profound bond with the earth and the stories that have been passed down through generations.

*work on pages 2-3*



Elladiss Winter, 20  
(Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians)

is an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan, where they study with the hope of later returning to Indian Country.

*work on page 8*



Jamie Ayze, 22 (Pueblo & Diné)

is from Crownpoint, NM and a first-generation graduate of Fort Lewis College. Received her bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies, minoring in Sociology, and certificate in Regenerative Food Systems. She is interested in Indigenous community development through gardening, artistry, and Indigenous language preservation.

*work on pages 17-18*



Jamie John, 23  
(Grand Traverse Band / Anishinaabe)

is a 2 spirit trans and queer Anishinaabe and Korean-American multidisciplinary artist and powwow dancer. They describe themselves as a dually enrolled tribal citizen of the Grand Traverse Band Of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians and the United States of America.

# Contributors

*work on pages 9-10*

Laken, 25 (Lakota)

is a Lakota poet and artist. Her contemporary and vulnerable work explores identity, loneliness, and ancestral wisdom. Through land connection and self-reflection, she continues to decolonize her voice. Deeply empathetic, Laken writes to connect with others navigating similar paths. Find her work @Readmyaura.



*work on page 13*

Mochi River, 25 (Kickapoo & Muskogee)

was taught how to bead, sew, quilt, and plant by different native communities, who came together to help native youth to remember their culture. They are a multi-cultural reconnecting indigenous person with ancestral connections to Kickapoo and Muskogee.



*work on pages 15-16*

Marianna Cota, 25 (Yoeme & Pinay/Kapampangan)

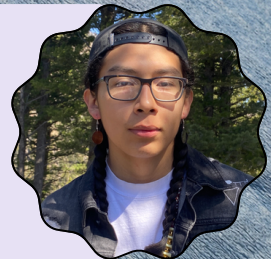
is the initiator of INDIGENEXUS, an Indigenous-led culture and creative company. An ecologist and heart-ist, they create from the heart, honoring the emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and ancestral ties that connect all kin. Their voice is held and guided by their ancestors who have her back.



*work on page 7 + 25-26*

Seth Still Smoking, 21 (Blackfeet & Lakota)

is a Culinary Arts student at Gallatin College/Montana State University, dedicated to promoting Indigenous Foodways through Progressive Indigenous Cuisine that addresses food insecurity in his community. He has worked with organizations such as BNFSI, NATIFS, and FAST Blackfeet.



*work on page 28*

Wendy Matias-Pablo, 19 (Maya Mam)

is a rising college freshman of Maya Mam heritage with a deep interest in Indigenous histories, especially those of the Maya people of Guatemala. She hopes to focus her future research on providing legal aid to Maya communities impacted by the Mayan Genocide. Her passions also include educational access, volunteering, and reading.



# Contributors

*work on pages 12 + 22*



Aandeg Kether, 21  
(Anishinaabe & Mohawk)

is a 2S Mixed Media Artist from NY.

*work on page 11*



Alexis Clifton, 20 (Lipan Apache & Wixárika)

is a writer from the east coast currently studying at UNC Chapel Hill. She loves bonfires, canceling big plans to replace them with smaller ones, laying in the sun like a cat, and fried fish. If you can't find her, check the local bookstore.

*Photo: Samm Yu | @strawberriesamm*

*work on pages 5 - 6 + 29 - 30*



Danielle Shandiin Emerson, 25 (Diné)

is a Diné writer from Shiprock, New Mexico on the Navajo Nation. Her clans are Tł'aashchí'í (Red Cheek People Clan), born for Ta'neezaahníí (Tangled People Clan). Her maternal grandfather is Ashííhí (Salt People Clan) and her paternal grandfather is Táchíí'níí (Red Running into the Water People Clan). She has a B.A. in Education Studies and a B.A. in Literary Arts from Brown University.

*work on pages 19-22*



Kiara Tanta-Quidgeon, 24 (Mohegan Tribe)

is from the Mohegan Tribe of Quinacucquet, a public health professional, researcher, and writer focused on health equity, climate resilience, and cultural preservation. A Columbia (MPH '24) and Quinnipiac (BSc '22) alum, she founded the QU Indigenous Student Union and now serves as its Alumni Advisor. She also created Sunrise Healing Community, empowering Indigenous youth through cultural connection and revitalization.

