

Nolene Dunlop

Nolene Dunlop was born in 1968 in Edmonton, Alberta. She was adopted in 1969 and travelled to Papua New Guinea with her new parents. After her sister was born, the family moved to Australia, where her younger brother was adopted. Her father was in the Royal Australian Air Force and the family moved frequently, returning to Canada in 1984. Nolene loves words and the stories they tell, of who we are when we remember where we came from.

I was once

I was once my mother's daughter...born strange on stranger land. Blood memories rush...past through me...flash flood of everything that never was...and I am made of stone.

I dream of stones in the middle...for everything dies...just once I flew...in all directions...and watched the sun blaze behind the moon. Ghostly shimmers in my eyes...sparkled sparks in the fire...burn the dark...in my fossilized heart.

Fireflies dance atop the stand of poplar trees...fall...and falling...on my buckled knees...my heart and head...hung low.

Long for mother to be with me...unbeknownst, her I am...she was me still to be.

I dream of stones burning...and firelight flickers...in my savaged heart. When stardust falls...my eyes tear...for gratitude is for giving. Ceremony-seared breath exhaled...mingles with the last...of the ones in the middle.

We sing for them in the dark...as they break for our hearts...cry for our mothers...for we are home at last.

I stood beside footprints...on a path to Wakan Tanka...wide eyes filled with dark beauty...of love uprooted...and scattered underground. Held prayer tie in hot hands...icicled inside...prayer blanket made in fierce love...clutched to heart inside.

I heard the breathless cry of mother mourning child...soft whispers of sisters...sigh in the windswept...burned ash. No more secrets...shushed in the dark...run to the river...wash away and ghost apart. Lovers with no one left to hold...for what was...has been stolen...in lies and truth untold. A small one who has her mother's eyes...old yellowed photograph...blurs when she cries. She misses her mother...in all ways...wishes and kisses...dreamtime stay. I felt the small ones...not yet here...cry for their mothers...endless tears. My heart curled up to defend my tender belly...soft-spined and orphaned porcupine.

Tunkasila swaddles in buffalo robe...the broken hearts of our nation...drumbeated heart beating...Great Spirit...and our relations. Our voices rise...in prayer song...honour our past...may our future be strong. White buffalo roam...seven sacred rites...sun dance...fast...we pray for the light. Our prayers...carried by eagle's wings...rushing winds...four directions...our hearts sing.

Indigo sky...washes over me...a moon-swollen river...and I am made of stone. The red road way...has always been...I shiver...I am clean. I pray for give...to leave this burden here...with you Tunkasila...so I may live. I look up...I am no one...and from no thing...I pray...and still...buried sadness stays.

Blood memory... becomes me...my mother's remains...with me. How I miss my brothers...the ones I never had. They take my hand...as I stand...with the sadness...and we pray. We were all small once...we always were here too...with our elders...and their wisdom...where the eagles flew. Sometimes we are tired...afraid to close our eyes...wild palomino gallops...heart sighs. I am happy with the mystery...for in the stars I am home. Where my heart remembers...every beat matters...I close my eyes...and dream. 'Tis in the ends where we begin...no heart stays broken...in buffalo robe...wild horse in the indigo...stone burns...firefly glow...look up...and do not sleep...for shadows in the dark lie deep.

Eagle's lone flight...carries our love...and all the light. Winds blow...buffalo roam...rivers wild...we go home...in my heart fire.

I found my long way home...my history a mystery...remains of the old ones...entombed in who...I always was. My lost brothers...walk in places...where shadow eats the light...they could not bear to fight...so forgot...with all their might.

My mother walks with me...in a dream...when I'm awake...four winds rustle poplar leaves...around the cold lake...frogs ribbit...cicadas sing...under the blooded moon ring. Wild horses standstill...when stars fall in their eyes...memories remembered...truth of the lies.

I am my mother's daughter...born of earth and endless sky. I'm told I have my mother's eyes...heart wholly hurt...the truth belies.

I'm told I have my mother's hands...that gentled children...and loved the wilder land.

My mother holds me close...lullabies my sleep...feel her love...drumbeating...heartbeat.

Crawl in...back to begin...before the lost...in the sorrow ...and the sin.

Head bowed...hushed not a sound...Dreamcatcher...mother's womb round. Eyes closed...watch the stones turn white...fiery hearts...turned inside out. Weathered hands waft cedar smoke...I'm sorry for the bad I've done...prodigal child...left alone...heart open...petal leaves...in Wakan Tanka's sun.

Pray in four directions...eagles circle high...we were all small once...and we still live inside.

Cry sobbing...weep ourselves to sleep...suck our thumbs...and miss our mums...this pain...still ours...runs deep.

This land not yours...knows our braved hearts...heart drum sings us home...promise for us to keep.

I am my mother's daughter...made strange...on once familiar land.

Blood memories become me...my mother remains with me.

My name is Jennifer Lee Lajimodiere...I am my mother's daughter.

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