**The Highway Of Tears - Poetry**

[*September 30, 2013*](https://www.smeetslaw.com/2013/09/30/)*by*[*Larry Smeets*](https://www.smeetslaw.com/author/larry/)

.

With innocent smile

she presides

over new reports

she was unable

during her own brief life

to comprehend.

Her name is now entwined

with terms like  “decaying”

“serial killer’s victim” and  “shallow grave”.

What did she live through

between the smiles

and the moment of her death?

What desires not yet professed

were by her abductor’s hands crushed?

What hopes were shattered?

What trusts betrayed?

The contrast between the calm image

in her school photos

and the shocking jargon

of the crime reporters,

the disparity

between the beauty lost and the gruesome details,

between what she was

and what has become of her,

warns us all

that when innocence blossoms

it flowers in a brutal world.

**– Larry Smeets**

***“A Lament for Laura and the Disappeared” by Tanaya Winder***

“I am not murdered. I am not missing

And so I will speak even to those who won’t listen.

I will speak because

I am not murdered. I am not missing

I am one part of a thread of voices

Of bodies or women standing up to speak for those who are murdered

Those who are missing

Those whose families are missing them

We are here to support our stolen sisters

Young native girls and aboriginal women

Aboriginal Canadian women are 5 times more likely to be violently attacked than non-aboriginal women”

You can read ‘Boast Unanimity’ from Miskwagoode below.

##### Boast Unanimity

take to the streets

walk swirl spin words  
.  incite rabble rouse

unwritten life manifesto re-image nation  
.  step out more self-contained  
.  wear a shawl over winter parka

talk swirl spin inward yet  
outward confident conscious  
possible defiant words declare  
rebel, revolt, resolve, recollect  
walk straight into dystopia

march out more self-contained  
wear a ribbon skirt to match others  
express compassionate solidarity  
red or purple chosen colours of purpose

many red skeletons bump along back streets  
make multiple paths toward crowd holding  
candle lights in collective gesture to mourn  
sisters fallen but not forgotten on this eve

foot after foot motion fumble feel around  
awkward in shuffle step sound momentum  
form outspoken unwritten life manifesto  
zigzag animation an ultimatum showdown

proceed single file to women march  
minus below breeze rips through crowd  
red skeletal remains scramble to get closer  
spirits in deference keep outside inner huddle

join hands thick mitts shield finger bone clutch  
phantom fingers and toes dig in crunch together  
as if it is all pavement road to navigate from ancestor  
lodge while inside they did rest formal introduce  
say tansi aaniin boozhoo sisters welcome back  
we have work to do  maybe one grisly joke  
murder she did not write only Agatha Christie  
solved murder mysteries on telly every week  
support this exceptional gesture of defiance

police now encircle where was presence  
before criminal arrest supposed to take place  
vital contact before bureaucratic damage done  
now it is mere entrapment to have security  
negotiations about safety must serve and protect  
taste strange metaphor on tongue about to say  
valentine day so boney red is suitable choice

valentine day winter evening  
time being always time immemorial

find comforting grip for boney toes  
dig in crunch together cannot avoid  
bump in journey step over pot hole

as if it is all talk not walk to negotiate  
re-image nation copy that

how many lives taken  
speckled stones remain along pathways  
find one it is divine to remember

Today we stand in solidarity  
As sisters we lift our drums and voices to unite  
Justice for our mmiwg2s  
Who were denied the right to life.  
  
Through Sacred Fires and Ceremonies  
we hear their loved ones cry  
Singing up to Creator  
to understand the reason why.  
  
So let us stand together  
Honouring generations of red dresses hanging in trees  
Giving back our Stolen Sisters voices,  
And hear their stories whispered in the breeze.

[**Annalee Somerville**](https://www.poemhunter.com/annalee-somerville/)

## I am 10 years old

My name is Natalia,

I am 10 years old.

I will never be older than just 10.

I will never graduate

I will never fall in love

I will never have children of my own

I will never live the life I was given

I am 10 years old.

Although, in my 10 years of existence

I was taught not to fear the white man but to keep my distance

I was taught how to dress appropriately so no one would stare

I was raised Catholic because my grandmother said our ways are shameful

I spoke English and not one word of our mothers tongue

It felt wrong,

But I did as I was told.

