

POETRY

Here We are on Stolen Land, Your Homeland

Farah Mahrukh Coomi Shroff

Here we are on stolen Land
Far from the soil of our ancestors
Like dandelion seeds scattered by colonizing hands,
The winds of malice blew us all
Here to your Land, that we now call
Home

Here we are on stolen Land
Amidst Indigenous warriors' cries,
Wise elders' teachings, a sacred connection
To Earth, Sky, Sun, and Moon's affection

Here we are on stolen Land
Amidst ongoing struggles against oppression,
Unheeded need, falling on ears deafened by greed
Indigenous wisdom's light
Guiding the Land, water, animals, for a future bright

For the sustenance of all
Your strong leadership in resisting pipelines, mines, fracking
Care for the environment, despite the attacking
Of state forces against you and the Land
Thank you all
Tsimshian, Haida, Wet'suwet'en, Stó:lō, Anishinaabe, Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam, Gitxsan,
Squamish, Beothuk, Inuvialuit
Hitting the nerve centers of capital
Stops business as usual!
No more maya¹ – delusional

Here we are on stolen Land
Like those before us and those yet to come, escaping persecution and poverty
Seeking money
Yearning for milk and honey
Not fully knowing your sacrifice
How best may we be brothers, sisters, siblings—united in a sacred promise to heal ourselves
and our Mother?
We hope that one day we will pay our taxes to you
One day, hold passports from your Nations, so we are *welcome* citizens in Kanata
We yearn for the day when Turtle Island will be free!
In our Motherlands, we shed the skin of the invaders to a degree
Even flag independence is better than occupation and settlement

Here on this stolen Land
We honour your determination and courage
That holds the light for so many
Through long tunnels of trauma and grief
We have not forgotten your suffering
Or how loudly justice calls your names
We invite dialog about our mistakes and lack of courage for all the times we slipped
Forgotten who we are, where we have come from and our own earth wisdom
For all the times we lacked the courage to stand up
For you, for the mountains, rivers, trees

Here on this stolen Land
Awakened to our connection with you

Sacred promises
To the water, to the soil, to Life
We stand beside you now
To avow
A pledge to Mother Earth

Here on stolen Land
We stand together for justice, protecting the heartbeat of this planet
Let's transform the malevolent winds
Making us diasporic, here on stolen Land
The occupiers on this Land are the same
When all of us want this planet to survive then we'll journey together

Here we are on stolen Land
Connected with the original stewards
For our children
Each other
For the Earth
For all our Existence

Here we are on Stolen Land
Together We Stand
Hand in hand



Photo 1: Spirit of Haida Gwaii.
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Dedication

This prose is dedicated to my dear friends and healers, Nola and Hoomiis (George) Jeffrey. Nola is a grandmother, powerhouse, leader, and inspirational speaker from the Tsimshian and Coast Salish (Stolo) Nations. Hoomiis is a multi-talented tree specialist from the Tsimshian and Gitxsan Nations who has heeded the sacred call of his ancestors and become a healer of hearts, minds, and bodies like none other.



Photo 2: Nola and Hoomiis (published with their permission ©Author)

About the Prose

This prose is written from the perspective of an immigrant of color to Turtle Island, with love. I have had the honor of working with Indigenous communities for many years, reinforcing the “Indian-Indian” connection. I was adopted by the Inglangasuk family of Aklavik, NWT and given the name Igaluk (Arctic Char), after the matriarch, Mary’s grandfather. This prose speaks to my thoughts about the need for greater dialog and understanding of shared colonial realities and possibilities of decolonizational transformation on Turtle Island. Above all, it speaks to the need for deep respect for the stewards of this

land. I believe that the ancient wisdom of Indigenous communities will be a major force in climate justice movements.

About the Author

I am *Farah Mahrukh Coomi Shroff*. Farah means joy and Mahrukh means face of the moon. Coomi is my grandmother’s name and I’m not sure what it means. I hail from a community called the Parsis who are originally from Persia but we’ve been in South Asia for about 1000 years. I was born in Kenya, and I’ve been on Musqueam land most of my life, while working in Asia, the African Continent, Latin America and other parts of the world.

As a social justice scholar, educator, organizer and activist in public health, I really care that we *all* get a better deal in this world. I have taught at the University of British Columbia Medical School for many years. I also run Darya Consulting and teach yoga, dance, meditation, self defense, and other mind body practices. I founded and lead Maternal and Infant Health Canada (MIHCan) which strives for womxn, young ones and the Planet, to have better chances of being healthy. MIHCan focuses on education, research and innovation, in India and on Turtle Island.

For all this work, I was recently honored by Harvard School of Public Health with the Takemi Fellowship in International Health 2021-22—a mid-career award. I continue to work with the Harvard Health Lab.

My beloved Roozbeh and I are parents to Zubin and Arman, our beautiful boys. We are honored to call the lands of the Musqueam our home. One day, we hope to pay our taxes to them and if possible, have a passport with citizenship.

Email: drfarahshroff@gmail.com and farah.shroff@ubc.ca

¹ Maya is the Sanskrit work for illusion. It usually refers to the fallacy of the material world as permanent and the source of our contentment. In the context of this prose, maya could refer to over consumption.