Yukhika-lətutse?

(she tells us stories)

Iroquois Pottery

Courtesy of Ken Metoxen

Volume 9 — 2013

$6.00
First Word

This edition is dedicated to Jim Stevens, the founding editor of Yukhika-látuhseʔ. Sayoʔhsli-yó (Good Work) and Yawʔkó, Jim!

Yukhika-látuhseʔ (she tells us stories)
Ohʔ-tú nukwá· Yukwatelhala-tů (looking forward)

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Dust Mother, Namegiver

For Maria Hinton

by Kenzie Allen

I.

papery fingers
trail on my forearm, fragile
revered Dust Mother.
Namegiver leans on me we walk
this great circle—Grand Entrance
gathering, under the umbrella
modern, absurd
in a field of feathers
and bones and bells.
When the circle ends
feel the beat of the drum and Six Nations

II.

but Dust Mother, Namegiver—
she loved me.

III.

Three days she dreamed; named me
for She Who Travels, my mother. More
when written, by Dust Mother, Namegiver’s
unsteady hands. yakotlanotáti they told her
‘There is Music as She Goes Along,’ a child
of upright stones.

IV.

Late night I returned
to the ground my ancestors
followed the deer, where the longhouse
once threw light to the grass. The fires
put out, forgotten I lifted my feet, but the steps
come to all of us
I Knew a Girl Who Roosted
in Airports

by Kenzie Allen

like rafters, the trees a vanguard
against Japanese beetles but inhospitable
to her sparrow ways. Milan
is the pint glass left full for the sparkle
of tin in Moroccan sands, of silkworm fluff.

She is building a terminal nest, leaving
baggage unattended to the polecats sensing
fresh yolk. Doesn’t it feel better
wrapping your scaled, curled toes round a branch
suspended, not flat-spread on the ground?
She thought he would say YES and
YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL (TO ME) but Reno is calling
and he gives her the doggie-bag, there’s
good crab cakes in there, the very best in town.
Good luck wherever you’re going.
As if everything in the world were penetrable we seek out archways, sweet lockjaw of crook and clavicle. Even the ear is a marvel of vulnerable invention. As if sanctuary, your hand on the flimsy trapdoor of my skull where hush, quiet.

What I do not ask leaves ley lines, haunted rivers parched in the palm. The line of Saturn, girdle of Venus, that break toward the thumb a sickness. Someone might have hurt you once or again. I want hands like these, red splayed freckles rain on the body, you can dye anything uncomplicated, a nebula whose only clear picture infrared and cave-like, billows manlike, noxious stalagmite, birthing stars. Give me no other side to these steel clouds, this cathedral, dense with purpose and too lovely to pass through.

Kenzie Allen is a descendant of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, and member of the Turtle Clan. She is currently a MFA Candidate in Poetry at the University of Michigan, graduating 2014. She has a degree in Anthropology and a minor in Writing from Washington University in St. Louis, and grew up in West Texas. By day, she is a freelance photographer and web designer.
The Spirits are Still Here

By Richie Plass

We walked along these shores
Our homes were from Mother Earth
Hundreds of years later
Their memories carry more than I’m worth

They walked along the water, in the woods and among their peers
They sang their songs of praise
Today we hear those songs of life
And lower our hearts to fix our gaze

Many more were here as time went on
Homes of many ways
Harmony, care and respect was shown
As the Moons turned into Harvest Days

Our venture now is not the past
The first, the best the biggest gem
Our duty now is to live as one
That’s the Honor we show all of them

Years from now as our children play
On this Sacred ground we hail
Let’s pray for comfort, peace and Grace
And strive for life to prevail

Richie Plass, Menominee and Stockbridge/Munsee is a published poet, an activist, DJ, college professor, and drummer.
Capture the spirit

by Beverly Archiquette Rubio

Intangible feelings within me
searching for something lost
wistful thoughts that enter my mind
Like the whispering winds that come and go
like the waves tossed about by the sea

Long ago it was taken away
with resolution I’ll regain it
Alerted by forces that influence my life
like the moon influences the sea

Eager and longing to learn a bit more
my ancestors are fading fast
I’ll pursue the red road zealously
in search of my past

So many barriers
so many turns
Wrongs aren’t easy to right
Too long I’ve endured anothers’ way
with fervor I’ll capture the spirit

*Beverly Rubio is a 4/4 blood Oneida Indian living in the Milwaukee area.*

My Native Heart

by Rosemary Powless Malanik

My native heart
I give freely to you
Treat it kindly
And there’s nothing we can’t do

*Rosemary is an Oneida woman. Her native name is “Teyuthahuk” (woman who picks up the path). She currently live in Northeast Wis with her husband and 2 dogs.*
Illusion of Inclusion

by Beverly Archiquette Rubio

I attended your schools against my will
I learned your ways, your language and dress
I answered your questions,
you never answered mine.
I tried to understand you
To understand me, you had no time.

If not for intelligent elders
Who buried our ways for a while
I’d be as lost and confused
as a neglected child.

Change me? From savage to what and why?
I’m educated in your ways
I need employment!
“We don’t hire Indians”
I have an invention created for society’s need
“We can’t give you a patent”
“You’re an Indian”

We fall in love
I want to marry your daughter
She can’t marry you,
“You’re an Indian”

So we drink the alcohol you gave us
in the bar window
“No indians allowed”
First Grade Lessons

by Louis V Clark III

I was flat on my back getting hit in the face
When a young man informed me, what was my race.
I was bleeding and crying but I couldn’t agree
I didn’t look like anything I saw on T.V.
I didn’t have a pony, I only had a cat
My Daddy didn’t wear a loin cloth, thank god for that
I never smoked a peace pipe
Or burned someone at the stake
I was just a little kid
Oh, for heaven’s sake

We thought that we were people, my relatives and I
Living breathing human beings until the day we die
But religion called us savages, heathens if you will
They paint our face as mascots, like animals that you kill
That’s the way it always is
The way it’s always been
But what about this Jesus,
What color was his skin?

