

# Love Lessons in a Time of Settler Colonialism

Tanaya Winder

*I am not murdered, and I am not missing, but parts of me have been disappeared.*

— Leanne Simpson



They too know all too well that some cracks were built just for us to fall through. We live in a world that tries to steal spirits each day; they steal ours by taking us away.

From Industrial Schools to forced assimilation, genocide means removal of those who birth nations – our living threatens. Colonization has been choking

us for generations. I tell my girls they are vessels of spirit, air to lungs expanding; this world cannot breathe without us. There are days I wish

I didn't have to teach these lessons, but as an Indigenous womxn silence is deadening. There is danger in being seen, our bodies are targets

marked for violence. We carry the Earth's me too inside us, a howling wind, our mothers & their mothers swallowed these bullets long ago.

The voices ricochet I wish I were invisible I wish I were invisible I wish echoes in my ear-drums – we know what it's like to live in fear. Colonialism's bullet sits cocked,

waiting behind a finger on trigger. We breathe and speak and sing for survival. We carve out in lines; we write – I know joy I know pain I know love

I know love I know – lessons we've carried throughout time. Should I go missing: don't stop searching; drag every river until it turns red and the waters of our names

stretch a flood so wide it catches everything. And we find each other whole and sacred, alive and breathing and breathing and breathing.

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