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A Visit Home

Kecia Cook

As I'm driving down the winding roads
My spirit calls me back to my home
I feel restless and ecstatic as I recognize the forest that knows me as well
And if you can't tell, I am so thankful
No offense to the Saskatchewan breeze
But I am safe and more at ease, surrounded by the spruce wood trees
Oh! To be back in my homelands is the best feeling
As I pass the last hill and come driving down I am glad, ah here at last!
I pass through town and wave hello
And then I arrive at my cousin's house!
As soon as we see each other
We greet one another with a big smile and hug
And we just laugh because that's how it is
Then we proceed with our visit
Once I'm settled in we prepare to begin
Our weekend filled with beading, sewing and feasting that was planned
Our community is gathering at the band hall and I can't wait to see them all!
I was seeking these connections to be back with my relatives and to be festive
Soon the respective elders come in
They brightened the room with their laughter and presence
As the children are playing, they tell jokes

KECIA COOK, also known as Nokomis, is a Cree Indigenous woman from Misipawistik Cree Nation in northern Manitoba. She has been residing in Treaty 6 territory for several years. Her poetry focuses on identity, family, community, life experiences and her connection to the land. She has participated and performed in two national poetry slam competitions in Canada. Nokomis hopes to inspire Indigenous youth to follow their passion in writing by sharing her storytelling style of poetry. Poetry has been both empowering and an act of resiliency by allowing her stories to be told.

Even their smallest teachings hold many meanings
As they share their stories and reminisce the good times
The sun shines and we have no worries
I look out the window and notice the little rez house
It looks so majestic and almost unrealistic
As it sits still in the snow with the sun rays shining down
Suddenly it is peaceful and quiet now
In a way I am not fully present so I call my spirit to come be with me
As I am still sensing the city life I do not feel quite right
So I say a prayer in my mind
Be with me. Be with me. We are home again
As the day goes on we are honored with a ceremony and drum songs
The men fulfill their roles and duties and tell us their sacred stories
I feel blessed to hear their wisdom as my blood memory recognizes their language
It's strange in a way but I know in some way these teachings will always stay with me
At the end we finish off with a feast
And now my tummy is full but so is my heart
But I am not done yet because the sweat is about to start!
The lodge calls my name as if it were waiting for me,
Something I did not expect but I was wishing to be in
Gratefully I attend and pray hard, giving thanks for the beautiful day
I sang and healed in our mother's womb feeling safe and in a sacred place
The heat washes away my worries and pain
As I gain my spiritual connection and learn more traditional lessons
My ancestors join me to the sacred heartbeat
As the nimosom rocks take away the negative blocks
And nokom talks as each word unlocks a new meaning and teaching, I feel whole again
And all I can say is ekosi for what seemed to be a perfect day.

I Am a Number

I am a number
When I walk into a store
That is what they see
A number
That separates you from me

They say I am privileged
And without taxes
They say I am greedy
Without getting the facts straight

I am a number
Because of a treaty
This number that claims
If my ancestors' blood
Flows through me

Because without a number
I cannot be the true me
According to the government
A number is all I need

Forget the water
Forget the land
You do not belong here
Even with that number
You should just disappear

They say that my existence
And very presence is the issue
And when we cry for our sisters
All we get is a tissue

They look the other way
And rather look at things like Hitler
Even though our history is very similar

I am a number
With brown eyes and brown hair

She doesn't matter
Just forget that they are from here!

Genocide didn't kill them
They are drug addicts and alcoholics
They forget they are privileged
Look how much we give to them
They have a number
That they take for granted

But If I gave you this number
Would we get our land back?
If I gave up this number
Would I know my language?
If I got rid of this number
Would I still be native?

Without this treaty number
Would you recognize me?
And would there be peace?

Well guess what

I am NOT a number

I am a human being

For Mother Earth

The men that run the corporations
The men that have lived on wealth and greed
Walk their lives thinking they know riches
Taking and taking to fill their pockets.
We buy materialistic things, thinking money will set us free
Realistically it's the greed that we achieve
Will destroy our lives and what is left behind
For one day soon our world will die
The trees will be gone
The air will be thin
The waters will run with poisonous things
The ground will be sick and filled with toxins,
The earth will be rotten and our existence will soon be forgotten

In reality our mother is sick and fights for her life
But the pollution in the sky is much too high
Her children don't see that she is trying not to die
They forgot that her body is what really gives them life
She loves them so much she gives them everything they like
Spoiled children who are never satisfied

What will be left behind for our great-grandchildren?
Will they suffer horrible lives?
Most importantly will they survive?
What will they eat when the earth has died?
Where will they live; will they feel empty inside?
Do they even have a living chance?
When the generations before them have nothing left to pass onto them
Only an empty carcass that's rotten and used
With scraps of plastic, junk and no food
The animals will disappear like they were not here
The end will be near and they will live in fear
Begging and praying for something like deer the waters to be clear and fruit
like a pear

When will men wake up and finally care?
When will we decide to be equal and fair?
To share and live with what we have
To take care of the land and go back to being good man
To appreciate the things that earth has to offer

To love and respect each one another
Because to be rich is when we are kind
To be filled with such happiness is better than buying
We need to see that material is temporary
But our mothers' love is forever eternity

Her body is earth and her voice is the wind
Her blood is the oil, the water and river her veins
Her minerals are organs
The forest her lungs
The long green grass is her hair and the leaves

We are her children who she loves and cares for
When will we wake up and do the right thing here?

