**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