*Photo by Sukhmani Kaur*

*work on page 27*



Savannah Maija Prince, 20 (Witsuwit'en)

is a Witsuwit'en youth belonging to the Gidimt'en (bear clan), Cas Yíkh (The Grizzly House.) She finds healing through culture, community, and the land.



## editor

Photo by Sage Malee Photo



**Tommey Jodie,**  
23, Tótsohnii nishí,  
Tó'aheedlínii bashish-  
chiin is a Diné poet, writer,

and senior at the University of Arizona, studying Nutrition and Food Systems, Food Studies, and Creative Writing. Originally from Teesto, Arizona and now living in Tucson, her work explores the intersections of Indigenous food sovereignty, storytelling, and the revitalization of land-based food systems. She is the editor of this zine, runs Butterflies and Azee', and co-founded Glittering Horizons. Her writing has been published in the *Sonora Review*, *The Diné Artisans and Authors Capacity Building Institute Anthology on Home*, and more. Tommey enjoys riding horses, going to rodeos, listening to folk music, and reading Native literature under the desert sun.

## cover illustrator



### Helena Austin

23, Kinya'áanii  
nishí, Áshjijí  
bashishchiin is  
originally from  
Greasewood

Springs, Arizona, and  
currently resides in Tucson,

where she attends the University of Arizona. She is pursuing a double major in Psychological Science and Neuroscience with a minor in American Indian Studies. Passionate about mental health and her community, Helena aspires to attend medical school and become a clinical psychiatrist. In her free time, she enjoys, expressing her creativity through drawing, crocheting and knitting. She often explores the scenic trails around Tucson. Her dedication to both academic excellence and personal growth reflects her commitment to making a meaningful impact in the field of mental health.



# Keep Listening, Keep Learning

Indigenous Food Sovereignty is about more than returning to traditional foods — it is about reclaiming relationships. Our ties to land, story, ancestors, and future generations shape how we live and care for one another. Food has always taught us about connection and responsibility. It carries our history, sustains our bodies, and grounds us in place.

Settler colonialism disrupted these relationships. Through land theft, forced removal, and government rations, our communities were pushed away from the foods that once nourished us. Today, these impacts remain in the form of food apartheid, environmental violence, and the erasure of culturally significant foods and practices.

But our knowledge has never been lost. It continues through language, ceremony, seeds, and story. Indigenous Food Sovereignty is not about nostalgia — it is about revitalization, reclamation, and resisting systems that profit from our disconnection. This work is about defining and sustaining life on our own terms. The poems and prose here remind us that our foodways are alive — they have never disappeared, only threatened. Storytelling is how we remember, how we resist, and how we dream new possibilities into being.

The next few pages hold resources — books, organizations, and community efforts — to help continue this journey of remembering and returning.

T'áá hwó' ají t'éego. It is up to you.



# Organizations & Community Resources

Indigenous Food Sovereignty is not only found in theory or archives — it lives through the everyday work of communities, seedkeepers, growers, and storytellers across Turtle Island. We've listed just a few organizations and collectives that are leading powerful efforts to protect, revitalize, and celebrate Indigenous foodways, languages, and lifeways. We invite you to learn more and support their ongoing work.

**Dream of Wild Health** → [DreamofWildHealth.org](https://DreamofWildHealth.org)

**Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance**

→ [NativeFoodAlliance.org](https://NativeFoodAlliance.org)

**North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems**

→ [natifs.org](https://natifs.org)

**Native American Fish and Wildlife Society** → [nafws.org](https://nafws.org)

**Native American Agriculture Fund**

→ [NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org](https://NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org)

**Diné Community Advocacy Alliance**

→ [@dineadvocacy\\_dcaa](https://@dineadvocacy_dcaa)

**Old Growth Table by Valerie Segrest** → [@oldgrowthtable](https://@oldgrowthtable)

**All My Relations Podcast** → [@amrpodcast](https://@amrpodcast)

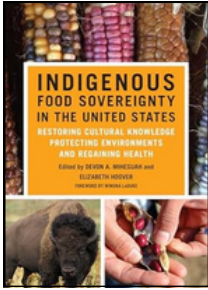
**NDN Girls Book Club** → [ndngirlsbookclub.com](https://ndngirlsbookclub.com)

**Abalone Mountain Press** → [abalonemountainpress.com](https://abalonemountainpress.com)

**USDA Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative** → A

growing collection of resources supporting  
Indigenous food knowledge and efforts.