Louis Clark III is an Oneida writer living in Omro.
He recently had his first book of poetry published.
Grandfather knelt on one knee and gathered his two grandsons into his arms. Pointing to the green valley below he spoke, “Look how the river winds through the valley like a snake. When I was small like you, all this land belonged to our people.”

A small tear could be seen in the corner of Grandfather’s eye. He continued to speak, “See where the big curve with the sandy beach is? That is where the turtles come to lay their eggs. Each year about this time I would come to catch some of them. It would be a special treat for your Grandmothers birthday meal.”

The two boys, David the older one and Jackie the younger, squirmed in their Grandfather’s grasp. “Why don’t we go down there now and catch some?” David asked smiling broadly.

Grandfather shook his head from side to side and with a sad look upon his face he answered. “We can’t do that my Grandson’s, years ago we lost this valley and now men play a game called golf there. One time I wandered down there to hunt the turtle and the people who play the game called the police.”

“Did they put you in jail?” Jackie asked.

“No, Grandson, they did not put me in jail but they told me that I wasn’t allowed to walk on their grass anymore. I guess it’s because I don’t have the special shoes that allows men to walk on golfing grass.” Grandfather laughed as he spoke this, talking about golf shoes with spikes on the bottom that golfers wear. “Grandmother would be very upset if I walked into the house with those on.”

As the threesome walked along the edge of the golf course, hidden from view by the trees, they made many grand discoveries. Here and there a shiny new golf ball to collect for selling back to the golfers for 10 cents or 25 cents apiece. The trees would hide the balls for them to find.

Then the finest discovery of the day, deep down a ravine, they found, a shiny new golf club. Someone must have lost their temper and thrown it in here, they all thought to themselves.
Over the years Grandfather had made many such discoveries. Sometimes he would sell the club. Sometimes he would keep them and sometimes he would give them away.

But now, Jackie and David grabbed the club and started screaming like they had seen Indians do on television. Pretending that the golf club was a gun they would take turns shooting each other. Then one or the other would grab his chest and yell, “You got me!”

Grandfather’s eyes grew narrow as he looked at the boys. “What on earth are you doing?” he asked sternly.

“We’re playing cowboys and Indians like on television,” they answered, but in hushed voices because they were startled by the harsh tone of Grandfather’s words.

Grandfather shook his head and told the boys, “Grandsons,” his voice grew gentle. “Life is a gift given to us by the Spirit up above. It is not something to be taken away with guns or games that you see on television.”

“But Grandfather,” Jackie said. “What about when the Indians had wars.”

“Yes,” Grandfather admitted sadly, “there were many lives that were lost during wars, but the bravest warriors would try to count coup.”

“What is counting coup?” David asked.

“Counting coup,” Grandfather continued, “is when you charge in against your enemy and hit them with a stick or a club. This way you can show how brave you are and the people won’t have to mourn for the bones of some dead warrior.”

“Can we play counting coup, Grandfather,” the boys asked.

Grandfather smiled.

Later at home Grandfather gave the boys another golf club. Then he helped them decorate their new war clubs with turkey feathers and water paints that he kept in the garage. As he did this he told them stories of the old times. The days when he was young counting coup on the turtle shells and then maybe taking one home for dinner.

The boys loved Grandfather’s stories but they felt sad that he could no longer walk among the turtles in the valley. All because of a little round ball, they thought to themselves.
Then an idea landed right in the middle of David’s head. “Jackie, this is what we’re going to do!” He said with a sly grin.

The next day as Grandfather helped Grandmother around the house the boys grabbed their war clubs and headed for the woods.

Stopping at the point where the river flowed away from the trees, the boys took off all of their clothes and covered themselves with mud from head to toe.

Sneaking through the woods they waited by an opening. The grass stretched out long across a field and soon two golf balls rolled quite close to them.

Yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs they took off running towards the balls. They began to hit the golf balls—counting coup. Pounding the golf balls into the ground they were counting coup.

When they looked up two white golf carts with four men inside were driving towards them. The men were yelling at them.

Jackie and David turned and ran towards the woods. Just ahead of the golf carts they entered the trees. The men started chasing them but no one was going to catch two naked little Indian boys on a mission.

That night, after cleaning themselves in the river, they asked Grandfather to build a campfire. Roasting hot dogs on sticks they pretended that it was turtle meat. The boys then told about the brave deed that they had done that day.

Grandfather listened.

Then Grandfather smiled.
Lessons

by Lois Louise (Metoxen) Pearson

Grandmother’s skin
was juniper bark,
her hair - fluffs
of milk thistle.
Her fierce lessons
are pictographs
on the walls of my brain:
If you are to survive,
you must in some way
be prickly,
have thorns or needles,
perhaps poison...
Imitate the desert-
Curl inward, conserve.
Protect your heart.
Anticipate no
benign gardener
praising your wild perfume
and petals.
Honor extremes
in all things:
rain that ravages,
harsh winds,
relentless sunlight.
Know how
to extend your roots
deep into a ledge of
pure stone.
Casino

by Lois Louise (Metoxen) Pearson

When the village of The People
had been stomped down and flattened,
Coyote appeared,
eyes glinting, smile spreading,
sorting through the rubble
of the ravaged sacred space,
gathering sticks, bits of walls,
wisps of dreams, footprints, prayers.
Piece by piece he sorted,
stacked and mortared.
And when he was done he danced...

