

The Canvas Remembers: Spirit and Skin

by Jessica Jerome

The brushes sat idle, the colors ran dry,
As seasons of projects kept hurrying by.
All my light was poured into pixels and the screen,
Leaving little for spaces where *self* once had been.
A friend whispered when darkness was stark:
"Make room for the flame. Find time for the spark."
A dream once awakened in two-thousand-four,
When I first let the shadows slip out through the door.
A two-spirited woman, a mother, a wife,
I paint transitions that flow through my life.
Releasing these feelings is how I stay whole,
Moving weight from my heart to the depth of the scroll.
Now Mi'kmaw petroglyphs bloom bright on my skin,
A message of who I have grown from within.
Two-Spirited symbols rest firm on each shoulder.
Growing in power as the years make me older.
With one eye covered to strengthen the other,
I paint as a keeper, a daughter, a mother.
Sweetgrass is present to heal and to hold,
A medicine gift from the stories of old.
Through paint, I show kin in their beautiful span,
The light in the eyes and the fairness of the skin.
So all our people feel seen in the light,
Through movement of colour that breaks through the night.
Blessed by Creator, I carry the flame,
Passing down teachings and honouring a name.
I give to my sons what was gifted to me /
The art of a journey, the soul set free.

Jessica Jerome (Two-Spirited) is Mi'kmaq, originating from the district of Gespegewagi. She was born in Lis-tuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation and was later adopted by the Jerome family in Gesgapegiag. Jessica is a member of the Micmacs of Gesgapegiag Band, which is situated along the banks of the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec. Jessica's professional art education includes studies at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, where she earned a Certificate in Foundation of Visual Arts. She furthered her education with a Certificate in Applied Media and Communication Arts and obtained a Graphic Design Diploma from the Waterfront Campus of Nova Scotia Community College. Jessica's artwork has been exhibited in several galleries and juried shows across Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Her pieces are part of permanent displays at the Cancer Centre in Kingston, Ontario, as well as in her home community. She has also contributed graphics and logo design work for Mi'kmaq communities throughout Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, supporting First Nation community and economic development initiatives.