

BEING UTE

(PRESENTED AT THE TRI-UTE YOUTH CONFERENCE, MAY 2018)

A POEM BY TANAYA WINDER

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Wake up, greet the sun, and pray
Burn cedar, sweet grass, sage –
sacred herbs to honor the lives we've been given,
for we have been gifted these ways since the beginning of time.

Remember, when you step into the arena of your life
think about those who stand beside you, next to, and with you
Your ancestors are always in your corner, along with your people

When we enter this world we are born hungry,
our spirits long for us to live out our traditions
that have been passed down for generations.
Prayer, ceremony, dance, language - our Ute ways of being.
Never forget you were put on this earth for a reason –

Honor your ancestors.
Be a good person, be who you are, be a good relative

We are strong, beautiful and unique.
We are a part of a great legacy,
carrying on traditions through the centuries.

We support each other, our sister tribes,
together (nana-ma) is the way we thrive.
We are a part of a family that never dies,
but endures into the spirit world.

We honor our ancestors by honoring our spirits in song, ceremony, and prayer.
We honor our bodies when we dance or play on the field or court.
We challenge and push ourselves to keep our culture living because we are alive.

We live, we love, we pray, we honor our ancestors
by embracing the strength and resilience that lives in our bones.
Our blood flows ancestral, Ute strong, coursing through our veins like rivers
reminding us to be who we are meant to be – brave, warriors who have survived.

TANAYA WINDER



Tanaya Winder is a poet, writer, artist and educator who was raised on the Southern Ute reservation in Ignacio, CO. An enrolled member of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, her background includes Southern Ute, Pyramid Lake Paiute, Diné, and Black heritages. Tanaya writes and teaches about different expressions of love (self love, intimate love, social love, community love, and universal love).

A winner of the 2010 A Room Of Her Own Foundation's Orlando prize in poetry, her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *POETRY*, *Rumpus*, and *World Literature Review* among others. Her poems from her manuscript "Love in a Time of Blood Quantum" were produced and performed by the Poetic Theater Productions Presents Company in NYC. Her debut poetry collection *Words Like Love* was published in 2015 by West End Press. Her chapbook *Why Storms are Named After People and Bullets Remain Nameless* released in 2017.

Tanaya has taught writing courses at Stanford University, UC-Boulder, and the University of New Mexico. She has a BA in English from Stanford University and a MFA in creative writing from UNM. She is a co-founder of *As/Us: A Space for Women of the World*. She guest lectures and teaches creative writing workshops at high schools and universities internationally. She was a TEDxABQ speaker in 2013.

Tanaya is the Director of the University of Colorado at Boulder's Upward Bound Program, which services 103 Native American youth from 5 states, 12 high schools, and 5 reservations across the country. She continues to teach as an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico. She co-founded the *Sing Our Rivers Red* traveling earring exhibit to raise awareness about murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. She is a 2016 National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development "40 Under 40" list of emerging American Indian leaders recipient and a 2017 First Peoples Fund Artists in Business Leadership fellows.

Finally, she created *Dream Warriors Management*, which currently consists of Indigenous Artists: Mic Jordan, Lyla June, Tall Paul, and Frank Waln. Tanaya manages these artists, each of whom travels to perform concerts, run workshops, teach empowerment and artistic skill sets, and speak at various engagements throughout the country. She created it to bring together different talented artists, speakers, and educators who embody the values of what it means to be a Dream Warrior.

If you'd like to schedule or book Tanaya for a poetry performance, speaking engagement, keynote, reading, workshop, manuscript critique, book review, school visit, or lecture please contact her at: tanaya.winder@gmail.com