There is no more sacred space than a casino,
someone once said to me
as we were walking between
flashing lights and spinning bars,
admiring Great Eagle, Whale Song, Red Hawk-
Laughing at the antics of
Cosmic Cat and Galactic Gopher.

Everyday is delighted to offer fresh evidence:
smoke rising to
a ceiling of faux stone,
petroglyphs of jackrabbit and antelope
gaze downward.
The drum beat of bowling balls
announces a gathering within
the Dragonfly Lounge.

A Person in ribbon shirt and jeans
speaks through her cell phone,
“I am here at the Casino.”

Lois Louise (Metoxen) Pearson’s father was a member of the Oneida Tribe and mother was a naturalized citizen from England. She is a teacher who believes that writing is an essential tool that brings power and beauty to her students.
Highway 55
by DJ Peters and Brittany Harper

He was eighteen
And graduating
He was on the verge of
Being heard of
He was working tables
Still he was able
To meet all the ends
And pay the rent

But tonight
He’ll be far away
For once
He will escape
All of
His shallow days
Are gone
No more suffocation
He was always open
Could not be broken

It was a cold night
A cloudy twilight
They followed him home
As he walked alone
They stole him before
He could unlock the door

But tonight
He’ll be far away
For once
He will escape
All of
His shallow days
Are gone
No more suffocation
He was always open
Could not be broken

He stays in the darkness
In his fencepost harness
Somewhere beyond you
They got what they wanted
As he was tied up
He died of
Fatal wounds and words
His knees rest on the earth

But tonight
He’ll be far away
For once
He will escape
All of
His shallow days
Are gone
No more suffocation
He was always open
Could not be broken

DJ passed at the age of 19 in 2012. He was a proud Menominee and always tried to share his feelings about who he was and where he was from. He loved being in the Arts. He loved music, writing music, performing and also writing poetry. He worked at Harmony Café in Green Bay and he would perform on their, “Open Mic Nights.” He loved all people.
As she sits down, I can tell she wants to talk. “Madison?” asked the women. Look up. I see in her eyes that wishes to help, but knows she can’t. She feels for me, I know she does. But, she does her best to treat me like everybody else.

“How are things at home?” she asks. Home . . . That word echo’s in my head. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been asked this. I’ve told so many people my story, and they had chances to help, to get involved. I’ve gone to six people for help hoping when my savior will come, hoping my savior will speak up.

As I finally begin to open my mouth, I quickly close it knowing she’s going to say “That sucks.” I wish she was my savior. I wish she could have spoken to my parents. But, she didn’t.

She’s looking at me waiting to answer. I can tell she’s becoming impatient. As I look down at my hands, she says “Madison? You OK?”

I say “Yea. Sorry. Had a long day, and things at home are fine.” Another lie; another “savior” failed; another hoping and wishing not coming true.

My savior is not my mom, dad, brothers, friends… No, my savior is me. I’m keeping me from drowning. I’m holding on to the rope. I am saving myself, for I am the only one that understands.

Joy<3 is a 15 year old student in the Green Bay area. She likes to read, write, and climb trees.
when N DN'i Die

by kanatihal hill

sometimes,
when sadness is in fucking
    overdrive
and laughter is everywhere
and love is true and false,
I feel good and

    I park.

Sherman Who?!

by kanatihal hill

i wanna be a poet like Sherman Alexie
write dope ass stories like Sherman Alexie
have them critique me like Sherman Alexie
never retreat like Sherman Alexie
i wanna love language like Sherman Alexie
i wanna be famous like Sherman Alexie
and ndnz will hex me like Sherman Alexie
i won’t give a fuck like Sherman Alexie
muckety muck like Sherman Alexie
i’m just a rookie, won’t let it affect me
i’ll reinvent me like Sherman Alexie
with all kinds of complexity like Sherman Alexie
i’ll write ndnz illiad like Sherman Alexie
i’ll stack books up like Sherman Alexie
and crack folks up like Sherman Alexie

i’m not a groupie of Sherman Alexie
nor do i stalk him or want him to sex me
i’m straight jealous haten cuz he already best me!
god dammit god dammit Sherman Alexie!

Kanatihal (Michelle) Hill is married to Tehassi Hill and have a
blended family with 8 children. They reside and work in Oneida, Wisconsin.
GOING FORWARD
Editor’s Essay

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Editor’s Essay

Going Forward with Respect to our Past

I remember the gratitude I felt when I read the first few issues of *Yukhika-látuhse*. Jim Stevens, Mildred “Tinker” Schumann, and I had just concluded the first Native Writer’s Workshop the journal hosted at College of Menominee Nation’s (CMN) Keshena campus and I was thrilled to get my hands on a journal devoted to publishing the words of Wisconsin’s American Indian writers. I was amazed to see the talented voices that Jim and *Yukhika-látuhse*’s Board of Directors assembled, and I quickly consumed the new and unpublished works by decorated Wisconsin writers Kimberly Blaeser, Denise Sweet, and the late, great E. Donald Two-Rivers. As a faculty member at CMN who’s dedicated to encouraging Native writing, I was also excited to see vibrant new voices rightfully finding their way into print.

