

*Look Inside!
Selections*

Chief R. Stacey Laforme

*Love
Life
Loss*

*and a little bit
of hope*

*Poems from
the Soul*

Love
Life
Loss

and a little bit
of hope

Poems from the Soul

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Life
Loss

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Chief K. Stacey Laforme

Foreword by Kevin Hearn

Afterword by Kate Laforme



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and a little bit of hope

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The lands where our studios stand are a part of the ancient homeland and traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations, as places of hunting, travel, trade, and healing. The Treaty 7 Peoples of Southern Alberta include the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai of the Niisitapi (Blackfoot) Confederacy; the Dene Tsuut'ina; and the Chiniki, Bears paw, and Wesley Stoney Nakoda First Nations. We also acknowledge the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta. We honour the Nations and Peoples, as well as the land. We commit to serving the needs of Indigenous Peoples today and into the future.

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Dedication



*I dedicate this book to everyone who has lost
someone special. To everyone who struggles
with that loss, that pain, and who tries to find
the sun behind the clouds.*

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Foreword

Allyship



BACK IN 2016, I had the honour of helping Gord Downie bring his “Secret Path” record to the live stage. Before the first concert in Ottawa, Gord, along with me and the rest of the Secret Path band, were invited to participate in a healing ceremony with residential school survivors. The experience deeply affected me—in fact it changed my life. I embraced the idea of allyship. I made a personal commitment to learn more, and do more. The journey has been difficult, humbling, and rewarding.

I believe that anyone who sets out on this path will soon meet friends and teachers along the way. Giima Stacey Laforme has been one of my great teachers. His lessons are available to all who read his poems, which are rich in wisdom and gracefully articulated in down-to-earth language that gets right to the heart of the matter.

In 2019, I helped the Downie and Wenjak families restage *The Secret Path* at Massey Hall. This time, Gord’s songs would be sung by an amazing lineup of artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, including Tanya Tagaq, William Prince, Lori Blondeau, and members of *The Tragically Hip*.

In a typical concert, before the music begins, it's customary to have welcoming and informative speeches from individuals affiliated with the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF). However, for the upcoming performance, I aimed to create a transition that would seamlessly guide the audience from the speeches to the musical experience. I envisioned a spoken word piece infused with creative expression, designed to encapsulate the essence and purpose of the event. Ideally, it would eloquently convey the significance of the gathering.

Through my work with the DWF, I had become friends with Chief Perry Bellegarde, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and his wife Valerie (Galley) Bellegarde. I asked them if they knew of any Indigenous poets or writers who might be interested in participating in this bridge building between the speeches and the music. They immediately recommended Chief Stacey Laforme.

I ordered Chief Stacey's book *Living in the Tall Grass: Poems of Reconciliation*. A few days later, I sat down and read it from cover to cover. Then, at the Massey Hall event, Stacey's live reading of his powerful poem "Prayer" set the perfect tone for the heartfelt performances that were to follow. Chief Stacey and I have continued to collaborate and perform together since then.

In his new book *Love Life Loss and a little bit of hope*, Stacey's graceful way of addressing some of the deepest human experiences is even more powerful and inspiring. Here, he presents thought-provoking and healing meditations on this journey of life. He writes from experience, from his perspective as a son, father, husband, community leader, but most of all as a human being. In other poems, he may suddenly give voice to a grandmother, a tree, or a bison.

In the poem "Walk With Me" he writes:

See the world as I see the world.

Understand the world
as I understand it.

Let us learn from each other ...

He invites us to walk with him, and to see the world as he sees it. Not only is this an invitation we should accept, but it is also a beautiful and generous gift.

—*Kevin Hearn*

Musician, and member of the band

Barenaked Ladies

2024

Prologue
Storytelling



I TELL STORIES USING POETRY. A moment in time written from the perspective of the subject of the poem. They are not all written in first person, but enough so that you may notice.

It was my intent to write a book that chronicled my life to this point.

It has been an interesting journey through violence and abuse, homelessness and despair. Yet it has also been a life of accomplishment.

