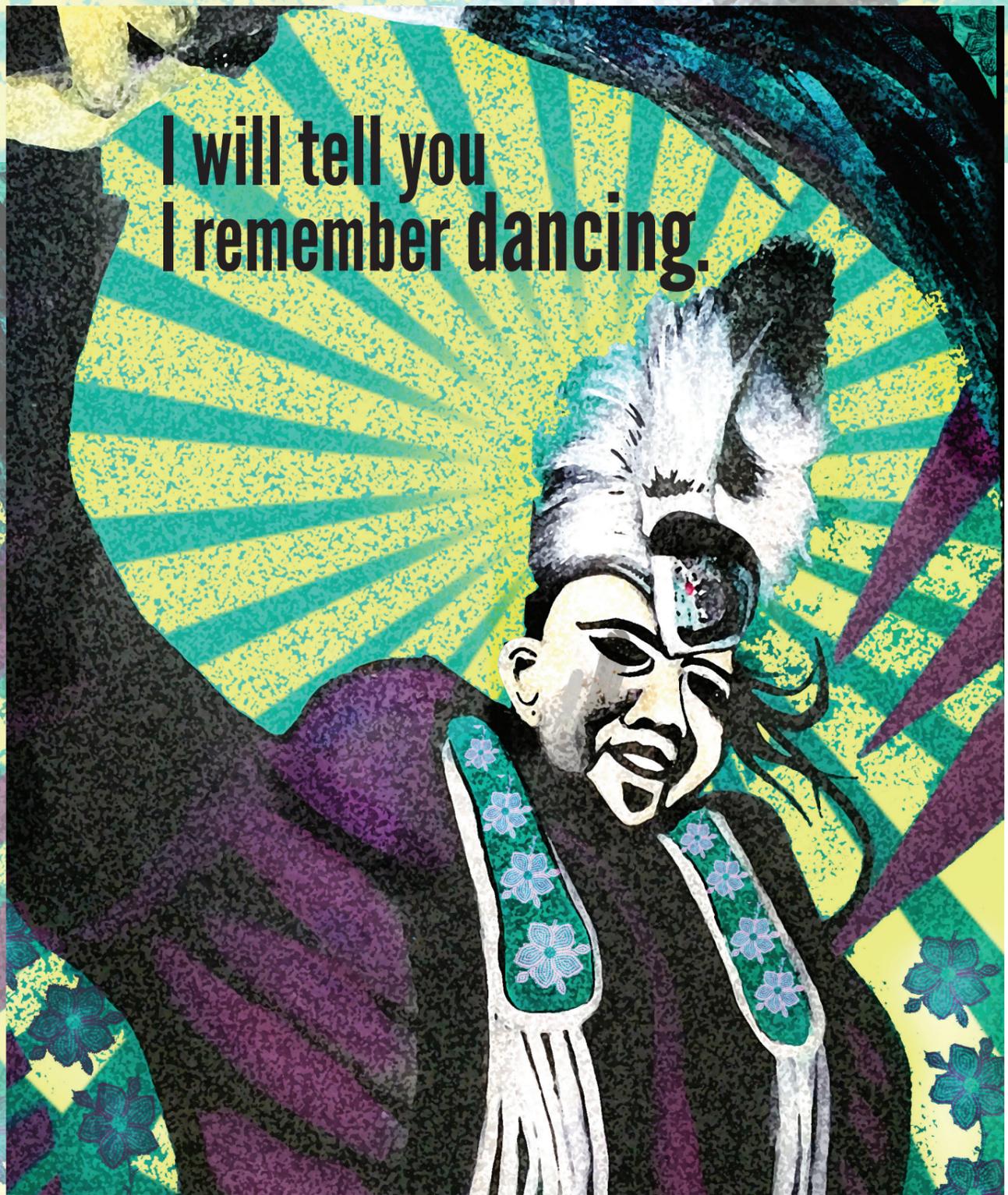


The Dance of Decolonial Love

When I am old,

I will tell you
I remember dancing.



I will tell you I remember every time they
said our starvation
was natural and our
dispossession was progress.

When I am old, I will tell you I remember refusal.

The dream of these twelve moons, just like the
twelve thousand before and after, is freedom.

And one last thing, before I forget,
remember:

our memories contain every future,
every sunrise, you will ever need.

Twelve Thousand Moons

Image by Angela Sterritt
Words by Erica Violet Lee

When I am old, I will tell you I remember dancing. I remember morning ceremonies at the Squamish, x^wməθk^wəyəm, Tsleil-Waututh waterfronts, shutting down malls in amiskwaciwâskahikan, organizing all night in Iqaluit, and the Chief setting up camp by that funny little concrete flame.

I'll tell you about the day we danced in front of the old rail station in North Battleford, our drums shaking the spikes from the tracks and eventually shutting down the courtroom inside. When we sang those love songs louder after the cops told us to settle down so the trial could continue, it was mourning and celebration all in one. That's what most of us did those early days: counting our time in breaths, breathlessness, and how many round dance songs before we hit the ground.

I will tell you I remember every time they said our starvation was natural and our dispossession was progress. Every time they said our freedom was impossible, and how this made us want it even more. I remember how upset they were when we started growing tobacco and vegetables in the plots of wasteland they had reserved for gas stations.

When I am old, I will tell you I remember refusal. I remember walking around what used to be the financial district in Dish with One Spoon and re-imagining it as our own, once more, feet sore from marching but unwilling to give in to sleep. I remember the days our people were locked up for fighting pipelines, for graffiti, for sex, for smudging, for living. I remember the night we broke them out and brought them all home.

When I am old, I will tell you I remember learning to twist copper wire snares from big, rough hands that didn't need hide mitts in the bush but wore them anyway, just to show off that someone cared enough to keep those hands warm. I remember catching my first fish, taught exactly how to knock a pike on the head so it didn't suffer long; this is how we cherished kindnesses in a world that afforded few.

I remember the Red River and Red Rising Rebellions. I remember the earrings my sister made me with beads the color of northern lights to wear to that extravagant party with Nēhiyaw philosophers, Dene physicists, and Anishinaabe poets after the first time a Métis went into outer space. We danced then, too, and I remember waking up by the fire after a bit too much strawberry champagne, surrounded by a circle of friends telling their re-creation stories with shadow figures on the wall.

When I am old, I will tell you I remember learning about freedom beyond anthems and passports. And how we never went back once we knew the kind of love bound only by shorelines, prairie skies, and forest floors.

The dream of these twelve moons, just like the twelve thousand before and after, is freedom. And one last thing, before I forget, remember: our memories contain every future, every sunrise, you will ever need.



Biographies

Angela Sterritt is an artist and writer from the Gitksan Nation.

Erica Violet Lee is Nēhiyaw from inner-city Saskatoon, where the first Idle No More gathering was organized in winter 2012. She writes Indigenous re-creation stories at moontimewarrior.com.



Further Reading

Lee, Erica Violet. "Land, Language, and Decolonial Love." *Red Rising Magazine* (November 2016): 2-4.

Maracle, Lee. *I am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*, 2nd ed. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1996.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs*. Winnipeg: ARP, 2013.

Sterritt, Angela. "The Legacy of Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada." *49th Shelf*. <https://49thshelf.com/Blog/2015/03/06/Angela-Sterritt-The-Legacy-of-Violence-Against-Indigenous-Women-in-Canada>.



Graphic
History
Collective

Illustrate • Educate • Organize

www.graphichistorycollective.com