As the years passed we held two more workshops at CMN, and under Jim Stevens’ and Kimberly Blaeser’s leadership *Yukhika-látuhse* also staged the 20th Anniversary of Returning the Gift (RTG) in Milwaukee during the first week of September 2012. Those events, and many more throughout the state, created eight powerful volumes of this journal and nationally renowned American Indian writers such as Maurice Kenny, Denise Low, and Linda Legarde Grover published their work in those pages. The eighth issue alone has both Marijo Moore’s “Poetry as Ceremony”, which I use in my classroom, and Alice Azure’s “A Conversation with Joseph Bruchac”, which captured Joe’s remembrances of organiz-
ing and running the first RTG conference in 1992. That conference was the largest gathering of indigenous writers at that time, and it was also a major milestone in American Indian literary history. Some might not have been able to attend that important event in 1992 or its 20th anniversary in 2012, but thanks to Yukhika-látuhse they are able to read the recollections of the man who was essential to the success of both of those gatherings.

Looking back on Yukhika-látuhse’s accomplishments, it’s inspiring to recognize where the journal’s heading next. Jim is moving on to other projects including a new collection of poetry from Fireweed Press titled, The Book of Big Dog Town: Poems and Stories from Aztalan and Around. Jim’s book is fantastic, and I say as much in a critique published in this edition. Tinker’s latest essay, “Historical Site Strawberry Island”, is also included in these pages, and it’s a piece about the urgent necessity of saving a Lac du Flambeau island from commercial development. We have a few other voices you’ll recognize, including Richie Plass and Wade Fernandez, and also numerous new and vibrant voices that come from American Indians in communities throughout Wisconsin. I feel both humbled and fortunate to accept the role of Acting Editor of the journal, and I’m elated to be able to witness firsthand the ambitious changes we’re undertaking.

Yukhika-látuhse will always be a journal for American Indian writers to publish their poetry, prose, and essays, but we will also continuously seek opinion essays that explore art, political issues, remembrances, culture, history, media critiques, and various other matters that compel writers to put their words into print. Our new incarnation will witness a switch to online content that allows us to publish pieces in a timelier manner than ever before. Of course we will still continue to hold writing workshops throughout Wisconsin in hopes that we can perpetually inspire and encourage all forms of Native writing from within our state.

Stories are meant to be shared, and our hope is that we will continue to produce a journal worthy of both the talented voices we’ll publish and the skilled audience who’ll consume our efforts. After all, nothing compares to the gratitude one feels after sharing or receiving a well told story.

--Ryan Winn
We were all born warriors, born to carry and share our gifts in a good way. We had the beauty and strength of a proud people. But, somehow, many of us forgot and began to hide our gifts. Some became ashamed of them. Some bragged far too much and thought the gifts were theirs alone, diminishing their beauty. Some say that these problems came from the boarding schools that stole away our natural way of accepting, honoring, and giving back what one had received. Others said that it just wasn’t our way to talk about them or show them and so they hid them under their bed of humility. Then we became ill with depression, abuse, anger, and resentment from neglecting our gifts and we became weak.

Yet some remembered, or felt that the power of the gift was far too beautiful for restrictions. They pushed forward, carrying their gift past self-inflicted wounds, past devouring egos, and past criticism’s silly rules and doubtful definitions. They honored their gifts and became their friends, inviting them to play, every day. They accepted their raw and honest beauty and prepared them with love, hard work, and respect so that all could become attracted and affected.

Then one day these people became recognized by their people and given strong warrior names, such as writer, artist, father, mother, elder, teacher, healer, and friend. They took pride as a gift bearer and carried their gift to the people unconditionally, helping each of them to recognize their own special gift and the warrior within themselves.

Wade Fernandez / Wiciwen Apis-Mahwaew is a father from the Menominee Nation in Wisconsin and can be found at www.WadeFernandez.com.
Here, in this watery meadow of wild rice known as the Kakagon Slough, there is a sense of timelessness, a connection to my Ojibwe ancestors who relied upon this resource and protected it with their words…and sometimes with their lives. Today our community is mobilizing to protect it against a massive mine threat at the headwaters of the Bad River, the main artery that feeds and filters this wetland.

I’m in a boat with three fourteen-year-old Bad River Ojibwe tribal members, who are shooting a video documentary about rice—Manoomin—as we call it and its threatened destruction from the proposed mine. There are two elders with us—Joe Rose and his son, Joe Dan.

Joe has shared the Ojibwe migration story with the three teens and recounted how long ago the Ojibwe, who were living in the east, were told through prophecy to return to their original homes in the Great Lakes region, where the “food grows on water.” He’s explained the spiritual, cultural, and political relationship the Ojibwe have with the rice, this “relative” which is at the center of our ceremonies, our teachings, and the treaties through which we reserved the right to “gather rice upon the waters” in the lands we were forced to give up.

Joe Dan, a biologist for Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, has eloquently described the Bad River and Kakagon Sloughs as a nursery for fish, waterfowl, and small mammals. The rice is mother’s milk.

We’ve come to expect the halting words, the long swallows, and the glistening eyes from tribal members who try to explain how they feel about plans to site a four-and-a-half mile long open-pit taconite mine upstream from the resource that defines us. Still, it’s painful to hear Joe Dan struggle to maintain his composure.

The recurring theme we’ve heard from tribal members is the “Seventh Generation” teaching—the concept that we have inherited our quality of life from those who preceded us and so have an obligation to act today in a way that’s best for those living seven generations into the future. I’m reminded that these three young people are the seventh generation from our ancestors who signed the 1854 Treaty, which reserved our right to harvest the rice. It makes me shiver.

