



Handout 5 - Three Poems by Indigenous Writers

On Leaving My Children John and Jane at School, in the Atlantic States, and Preparing to Return to the Interior **Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Ojibwe)**

Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (1800-1842) is considered to be the first known Native woman writer in the United States. Schoolcraft was the daughter of a Ojibwe mother and Scots-Irish Father. She began writing poetry at age fifteen, both in English and Ojibwemowin. Many of her poems were published in a magazine she coedited with her husband, Henry Schoolcraft.

Nii'aa nindinendam - Oh I am thinking
Mikawiyandin - I am found by you
Endanakiiyaan - My place of origin
Waasawagamig - A faraway place
Endanakiiyaan - My place of origin

Nindaanisens e - My little daughter
Ningwizisens e - My little son
Izhi-nagadawaad - Oh I leave them
waasawekamig - In a faraway place

Zhigwa gosha wi - Now
Beshowad e we - It is near
Nazhikeweyaan - I am alone
Izhi-izhayaan - As I go
Endanakiiyaan - My homeland

Endanakiiyaan - My homeland
Nazhikeweyaan - I am alone
Izhi-giiweyaan - I am going home
Nii'aa ningashkendam - Oh I am sad



Oh, Give Me Back My Bended Bow
William Walker Jr. (Häh-Shäh-Rêhs) (Wyandot)

William Walker Jr. (1800-1874) was the principal chief of the Wyandot tribe from 1835-1836, and the first provisional governor of Nebraska Territory. His work, which often spoke on the rights of the Wyandot, was widely published.

Oh, give me back my bended bow,
My cap and feather, give them back,
To chase o'er hill the mountain roe,
Or follow in the otter's track.

You took me from my native wild,
Where all was bright, and free and blest;
You said the Indian hunter's child
In classic halls and bowers should rest.

Long have I dwelt within these walls
And pored o'er ancient pages long.
I hate these antiquated halls;
I hate the Grecian poet's song.



Everything You Need to Know In Life You'll Learn in Boarding School
Linda Legarde Grover (Anishinaabe)

Linda Legarde Grover (1950-) is a writer from the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe. In addition to writing works of poetry and fiction, she is the professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth, where she researches the effects the Indian education policy has had on children and families.

Speak English. Forget the language of your grandparents. It is dead. Forget their teachings. They are unGodly and ignorant. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Indians are not clean. Your parents did not teach you proper hygiene. Stay in line. This is a toothbrush. Hang it on the hook next to the others. Do not allow the bristles to touch. This spreads the disease that you bring to school from your families. Make your bed with mitered corners. A bed not properly made will be torn apart. Start over. Remember and be grateful that boarding school feeds and clothes you. Say grace before meals. In English. Don't cry. Crying never solves anything. Write home once every month. In English. Tell your parents that you are doing very well. You'll never amount to anything. Make the most of your opportunities. You'll never amount to anything. Answer when the teacher addresses you. In English. If your family insists on and can provide transportation for you to visit home in the summer, report to the matron's office immediately upon your return. You will be allowed into the dormitory after you have been sanitized and de-loused. Busy hands are happy hands. Keep yourself occupied. You'll never amount to anything. Books are our friends. Reading is your key to the world. Forget the language of your grandparents. It is dead. If you are heard speaking it you will kneel on a navy bean for one hour. We will ask if you have learned your lesson. You will answer. In English. Spare the rod and spoil the child. We will not spare the rod. We will cut your hair. We will shame you. We will lock you in the basement. Learn from that. Improve yourself. You'll never amount to anything. Speak English.