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Gichi-Ayaa Mashkawziiwin

Suzette E. LaCasse (Anishinaabe-Ojibwe)
Northern Michigan University, slacasse@nmu.edu

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Gichi-Ayaa Mashkawziwin

Ancestor Strength

Suzette E. LaCasse (Anishinaabe-Ojibwe)

This mino-akidwanan (poem) was inspired by the awareness of the privilege our generation has to teach one another a culture and language that was once in very real danger of being lost; furthermore this poem was inspired by the ancestor in me. I honor them in these words.

N'gii-mikaan baakwaagozi ezhi gichi-ayaa'ag biinjaya'iing n'ode

I have found / sounds echoing / of ancestors / the place inside it / my heart

Wawizhendamoog miinawaa zoongide'ewag

They are proud of something / also / they are brave

Biskaakonenjigewag shkode biinji-nimisadiing

They ignite something / a fire / within my stomach

Miinawaa ombaabate ezhi-nindooniing

Also / goes upward as smoke / to my mouth

Miinawaa nagamowag ezhi-nindenaniwiing

Also / they sing / on my tongue

Miinawaa niimiwig ezhi-nizidaniing

Also / they dance / on my feet

Miinawaa baaga'akokwewag ezhi-ninagaakininjiing

Also / they beat the drum / in my palm (my fist)

Gaandinwad nikaadan pii n'bimose

They push / my legs / when / I walk along (I march)

Omoshkinatoonaawaa nipanan pii ninagam

They fill up / my lungs / when / I sing

Niwijji'igood ayaa mashkawizi pii n'kinoomageyaan

They help me / to be / strong / when / I teach

Ayaad wiijiniin pii mooka'am giizis

They are / with me / when / s\he rises / the sun

Miinawaa n'waabamaa kiinawaa pii ninibaa

Also / I see / them / when / I sleep

Odoondinaanaawaa bimaadiziwin onji-indonzibiingwaning

They get it from such a place / life / at the place of my tears

Nimaamkoomigoog;

They remind me

N'debise.

I am enough.