We are faced with a mine that will produce 850 million tons of waste rock and tailings. Geologists have told my young documentarians that the mine could produce sulfuric acid which would flow downstream and contaminate more than a dozen creeks, streams, brooks and rivers. Inevitably it would raise the sulfate levels in the Sloughs. We have only to look at Minnesota, where a taconite mine killed 100 miles of wild rice in the St. Louis River to know what our fate may be. And so, as is their
obligation to the seventh generation, the teens tell their story and hope it will make a difference. Perhaps 240 years from now, just as this generation looks back in gratitude to those who protected our quality of life, a future generation will look back and view the digital testimony these young people leave as the gift it was intended to be.
Looking from the Island of Madeline in Lake Superior, recently, at the pristine horizon of the Gogebic and Penokee mountain ranges allowed me a few moments to reflect upon many things I have heard over the years about the “Penokees.” Laying between the two mountain ridges, in the massive forested expanse, is the Bad River Ojibwe Reservation.

I am reminded of a short conversation amongst elders, maybe thirty years ago, about some strange story in our history were the Ojibwe people would guard the onion garden of the giants, “up there,” in the Penokee mountains.

Both mountains flipped on their sides in a giant earthquake millions of years ago creating a mountain range that has eroded, over the years, down to the metals that now literally layer the ground only inches under the topsoil.

During that vast time-period, from the ancient earthquake to today, civilizations of many kinds have passed through the region.

One of the most famous civilizations is the Cahokian-Hopewelian mound builders of southern Illinois. They had a 22 square mile palisaded metropolis about 1,800 years ago. Evidence indicates that they’re tied to the Penokee Range through cooper and silver artistic artifacts. These are found in not only the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys but literally throughout the world on business and trade routes; the same routes that also carried the rare and unique “spotted copper” footprint that reveals its source as having been mined in the Penokees.

In studying that history, my mind wanders to other conversations with Ojibwe elders.

One was about Walla Walla in the State of Washington, once the home of one of the world’s largest Indian trading centers and markets.

This history of Walla Walla alone attests to the vast enterprising trade routes of the Indigenous business community. You could trade for Cherokee tobacco plugs, Great Plains buffalo robes bought and traded by eastern Iroquoian tribes making the same business summit that started with wampum shells, corn, beans and squash. Their meeting grounds...
slowly morphed into a vast caravan of products like a full service modern day Fleet Farm store.

We know ancient products moved across vast miles across North America as confirmed by turquoise from Mexico in the burials of the Cahokians in northern Wisconsin along with shells from the east coast, southern tobacco plugs, and artifacts from other regions.

That east coast tribes camped and traded on Madeline Island, in Lake Superior, is a fact supported by all the evidence you need in the items we find upon excavation of the site, along with artifacts from throughout North America. The evidence is even more compelling when spotted cooper from the Penokees is found in South America, and even across the oceans.

What is also clear is that many of the rivers and current roadways, now-days, are one and the same trade routes that, like a spider web, were laid out for ancient business travelers and for those seeking spiritual enlightenment or rejuvenation. These are the same pathways that lay the groundwork for ancient community sites with their burials, mounds, geography and resources that fed Indigenous families of the past and need to be guarded and protected from destruction, like the food sources itself.

These ancient routes may also be a pathway back to places where “food grows on the water,” or where Ojibwe ancestors helped protect the onion gardens of the Penokee giants that once, or perhaps still do, live there.

Looking south, I could see the summit of the Penokee Range not far from the location where the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe established a harvest camp project in early 2012. The camp is an exercise of their retained treaty rights in the public areas of the territory they the ceded to the US. The exercise of those rights means that Chippewa tribal members can and do bring in the usual bounty of the hunting or fishing trip, supplemented by eating goods: medicines, poles, mushrooms, onions, and numerous items that number into the thousands of items harvested and used in daily Ojibwe life.

We should never have been surprised that one of those plants and medicines, known as leeks or ramps or some call wild onions or Indian garlic, grows in such abundance. It is a wonder.

Surveying all of this in the horizon of the Penokee range also reminds me that the most recent attempt, by out-of-state, out-of-country mining companies, to extract the minerals in this area isn’t the first attempt. Since the 19th century, mining companies have exploited the region as a commodity, and mined the metals that make up the backbone of the Gogebic and Penokee ranges. Timber, copper, and iron barons have taken their toll in this region using simpler technology.

The latest mining plans would not only invert the Penokee mountains, but also would poison the water and air, and lay to waste the environment, wild rice, and humanity who dwell in these mountains. Some of those who boast of great financial and economic gains from this new mine make promises of a new blue lake in a black and barren landscape.

cont.
Like the ancients who crossed these mountain ranges, and our Ojibwe forefathers who reserved this place for future generations, the Bad River Ojibwe, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, and other peoples come together to protect the forest and onion gardens of the Penokees.

Paul DeMain is a member of the Bear Clan, Oneida Citizen, and Ojibwe descendant. He is currently the spokesperson for the Harvest Educational Learning Project (HELP) on behalf of the LCO Chippewa tribe. He is the publisher of the News From Indian Country and Producer of IndianCountryTV.com.

I live on the shores of Flambeau Lake, one of the many lakes on The Waaswaagoing Ojibwe/Chippewa reservation, also known as the Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin. In the middle of this lake is the island known as Odemin Minis to our people. Odemin means strawberry or heart berry, and this land, commonly known as Strawberry Island, is sacred.