I intended to tell you my story using poetry and prose to get to this moment in time. Yet when I sat down to write this tale. I realized that a lot of the poems I wrote would not be included in that story as they were written during the pandemic, or they were written about the uncovering of our children on sites at residential schools. They dealt with love, life, loss, and hope, and I realized this is the story I want to share.

I was again envisioning chapters and sections similar to my other book *Living in the Tall Grass*,

but I soon realized that it wasn't going to be possible. You see love, life, loss, and hope are a part of not just one story but almost every story.

I think it is important to understand and share some of those moments with each other, so we can begin to heal. So that we do not lose faith in the world that surrounds us.

So, each of us can be reminded that it is our responsibility to try and make the world a little better for our children and their children.

Every poem I write, every story I tell, I live through. I experience the moments and the emotions that go along with the story, and I want my readers to experience it as well and the only way to do that is to leave a little something of yourself behind.

Usually, I state that once the poem/story is over it no longer owns me, or I no longer own it. This book and the stories within may stay with me forever.

— *Giima R. Stacey Laforme, 2024*

Imagination

We lose touch with our inner magic
Our imagination was the catalyst for
so many of our adventures as a child
Adventures that allowed us to escape
and become anything or anybody

Strange we seem to let
that imagination slip away

Some would say we refocus it
on practical things

Things in life that matter

But this magic is something
we should hold onto

Because it does matter

It reminds us of grand adventures,
it reminds us of hope

And in these magic moments we matter

We remember that we are heroes, adventurers

Maybe only in our own stories, maybe only
for moments, but we are heroes

And that is so important in the day after day
routine that becomes our lives

I wish I still had the imagination to let my
mind take me on an adventure

But though I still collect action figures and
toys, they mostly stay on the shelf
or in the box

No more dragons for me to slay or
supervillains to conquer

I remember those journeys, those adventures,
I miss them, but I cannot relive them

The magic or the imagination if you wish
has left me

I have searched inside for it but though I may
glimpse it, it is not attainable

I remember when every cloud
was its own story

I will not give up, I will look to the heavens,
I will examine those clouds

And I will dream and soar

And once again for a moment
I will be the most important thing
in my life.

Common Ground

*Everyone bears something of themselves in
this poem and that teaches us that
no matter how far apart we may seem,
we are never so far that we cannot
find common ground.*



No one thing can define us
For we are complex creatures,
dreamed in the mind of the Creator

We laugh when we should cry
We cry when we should laugh
We joke when in pain

We smile because tears could consume us
We love unconditionally and totally

We understand that family should come first
Yet family is not defined solely by blood

We are quick to anger, yet no one forgives faster
We are loyal and we are strong

When we commit, we are unwavering
We have survived much, but do not mistake
adaptation for resignation

You will always see us, for we will always be here
Standing for what we believe in,
standing beside each other

Doing what is right for our children, our future
We remember our obligation
to our Mother the Earth

And we remember our place upon her
We are a proud people and honourable people

We do not always do right, for we are human
And prone to the follies of humanity

Yet we strive to be better, to make each other better
To make the world a better place for the children

I know the Creator smiles upon us,
no matter where we are, or what we do

For the love of a child is unconditional
No matter where life takes you, walk proud.

Who Am I

Who am I, where do I belong?

It is a question that all seek to answer

Some people will try and tell you
who you are or who you are not

They will tell you that you
do or do not belong

Never listen to them,
for who you are is always here

In your breast where your spirit lives

Your heart and spirit
remember even if your mind forgets

We may lose our way

We may need to seek others to help guide us

But inside,
sometimes deep inside, there is the answer

It sometimes takes language or culture
to guide us

You were dreamed in the mind of the Creator

The Creator dreamed of the
most beautiful creature he could imagine

Then he made you
You know this

Your mind just needs to
listen to your heart and remember
Who you are and where you belong

Everywhere
It sometimes takes sport or learning
for there is no one way

Yet once we understand
and come to realize who we are

We come to understand that
we belong anywhere and everywhere

Never let another determine who you are,
or tell you where you belong

You know your worth, your value.