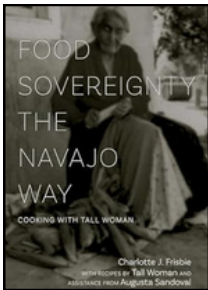
# Further Reading



## *Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the United States*

Edited by Devon A. Mihesuah and Elizabeth Hoover

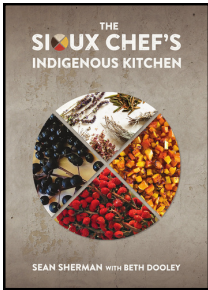
This book explores the meaning and importance of food sovereignty for Indigenous peoples. It highlights how colonialism has disrupted Native food systems and health, while spotlighting community efforts to reclaim food autonomy for tribal nations and communities in the United States.



## *Food Sovereignty the Navajo Way*

By Rose Mitchell & Malcolm Ebright

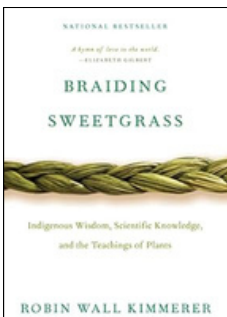
Rooted in oral history and family knowledge, this book offers insight into Diné food traditions and their deep ties to land, ceremony, and kinship. It speaks to how Navajo food sovereignty resists colonial and extractive policies that continue to affect land access and cultural autonomy.



## *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*

By Sean Sherman with Beth Dooley

Sherman shares pre-colonial recipes and ingredients from Native North America, rooted in place-based knowledge and seasonal eating. The cookbook celebrates Indigenous foodways while offering a path toward cultural revitalization. It's both a culinary guide and a vision for the future.

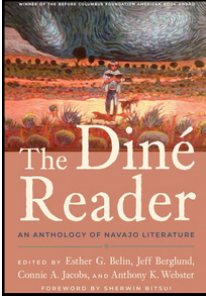


## *Braiding Sweetgrass*

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

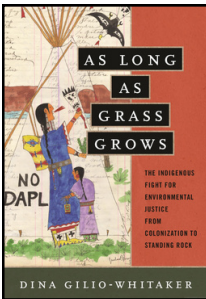
With the heart of a storyteller and the mind of a botanist, Kimmerer weaves together reflections on plant life, ceremony, and caretaking. Her work honors reciprocal relationships between people and the natural world. A poetic offering rooted in Indigenous ecological knowledge.

# Further Reading



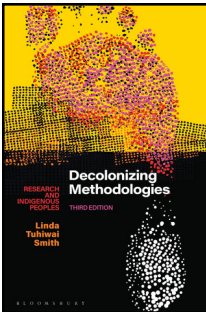
***The Diné Reader: An Anthology of Navajo Literature***  
Edited by Esther Belin, Jeff Berglund, Connie A. Jacobs,  
and Anthony K. Webster

A powerful collection of Navajo writers across time, genre, and geography. This anthology centers Diné language, story, and creativity through Diné poetics and interviews with contributors. It shows that Diné literature is not only alive, but thriving.



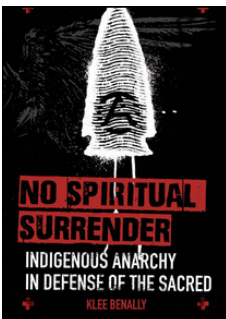
***As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice***  
By Dina Gilio-Whitaker

This book explores the long history of Indigenous resistance to environmental violence. From treaty violations to modern land struggles, it connects sovereignty, land protection, and food justice. A critical read on decolonial environmental justice.



***Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples***  
By Linda Tuhiwai Smith

This foundational book critiques Western research and its colonial impacts, offering a vision for Indigenous-centered approaches to knowledge-making, community care, and self-determination. Essential reading for anyone engaging in community-led, decolonial research.



***No Spiritual Surrender: Indigenous Anarchy in Defense of the Sacred***  
By Klee Benally

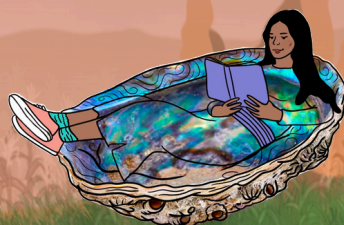
A powerful collection of essays challenging settler colonialism, capitalism, and state violence. Benally calls for direct action, cultural resurgence, and sacred resistance rooted in Indigenous autonomy and liberation.



## Carried by Community

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