Some of our tribal elders were told by their elders not to step on Strawberry Island because it’s a place where spirits visit. Tribal elder Niizhoma’ingan told me that a great war/battle between the Chippewa and the Sioux tribe was fought on our land. Strawberry Island was the last stand for the Sioux. The battle lasted several days. The Sioux were trapped, starved and nearly wiped out. Some escaped and swam to safety and ran. The Chippewa and Sioux eventually reached a truce. The Sioux left and went west where they reside in the Dakotas. The Chippewa remain to this day.
Strawberry Island was given to a five year old boy during the time of the Dawes Allotment Act 1910. In 1911 the boy died. John White feather inherited the land and sold it to a non-Indian man. The man who owns it today lives in Walter Mills of Aspen, Colorado, and he and a Colorado real estate developer have plans to build homes and subdivide those twenty-six acres into sixteen lots on the island. They hope to build quarter million dollar homes on this sacred site to sell to people.

We’ve resisted the development plans for decades. From July 4th-6th of 1995 the Ojibwa and Dakota came together at Lac du Flambeau for the “Healing of the Nations Gathering” to protect the island. On October 3, 1995 the Vilas County Zoning committee voted to deny the Mills Condominium Project building permit, and in August of 1999 the tribal constitution referendum rejected the deal. Yet now in 2013 Strawberry Island is listed as one of the ten most endangered properties in the state. This is despite the fact that in 1976 we obtained state and national register status.

Since Strawberry Island is sacred land, no one should disturb it or the human burial grounds located within in. Our tribe must raise 1.2 million dollars to purchase the island and prevent the desecration from happening. To gather that much money we need your help. Environmentalist and treaty supporters support our endeavors to preserve this land and now it’s your turn to do the same.

To help the Lac du Flambeau tribe reclaim Strawberry Island write: Lac du Flambeau Tribe P.O. Box 67 Lac du Flambeau, Wi 54538. Phone number 715-588-3303 Information from: Tribal Chairman Tom Maulson, Tribal Elder Patricia Hrabik, Tribal Elder Niizho Ma’inganan, and Midwest Treaty Network, Migizikwe Nindizhikaaz Dodem Migizi.

Mildred Tinker Schuman is a member of the Ojibwe Nation of Lac du Flambeau. She holds an A.F.A. from the Institute of American Indian Arts.

**Beyond Indian Romance Novels’ Chiseled Abs**

*by Vicki Besaw*

You’ve probably seen them on supermarket and department store shelves, those bargain-priced bodice rippers with a debatably cultural component. They have titles like *Savage Ecstasy, Wild Renegade, Forbidden Fires, Wind Eagle’s Desire*. The covers typically depict a muscular, bare-chested American Indian male with Anglo features clutching a beautiful Caucasian woman, her long hair flowing...
with wild abandon, her breasts brimming from a frilly gown, and…well, you get the picture. One of my favorite things to do in my seven years of teaching English at the College of Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin, has been to bring the discussion of the Indian romance novel into the American Indian literature classroom.

The first question is always, and rightly so, what is the Indian romance novel doing in an American Indian literature course? The answer to this question is complex and touches on a myriad of issues including author ancestry, historical accuracy, and content. It is an issue that requires much a larger analysis than this forum allows, but it is a question students find very intriguing. It opens the door to another question they have rarely, if ever, considered: Who has the right, and the credibility, to represent American Indian people in literature? Legitimacy and authenticity are concepts that are not only relevant in terms of what can be classified as American Indian literature, but they also touch on issues deeply rooted in identity and belonging. The resulting discussions are often personal, and powerful.

Beyond grappling with that initial question, however, the discussion of Indian romance novels gives students the opportunity to consider the responsibility (or lack thereof, depending on personal philosophy) that literature has to accurately represent American Indian people. Students often find this a difficult topic because they initially see the depictions of American Indian characters in these novels as positive. Further, a fair number of students will admit to not only reading Indian romance novels, but to enjoying them as well. Why, they often ask, are we criticizing books that show us in a positive light? After all, many of the authors of Indian romance claim Indian ancestry and say that they write the novels to ‘honor’ Indian people, so why not focus the call-to-arms on the abundance of negative images out there? Aren’t there much bigger fish to fry? I don’t answer these questions for students. Instead, my goal is to expose them to the issues and let them formulate their own conclusions. I want them to examine the issue in a new light, from an alternate angle, and let them decide.
In teaching the unit, I like to begin with an uncomfortable, impromptu class reading in which students take turns reading short excerpts from an American Indian romance novel. There is usually a fair amount of snickering over the descriptive passages regarding the main character, who is often depicted as a chief with hawk-like chiseled features and wears little more than a loincloth, moccasins, and a feather in his long black hair. We read the titillating descriptions of red hot sexual attraction this chief feels for the beautiful white woman he will eventually take as his wife. And finally, we read a smattering of the history placed here and there by the author, seemingly honoring whichever tribe is depicted. After the giggles subside, we discuss, among other things, the issues associated with those excerpts – the positive stereotyping, the pan-Indian images, the sexualizing of American Indian males as animalistic and, therefore, taboo.

I like that from these sometimes uncomfortable discussions, students often comment on the resulting revelation and self-reflection they experience. Of course, it helps that I can lessen the discomfort by revealing that I am Ojibwe, and in the past I have not only read but also enjoyed more than my share of these novels. In the end, I think what it comes down to is that these novels provide for us a lens through which we examine and share the struggle many of us face today – determining our identity and place in contemporary Native America.

