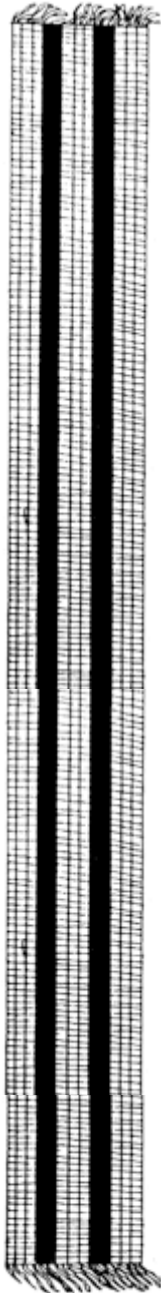




The Two Row Wampum laid the foundation for all treaties and agreements made between First Nations and Europeans during the colonial history of North America. The two rows symbolize two vessels traveling down the same river of life together, side by side, each in their own boat; neither trying to steer the other's vessel.



Reconciliation

We are waking up to our history
from a forced slumber
We are breathing it into our lungs
so it will be part of us again
It will make us angry at first
because we will see how much you stole from us
and for how long you watched us suffer
we will see how you see us
and how when we copied your ways
it killed our own.

We will cry and cry and cry
because we can never be the same again
But we will go home to cry
and we will see ourselves in this huge mess
and we will gently whisper the circle back
and it will be old and it will be new.

Then we will breathe our history back to you
you will feel how strong and alive it is
and you will feel yourself become a part of it
And it will shock you at first
because it is too big to see all at once
and you won't want to believe it
you will see how you see us
and all the disaster in your ways
how much we lost.

And you will cry and cry and cry
because we can never be the same again
But we will cry with you
and we will see ourselves in this huge mess
and we will gently whisper the circle back
and it will be old and it will be new.

by *Rebeka Tabobondung*

Rebeka Tabobondung, a member of the Waskauksing First Nation, is a poet, activist, and film maker. She lives in Toronto. This poem appears in the new edition of Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada
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