

The warrior

The boys whooped
as they sawed and chopped wood
for the winter months,
the wood stove warming the cabin.
They drew their buckets from the
iced water, sieved
in pillowcases for drinking, dish-washing
and bathing.

Beside their father's work bench
they learned to skin beaver,
muskrats, weasels and stretched
pelts that bought their groceries.
When he left for the north
to dance the night sky
the six boys hovered
by the wood stove,
their mother the braid
that lived throughout their lives.

From the rez, to school, to university
he carried a satchel, a bundle
filled with the voices of many.

His father's spirit by his side
his mother words
carried by the whispering wind,
"Always carry love and kindness."

I have heard him speak.
The *oskapewis* who never forgot
whom he served.
At home, regionally, nationally,
Internationally.

A man of vision
he moved forward
with those who went before him.
Head and heart connected

his spirit and words
danced in ceremony.

Kimamihcihawak kitayisiyiniwak
You've brought pride to your people.

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Parliamentary Poet Laureate