On that cold day,

I had to walk home from school,

a route I walked almost every day.

A man, with the gentlest smile

offered me a ride home,

I rejected his offer kindly,

A man, with the gentlest smile

did not like to be told “no.”

He told me he loved Native girls like me.

In those moments I questioned,

I dress like all the white girls?

I talk like all the white girls?

Not an ounce of Aboriginality was inside me

Except for my blood.

But still,

I was a target because

A man, with the gentlest smile

loved Native girls like me.

I was deflowered

I was robbed of my innocence

I received the kiss of death

I am 10 years old.

My body was found 16 days later.

Yes, you read that right

s i x t e e n   d a y s

No finger prints

No DNA

Not a trace left behind by

A man, with the gentlest smile.

I am 10 years old and I will never be older than just 10.

I don’t mind though,

because there are plenty other girls just like me,

here, in this Spirit World.

**Astokomii Smith**

Arrowwood, AB  
Siksika  
Age 18

Highway of Tears

Some have not been seen or heard from in years  
Last seen traveling down the highway of tears

On the hard, stone cold ground where she lay  
She won’t be coming home no not today

So many native women met with foul play  
In our hearts I hope they will always stay

On the side of the roadway where wild roses grow  
Their final resting place they have come to know

Their silenced voices still echo through the trees  
And may their precious spirits forever roam free

Their spirits call out from beneath the clear blue sky  
Why did so many innocent women have to die?

It’s so very sad that it makes me want to cry  
They didn’t even have the chance to say goodbye

Their loving ashes are scattered on the wind  
When will this senseless violence ever end?

An endless river of tears flows surely to the sea  
That there’s still hope we’ve just got to believe

Gazing out at the distant star filled sky  
We all ask ourselves the question of why

So many tears have been cried in this place  
All are seeking that final loving grace

 I throw my open arms up into the still air  
I’m certain many still possess the heart to care

Should you find yourself travelling the highway of tears  
Say a prayer for those who took their last breath here

By Gary Edward Allen 2017 ©

Highway of tears  
  
I wanted and want to  
Sit with them  
Talk with them  
Witness them  
Share their pains  
Be with them on tough roads  
Ride with them on highway ‘of tears’.  
  
Thanks to Mall I saw one  
Started with my phone, her mother  
Then she came.  
  
Her claims and actions  
Their warnings with whispers  
Handwriting, then address.  
  
Checked her on Internet  
Among them her secrets  
Between lines hear talks.  
  
The pictures and the words, videos  
Little girl; let me name her Tara.  
  
Is lucky?  
Child of rape?  
How can be?  
I am shocked, yet waiting.  
  
Time is key  
Is she a Squaw?  
  
People are different  
Doubtlessly with a cause.  
And daughter, her mother?  
  
She told me of writing, of movies, stories, scripts  
She looks like Barbara, is there a connection?  
  
These are all the basics for research.  
  
Must I move cautiously on highway, of tears?

[**Nassy Fesharaki**](https://www.poemhunter.com/nassy-fesharaki/)

**Highway of Tears  
Written for the Symposium  
By Tony Romeyn**

Please help me to seeHelp me to feel your painHelp me to understand why it must beThat you and I are gathered hereMoms Dads Brothers Sisters Uncles Aunts and FriendsGreat distances some of you have walkedFrom each community because you careAlong that highway tears came easySharing stories and memories of those you loveSometimes you laughed then you criedFor loved ones – some taken so brutallyYou’ve come to say we hurt so muchYou’ve come in anger fear and hopeDeep inside I cry for each of youHighway of Tears we call it nowAs you’ve shared your many storiesI cried and felt your painI wished I could fix it allAnd send you home in peaceFor your Children we’ve comeFor most of you long over duePlease speak for her I heard one sayShe has no one else – no familyOne thing I ask of you todayThough anger may be what you feelTo speak gently so all can hearAll of us are here today because we care

**THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS  
By Gloria (Frank) Clay**The Highway of TearsHas so many fears,Another victim has been claimed,And now, she has been sadly named.She went missing from home,Then, was found, cold and alone.Found beside the Highway of Tears,It was her family’s worst fears.Now she is gone, this young soul,Her family will ne’er again be whole.Who could have done this terrible deed?The answer is a must, and a need.A monster prowls the Highway of Tears!Too many young girls, too many fears.He gives them a smile, or a warm embrace,but, then he takes them to this terrible place.The Highway of TearsHas so many fears.Another victim has been sadly claimed-Let’s hope YOU will never be a victim named.Please, please, to all the young women,be careful and don’t travel by yourself.