Vicki Besaw is a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe Indians. She teaches English composition, creative writing, and literature course at College of Menominee Nation. She’s previously published other work in E.L.M. Literary Magazine at Eureka College, Eureka, Illinois.

What Makes an Indian an Indian?

BLOOD QUANTUM!

by Rebecca Bork

I’m an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans in central Wisconsin. I grew up in a border town about half a mile off rez in the village of Morgan Siding, so named for the railroad that cut through it and threw slabs of pig meat onto its siding for poor Indians to grapple over. Beautiful though Morgan Siding was, I’d come to know it as no-man’s land, for neither the rez nor the county ever wanted to claim it. It didn’t matter that we were among the highest paying tax payers in the state, our roads were rarely plowed. Morgan Siding is still a no-man’s land in many ways, but it’s been elevated to the status of Old Reservation now, so consider this; having lived on an abandoned piece of Indian land, having Indian blood in me, having an Indian card and belonging to a federally recognized Indian tribe, does that make me Indian? Not everyone thinks so.
I’ll never forget the time when I went to “the rez” to conduct some business and one of its denizens confronted me, asking me what I was doing there, saying I didn’t belong, asking how come they’d never seen me before. Having lived there my entire life, just beyond the border in no-man’s land, being a tribal member and having been treated like an Indian by the whites, I was confused. Granted, I’d lived within the outlying district of a border town and Gresham school was where I spent most of my waking hours, but wouldn’t they have seen me? Did I not exist to them? Had my soul been exiled to no-man’s land, too?

Who has the right to define who is or isn’t Indian? Didn’t getting thrown into the cinderblock cell at school, known as the Indian Room, qualify me? Didn’t my Indian card? My grandfather was tribal president and one of the founders of our reservation. I grew up on commod cheese and ate mutant pork from One Mile Island just like everyone else. And when the military sent us their Desert Storm leftovers, I partook of camel hump fresh from the can. I was even injected with one of their outdated vaccines they shipped to our IHS clinic. Surely, all of this has to qualify me as Indian. Statistically speaking of course, from an unscientific, informal survey, some would say not.

For this reason, I feel obligated to share my thoughts on what being Native is. It’s not objective. No matter where you live, or where someone thinks you should live, and no matter how you were raised, or how someone thinks you should’ve been raised, you either have the blood quantum or you don’t. Would they dare tell a German they’re not German if they don’t live in Germany or salute there past by wearing a swastika? And who’d have the nerve to tell a Scott they’re not Scottish if they don’t wear a kilt and play bagpipes? I’m of both these heritages, by the way, and never once has anyone ever questioned them. Only my Native heritage has been questioned, and it’s usually been by other Natives.

In addition, tribes who’re considering lowering the quantum requirements for enrollment of descendants with dwindling pedigree need to ask themselves this; at what point does a tribe stop being legit? Just possibly, there’s a better answer to this dilemma, and it could lie in the past. Our ancestors would adopt Native people from other tribes into their own when they’d intermarry; therefore, not losing any Native blood while, at the same time, gaining a tribal member. I know many Natives who’re denied tribal membership from not having enough blood quantum of any one tribe, yet their combined quantum is higher than most. It could be argued that they’re more Native than some enrolled members, yet they’re excluded. As an intertribal issue, this should be handled accordingly, for it breeds derision amongst all our relations.

Rebecca Bork is Mohican/Oneida who is studying Nursing at College of Menominee Nation.
My grandmother is fluent in both Potawatomi and Ojibwa and she’s continuously teaching our culture to the next generations.

Lillian Rice has volunteered countless hours in different tribal communities throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, shared her culture with the pre-K students in her classrooms, made numerous regalia for the children she taught, and been honored for her efforts by having a park named after her in Minneapolis.

My children and I feel extremely lucky to have this wise woman in our lives, because we appreciate what a gift it is to have her as a role model. I am sad to say that I have seen instances where elders have been taken advantage of, neglected, and even abused. This fact upsets me greatly.

I feel very strongly that our elders should be taken care of and respected by their families and communities. They are the ones with the most knowledge of our traditions, and we all should take the opportunity to learn from them. This year I witnessed my grandma pass these lessons to my daughter. Together, my daughter and I learned some of the things my grandma learned from her grandma. I feel honored to be a part of that.

I believe that education starts at home when our children are young. From a young age my children have learned about our culture and our Indian way of life through participating in our ceremonies and helping us gather and prepare our native foods. If it were not for my parents, grandparents, and the generations before us, we would not know how to live the way we do.

Please respect and learn from the elders in your family and community, as they are the key to our past and the knowledge of our future.

Elizabeth Rice is a Potawatomi/Ojibwa woman enrolled in the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. She’s currently in her last semester at College of Menominee Nation, earning her Associates of Arts in Liberal Studies/Social Sciences. Elizabeth has two children that her world revolves around, as they are her inspiration to succeed in whatever she does.
An Oneida Homecoming

by Sherrole Benton
As the Oneida people begin conversations about how we define tribal identity in the “Sustain Oneida” series, I heard several stories about how people are treated when they come to Oneida. Some tribal members who grew up in other parts of the country, or had spent their working lives in the big city, or just now learned of their Oneida heritage, come here to their mother’s land.

“That reminds me,” I say to each of them, “about the time I came home from Minneapolis for a visit.”

In the mid-1980s, I went to the Journalism School at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. I thought it was a great idea to go there for two reasons. One, was for my young son to get to know his grandfather, uncles, and aunts. The second reason was to stay in the college track because I wasn’t landing any jobs in Green Bay after graduating from the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay in 1985.

