

Ancestors AND Elders

we are born

every heart a drum zemlya земля askiy earth

gamu atseh (to sit quietly) listen kamu- atan (listen)

ki ga gi se monaw (we pray)

nimihtowin tansyuvaty танцювати dance.

an offering, a prayer

to try to understand

the silence of our survival

dance to find the story, dance

.

maybe you don't know

why we have to dance

where it comes from

how we almost lost the dance

how the dance almost lost us

winters were the hardest
some years, we nearly starved
and if we got sick? where would we go?
we had to rely on what we
ourselves, knew; the old ways
medicines we knew in the old country
we had to find those same medicines here

but where is the medicine for loneliness?
what heals the pain of silence? distance
empty skies and unanswered songs

Frozen here, in the moment
when they came for us, over
and over, forever five years old, forever
facing years of lashes, years
of hunger, tongue
torn at the spirit's root, bound
into a brittle shape, to survive.

Without my language, my totem, my clan
and the names for why i am born,
Am I abandoned?
Am I undone?
Where is my heart now?
ancestors
i need you
hear me, braid me, heal me
where i touch
the living earth, make me part of this

make this part of me, the braid that cannot be broken

earth and sky and heart together, here i am
one braid, and i offer it back to you.

This good earth our home
for as long as we have breath
remains our care after death;
when in memory
All that we honoured in life, remains etched
like starlight on swaying grass
A shimmering map, in song, in dance, nimihitowin ТАНСЮВАТИ

see
and choose to sing, to dance, to live
the beautiful truth, that we are all related тзе правда tapwe

and it is the Land
Who claims us, first and last,
breath, heart and bone tapwe тзе правда

We are not home, we are not home,
we are not home, until
we all are home. This good earth, our hearth, our home.
zemlya askiy tze pravda tapwe

***Written by Anna Marie Sewell for Ukrainian Shumka Dancers
Ancestors & Elders***