

# Native Poetry in Canada

A Contemporary Anthology



EDITED BY JEANNETTE C. ARMSTRONG  
& LALLY GRAUER

©2001 Jeannette C. Armstrong and Lally Grauer

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system, without prior written consent of the publisher — or in the case of photocopying, a licence from cancopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency) One Yonge Street, Suite 1900, Toronto, Ontario, M5E 1E5 — is an infringement of the copyright law.

**National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Main entry under title:

Native poetry in Canada : a contemporary anthology

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-55111-200-0

i. Canadian poetry (English) — Indian authors.\* 2. Canadian poetry (English) — 20th century.\*

3. Indians of North America — Canada — Poetry.

I. Armstrong, Jeannette C. II. Grauer, Lalage, 1948-

PS8283.I5N36 2001

C811'.54080897

C2001-930207-X

PR9195.35.I53N36 2001

Broadview Press Ltd. is an independent, international publishing house, incorporated in 1985.

North America:

P.O. Box 1243, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9J 7H5

3576 California Road, Orchard Park, NY 14227

TEL: (705) 743-8990; FAX: (705) 743-8353;

E-MAIL: customerservice@broadviewpress.com

United Kingdom:

Thomas Lyster Ltd.

Unit 9, Ormskirk Industrial Park

Old Boundary Way, Burscough Road

Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 2YW

TEL: (01695) 575112; FAX: (01695) 570120; E-mail: books@tlyster.co.uk

Australia:

St. Clair Press, P.O. Box 287, Rozelle, NSW 2039

TEL: (02) 818-1942; FAX: (02) 418-1923

[www.broadviewpress.com](http://www.broadviewpress.com)

Broadview Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Ministry of Canadian Heritage through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program.

Design and composition by George Kirkpatrick

Cover illustration by Sarain Stump (Permission from Linda Jaine)

PRINTED IN CANADA

Cont

Four D  
2000, Je  
Tuning  
A Note

CHIEF E

A La  
Wor  
If th  
Keej  
My ]  
To a  
I ha

RITA JO

I am  
You  
Wer  
Whel  
Exp  
She  
I Lo  
Den  
The  
Indi  
Mig  
The  
Sun  
A C  
Fish

PETER I

Alc  
Whi  
Och  
Bea  
Dav  
Cra  
Yell  
Swe

# More Red, Run Can Cree

## back roads

i travel the back roads in dust covered vans  
roads rough, wash board bone rattling rough  
dusty, with loose gravel scattering from passing cars  
spider webbing the windshield  
coming upon small towns with a lottery ticket centre sign  
on the only store not boarded up  
small dark hotel sits empty, rooms unused  
bar room holds peaked cap men hands dark from soil  
dust caked jeans, cracked leather wallets empty  
drinking on weather's promises  
stepping outside, watching the circling clouds  
listening for sounds of thunder  
i jump start the quiet room when i enter  
long black hair dishevelled from wind and dust  
dark tanned skin almost invisible in the dim lights,  
blue jeans faded and tattered with grass stains  
work boots, water stained, worn leather fraying at the  
seams, steel toe visible and heels kicking up dust  
the room remains silent as i sit down with four white men  
suddenly i'm visible on these back roads

1991

## Something you said

at night he wanders the streets  
seeking relief in smoky rooms  
by caressing strangers in dark alleys  
accepting money from old men  
spitting out their sex  
washing the taste away with whiskey  
erasing the memory with needles in the arm  
and in the early morning darkness  
alone in his room  
he likes to dance

1992

it could be anything  
the way someone laughs  
or the scent of a certain perfume  
i can never remember the name  
maybe when i'm just starting to wake  
and i'll reach beside me  
to the empty side of the motel bed  
but i feel the warmth of you  
sometimes it's a song  
it was our song  
when we were young  
and we'd walk outside  
to a night full of stars  
and the song would follow behind us  
it could be anything  
a whisper, a cough,  
or the way your breath would catch  
like that time we saw mountains  
riding in that train  
racing the sun to the ocean  
sometimes the smell of sweetgrass  
will find you walking beside me  
like we did last summer  
united across this country  
and i could see the pride  
in your eyes  
and i'll smile

## He Likes to Dance

he likes to dance  
long hair flying wildly  
in the dark  
feet moving to music in the silent room  
he likes to dance  
laughing loudly in the roomful of silence  
dark eyes flashing madly  
in smoke filled bars  
colored lights throwing his shadow  
on beer stained floors  
he likes to dance  
to music in his mind  
creating visions from his dreams  
living his lies in the daytime  
he likes to dance

## the duke of windsor

it's a thursday kind of night  
a feeling of rain in the air  
and the blues are calling  
i enter harry's place  
wiping the heat off my face  
then you slide in the door  
strutting  
seeking the light from a stranger's eyes  
and the temptation of the music in the night  
enters a restless soul  
and she yells as she walks in the door  
i've got to hear me some blues  
been walking all day  
and I'm tired as i can be  
so let those silver strings caress me  
till i can't scream anymore  
and et enters dancing  
wearing someone else's clothes  
kicking off his borrowed shoes  
with two different socks  
he glides he kicks up his heels  
he shakes and he yelps out a song  
just like a little dog  
the moon ain't full and the tide is still low  
and the world has got the blues  
bouncing off the walls on garry  
staggering the cars with a guitar sliding  
down st. mary all the way to main  
it's the 70's all over again  
with wall to wall brown  
on a thursday night just before the harvest moon rises  
on the castle of the blues  
and the duke staggers out before the streets roll up  
a harp solo still playing in his head  
the duke strides into the morning  
humming a nothing song into the setting night

1997

Mercredi, Duncan  
Cree

210 native poetry inc anada: a contemporary anthology

Daniel D

*My name is L  
Ruth Jamieson  
Nations lands  
the band regist  
Tuscarora. I al  
plays, poems, ai  
Those of spoken  
my home at the  
Toronto.*

Daniel David  
Toronto to at  
in Fine Arts. I  
British Colum  
for playwright  
*Delicate Bodies*,  
published the  
General's Award  
(published 1989  
1998), *Almighty I*  
*Indian Medicine S*  
Excellence in A  
Terry Goldie, M  
*English* in 1992. He

Until he wen  
"old established  
interview with I  
land, and to the  
poetry, especially  
Light of Dawn" a  
intense sensual  
community and  
"was Christianize  
he has said that  
probably is rooted  
and reading the  
Hartmut Lutz). C  
distinctiveness of  
including "respect  
were calling ourse

European thief, liar, bloodsucker.  
I deny you not. I fear you not. Your  
reality and mine no longer rankles me.

I am moved by my love for human life;  
by the firm conviction that all the world  
must stop the butchery, stop the slaughter.

I am moved by my scars, by my own filth  
to re-write history with my body  
to shed the blood of those that betray themselves.

To life, world humanity I ascribe  
To my people... my history... I address  
my vision.

1969, 2000

WO

Pales  
to th  
while  
and s

Amic  
and I  
wave  
lash

In ui  
built  
won  
to cr

Wari  
soft,  
prin  
wate

## Performing

I shudda got 'n Oscar  
for all the lies I told,  
all the masks I wore...  
But they don't give  
Indian women Oscars  
for dressin' like Vogue Magazine  
and drippin'  
honeymed English.

Remember Ta'ah  
I speak brocken  
Ink-lish tooh?

Now

I am  
speechless...

1972, 2000

Maracle, Lee  
st̄l̄:lo, Métis