**Till We Meet Again  
By Christal Capostinsky**

Gone but never forgottenFaces that we will remember foreverFor the lives they had were not who they wereFriend, sister, brother, they were and will always beGlitters that shine bright in the night skyWaiting…For the comfort of our prayersThe streets were only but a home for their lost soulsWandering aimlesslySearching for something or someone to believe inThey were warriorsMen and women standing in the face of a nation risen against themTheir stories will not be untoldStamped out in the ashes of their deathsThis is not goodbyeOnly till a moment in time when we meet again

**BUTTERFLY**  
**By David Culver**

The falling of leaves in autumn,are the whispers and sighs of thosewho stood around you,healing the wounds they suffered,when against the gray dark wilderness,they found youwith rosey wreaths, proptedin the sandy dirt.It made us aware of a season dying.That night, sounded the breakingof hearts inside us.Now, when this season comes,it hides us in all the silencea world could give, to heal the hurt.But, a hurt that never went away,yet, stays in small rooms of our hearts,and somehow, still finds you…drifting alone in our conscience.

Truck Stop Wall (Highway of Tears)  
  
I set out lonely in the Prince George rain  
To see my sister in the mountains today  
A truck pulled over when I stuck out my thumb  
He said he'd take me somewhere far away  
I know it's dangerous, I know people have died  
But I been stuck so many times, I can always find a ride  
  
Now the pigs are ready for slaughter in the farmlands to the south  
I can still feel East Hastings like a bad taste in my mouth  
I came back to the north to be with my son, but I'm nobody's wife  
Now he's reaching into his boot and 'Oh my God, that looks like a knife…'  
  
Faces fading on a truck stop wall  
Another missing for another year  
Forgotten voices in the northern rain  
Last seen standing on the Highway of Tears  
  
These forests are my playground, this backpack is my home  
The road is full of bad turns but you can't be afraid to roam  
My contract finished early, I planted my last tree  
Now there's a festival in Smithers, people I want to see  
I know it's dangerous, I know people have died  
But it's summertime on the open road and I feel like I can fly  
  
I used to laugh at all the faces looking away with their little lies  
But now I'm a ghost in your rearview mirror who wasn't there when you drove by  
Two cities named after Princes and a Highway full of thieves  
My body's still out here somewhere, my soul's lost in the trees  
  
-Chorus-  
  
I only drive this highway about once or twice a year  
I'm the only one on this stretch of road who ain't got nothing to fear  
I like 'em tall and pretty, dark-haired and young  
I got a knife tucked into my boot and if they scream I got a gun  
They all know it's dangerous, they all know people have died  
But every day there's another girl with her thumb out for a ride  
  
I know someday they might catch me, but for now I'm not really scared  
As long as I leave the white girls, the cops don't seem to care  
Now their mothers all walk the highway, there's another one every year  
They know it'll never be over, as long as I'm still here  
  
Faces fading on a truck stop wall  
Another missing for another year  
A killer driving with a stolen heart  
Last seen standing on the Highway of Tears

**credits**

from [Vagabonds & Wastrels](https://jeffandrew.bandcamp.com/album/vagabonds-wastrels), released January 13, 2009  
Jeff Andrew - guitar, dobro, harmonica, vocals  
Tobias Meis - bass  
Shelder Footz - trumpet  
Larissa Ardis - accordion  
Words & Music by Jeff Andrew

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Totem Poles and Railroadstotem poles and railroads / canada post diesel and drugs

uncomfortable with discomfort / everything is human error

pointing to police

cops cars passing / opposite directions

I look to them like / I know something

like they know something / and not saying

we are not sure / what’s been saved

or deleted

Janet Rogers