



Extraction: Seeking Ways to Survive

Creative work

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TANAYA WINDER is an author, singer/songwriter, poet, and motivational speaker. She comes from an intertribal lineage of Southern Ute, Pyramid Lake Paiute, and Duckwater Shoshone Nations where she is an enrolled citizen. Tanaya's performances and talks emphasize 'heartwork'—the life path one is meant to follow by using their gifts and passions. She blends storytelling, singing, and spoken word to teach about different expressions of love. Her specialties include youth empowerment and healing trauma through art.

Extraction

'Extracting is stealing—it is taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on the other living things in that environment. That's always been a part of colonialism and conquest'—Leanne Simpson

My grandmother says, 'boarding school is where people go to die'.
My hands fumble over needles, as she teaches me to embroider and knit,

Grandmother, when did you first learn how to sing
the songs you carry? Before I was born they tried to silence us,

pierced our tongues with needles

then taught our then-girls-grandmothers how to sew like machines.
Even then, they saw our bodies as land full of resources

waiting to be extracted and exploited.

We stitch together phrases; my grandmother patiently teaches me words,
'in Indian' as she says. Muguá-vi means heart—I want to learn how to unbury this,

bury, sogho'mi I want words to un-drink the drugs we loved into our veins
because for some of us this was the only way we knew how to keep breathing.

I want to say—alcoholism is the symptom and not the disease.

Can we un-suicide, un-pipeline, un-disappear our dear ones? There is no word for undo but many ways to say return. We never get to go back to before

our fathers began evaporating and our mothers started flooding themselves into unglobable rivers because their mothers were taken long ago.

We are still searching dragging rivers red until we find every body

that ever went missing. For as long as I can remember, we've been stolen: from reservation to Industrial boarding schools and today

our girls, women, and two-spirit still go missing and murdered. I could find no word for this.

But yáakwi is to sink or disappear.

Where is it we fall? When did we first start vanishing? Who taught us to sew new memories into old scars, fingers threading needle

so precise in its recorded pain? Grandmother, when it comes to letting go my hands have always failed me, but my mouth wants to tell the story

about the songs you still sing softly.

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As an Indigenous writer, I see us continually emerging and growing together.

Extraction

More and more Indigenous created and run literary magazines such as *As/Us*, *Mud City*, *Red Ink*, *Cloudthroat*, and Indigenous spoken word groups like *Dances with Words* and *BHS's Rising Voices* are coming into existence to hold space for our voices. We are no longer waiting for publications like the *New Yorker* or other mainstream spaces to only acknowledge our existence during Native American Heritage month or in attempts to invoke empathy through poverty porn. We are no longer waiting to be scripted into spaces mainstream society deems appropriate. We are no longer accepting being used as props in someone else's performative wokeness.

We've been awake. In fact, for many of us I doubt there are days, months, and years we get any restful sleep. We are continually dreaming of a future that is Indigenous, a future that is inclusive of all Indigenous voices, a future and a present where we can be in balance with the land and relatives we are in relationship with.

There is much to be done in reclaiming and rebuilding the ruptures brought on by colonialism and capitalism—the trauma from historical genocidal acts committed against us. From relatives being taken away from their homes and families to be forced into boarding school to our women, girls, and two-spirit relatives being stolen, history is inscribed on our bodies. When our women and children go missing, it is our responsibility to seek justice. When the world is silent about our struggles, art can be an act of resisting that silence. We have a Creator given right to give name, story, and therein meaning to what our ancestors survived through and what we ourselves are living today.

This is why I share stories through poetry and song, because through storying I am able to manipulate and slow down time to return to a moment or event and make that event (and not myself) significant. Rendering ourselves in this way is a way of saying this is not *my* story, but rather that this story *comes from me*, my people, and the ancestral knowing that my spirit carries but my voice still struggles to put into words.

Living with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Settler Disorder) means seeking ways to survive. Storying it not only an exhibition of our creative sovereignty, it is also an act of survival. They tried to bury us, and we survive by excavating our ancestors' stories.