

## BOBBI NAHWEGAHBOW

### Strong Indian Womyn

Who are the strong womyn?  
Where have they all gone, battered, bruised and  
beaten?  
Do you remember the ones they called witches,  
who in the burning time were really womyn of  
wisdom, doctoring and healing was what they  
did.  
My tears want to spill over for their persecution  
and innocent deaths.  
They burned and cried, for other womyn they  
died.  
Earth lovers, plant lovers, nature's instruments of  
peace who sought to heal with their medicine.  
What is the medicine, you say?  
They say the womyn is the medicine. By this I  
understand it to mean that the womynly ways  
are the medicine, the healing.  
What are the womynly ways and gifts?  
The kindness, the loving gentleness we show to all  
living things, our softness, being in touch with  
the inner self.  
We as womyn are healers, we carry the medicine  
as Indian womyn.  
For long centuries now we have held our children  
and our men to our warm red bodies, comforting  
and healing.  
We have sounded our war cries and stood on the  
battlefield, dying for our people.  
We have stood through the ages in our buckskin  
dresses watching our people die, with tears in  
our round black eyes.  
Our children died in the battles of sand creek,  
wounded knee and others before our eyes.  
Long has the white man raped us.  
Long we have starved and held our hands in our  
heads.  
But we have survived, and we are beautiful.  
So hold your head up high, Indian womyn, you've  
made it, you're beautiful, and you're whole!  
The power of your life giving force is shining  
through.  
I watch you as you sing your beautiful brown baby  
to sleep in her cradleboard.  
Aah! Sweet ancient songs which lull the babies.  
May their animal spirits always protect them as  
they sleep.  
For the children, the future generations to come,  
we go on.  
Our hearts never stop hoping, even when they are  
in the ground.  
The waterdrum soothes our womyn's hearts.  
The eagle whistle sounds and awakens my soul  
It says "Keep loving, keep healing."

Though our men have fallen by the wayside, and  
many have given up on us Red womyn,  
still we must make ourselves strong, pick up our  
bundles, and someday they will walk beside us  
again.  
Oh yes, I know those white womyn too well who  
come into our community to get a handsome  
Indian buck.  
Sadly the men fall into the trap  
Of money, white money. And status. The status of  
the white man's world.  
Sometimes they forget that of a Red womyn they  
were born.  
But our day will come, when we take our rightful  
place in the sun.  
Our respect will be restored.  
We who remember.  
The grey and beautiful grandmothers in their  
beautiful wisdom sit and spin the webs of live,  
knowing the outcome long before her young  
daughters.  
O, Grandmother spider womyn, help us naive  
children.  
Spin us webs of harmony and balance so that there  
might be peace between men and womyn  
Make all violence and torture stop, and let gentle-  
ness stand in its place  
Let forgiveness be in the hearts of every human  
being  
Let men regard womyn as sacred, to be cherished,  
not dominated and controlled  
Grandmother moon, help your Nishnawbe Kweuk  
to know their purpose  
Help them to honour and respect themselves so  
that they in turn will respect men  
Teach them about the water, the life force  
We walk with you but for a short time Grand-  
mother moon, o nokomis  
Then we ourselves become the Grandmothers, and  
your visits are over  
O how we'll miss you, but our destinies are  
fulfilled as we become the Grandmothers, the  
teachers  
For that I say megweteh  
Megweteh for this beautiful life, this red  
sweetgrass road.  
Megweteh for making us strong Indian womyn.

*Bobbi Nahwegahabow is from the Manitoulin area. She is an activist in the feminist community where she tries to integrate her beliefs as a Native womyn.*