As a single parent living far away from home, I got lonely in between school sessions. Some days, I watched sunlight stream into my apartment windows while my son was outside playing with the neighbor kids. I missed my friends, my sisters, and sometimes my mom and stepfather. They all lived in Oneida or Green Bay.

One summer day, I decided to just jump in the car and go home for a few days. I had forty bucks. That’s all I needed for gas and snacks to get from St. Paul to Oneida. I kind of betted on winning at bingo, or borrowing some money if I needed it to get back to St. Paul. I also figured there would be corn soup on the stove when I arrived because my stepfather always made corn soup for people who were coming home.

On the eight-hour drive home, I reminisced about my pow-wow buddies and our road trips to nice traditional pow-wows. I wondered how much my little sisters grew. I wondered if my mom and I would argue again, or just have a nice visit.

To pass the time, since my young son fell asleep in the back seat, I put my favorite tapes into the cassette player. The music and songs of Janis Joplin, Fleetwood Mac, Credence Clearwater Revival, Bob Seger,
and my new love jazz musician Earl Klugh, floated throughout my car.

I watched the thunderbird appear in the evening as the sun set. Every evening, a gray and shadowy thunderbird appears showing us that the thunder beings are still carrying out their duties to watch over the earth. Some thunderbirds float dark and ominous in the sky. Some of them appear emblazoned with orange, purple, and pink sunlight.

I approached the border of Oneida, the dark horizon filled with trees and a midnight blue sky became familiar, as I watched for the right turn to make on County Road U. I was happy to come back home and couldn’t wait to see everyone. Sometimes, I even forgot that my beloved grandmother was no longer here to welcome me home, as I made plans to go see her and play Uno or Rummy.

On this particular cruise, I got home late at night. I was so weary on the road, that I stopped more than I should have for breaks and coffee. The corn soup was on the stove, but it was cold. No matter, it’s always better the next day. I crashed on my mom’s pullout bed in the living room.

The next day, I was ready to go around and visit all my favorite friends, relatives, and people. Got my son dressed in his good clothes and shoes.

I thought people I knew would be excited to see me, as I would be to see them.

Imagine my let down when all of my little sisters had something better to do. My mom was running out the door to meet her church lady friends. My stepfather left early, at dawn, as usual to go fishing or something.

Well, I thought, we’ll go visit Grandma Rena for a while. “She hasn’t seen you yet,” I said to my young son. “Oops! I forgot. She’s not here,” I said in the next instant.

So, I decided to just drive around Oneida and see who I would run into. One of the most likely places to run into people, at the time, was the Norbert Hill Center. I drove up the hill to the old Seminary and parked the car.
The first person I saw was my old pow-wow buddy Debbie. I was so happy to see her. I jumped out of the car called her name. When she looked my way, I waved as if I was standing on the sidelines of a Packers game. She barely noticed me and walked even faster to her car, and then took off. I thought we were friends.

Imagine my deflated look as I realized nobody was here to greet me or to care that I was even around. I was so excited, on my way home, to see everyone, to visit and catch up on old news. But, there was no welcome for me.

While in the “Sustain Oneida” series, where we are broaching the subject of tribal membership, one elder drew a picture of a big basket on a big sheet of white paper. She asked the crowd standing in the circle, “What should we put in our Welcome Basket for people who are coming home for the first time or after a long time of being away?”

“A reference directory of services and programs in Oneida,” suggested one young woman. “A map of the reservation,” said another elder. Corn bread, a list of shops and cool places around here, said another young woman.

After people have been here for a while, and get a bearing on where they stand with relatives and the lay of land, they will glide through the community like everyone else with busy schedules and things to do.

Sherrole Benton is Oneida/Ojibwe, a Freelance Journalist, and Recipient of the “Native American Journalist Association” awards, and the “Howard Simons Fund for American Indian Journalists Fellowship - 1992.”
Media Review
by Ryan Winn

The Book of Big Dog Town:
Poems and Stories from Aztalan and Around

by Jim Stevens
Fireweed Press (2013)

Seneca writer Jim Stevens is attuned to the spiritual connections indigenous people have to specific places. Within the pages of his book, The Book of Big Dog Town, he uses his craft to advocate for “respecting and protecting” sacred sites by way of paying homage to the Aztalan site in south-central Wisconsin. Stevens begins his text with an essay that explains what Aztalan, commonly known as Big Dog Town, means to him and his storytelling and from there he guides his readers through a series of poems that collectively invite, explain, and inspire indigenous peoples’ connections to the spiritual sites of their ancestors.

Stevens writes about listening to the storytellers when they speak, because unless we hear these stories while we can they will “most assuredly...cease to be.” He discusses the stories that come in the form of dreams, music, or from our connections to the natural world. These are stories that entwine the Haudenosaunee with their past, present, and future worlds both on Earth and beyond, and he weaves these connections together with the passion of a man who knows the urgency of capturing the stories that must be told.

Stevens concludes his collection with an engaging story about the formation of Big Dog Town which serves as a fitting conclusion to a text that began with a personal story and expands to explain the connections indigenous people have to Aztalan. The sum of his efforts is a book that explores the necessity of preserving sacred sites and their stories for generations to come. Stevens’ book helps to remind us all of the necessity of indigenous art, people, and places coming together to form the concept we collectively refer to as “culture”. We should all read this book, visit Big Dog Town, and use the experiences to sustain us as we rekindle our passion for advocating for the preservation of sacred sites for the next seven generations.