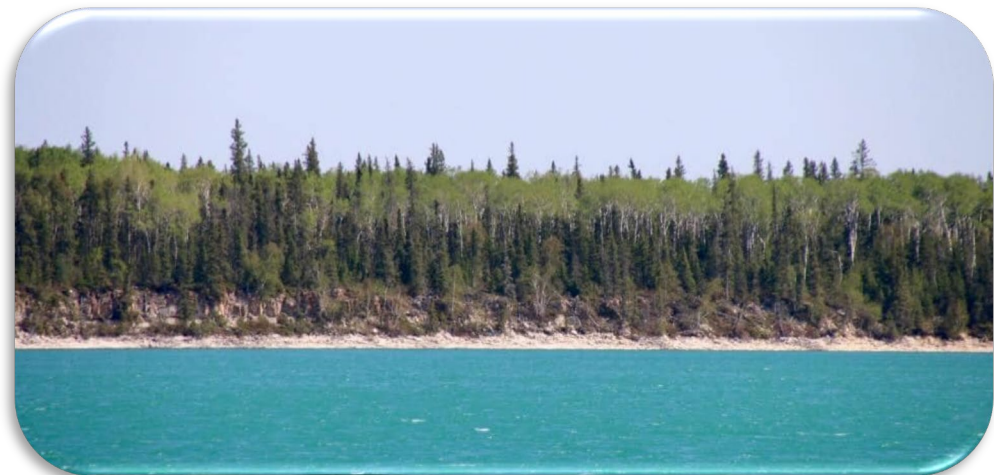


Kikâwinaw (to Mother Earth)

I knew you when I was young
your pristine forests, my playground
sparkling clearwater lakes.

With their calm depths
And white sandy beaches
Haunting calls of loons
As the sun is setting
Across the lake.





I knew your fast-flowing waters,
Shallow meandering creeks with pebble
bottoms

Your trees, willows, flowers.

I knew which berries to take
which roots, our medicines.

I felt your warmth and softness

When my bare toddler feet

First walked on lush green carpet
dotted with specks of clover.

Nohkom said

Place your hand on the ground,

Feel; I felt the pounding of your
heart

Like a rhythmic, soothing pulse of a
drum.

It was likely my own heartbeat

I believe nohkom knew it

But it was a lesson for me.





I cherished your flowers

kiwâpikwanima

Covering the landscape

With assorted beads of color as though

Painted by an artist's brush.

Crocuses, rising out of stony ground

through a layer of snow in spring

No matter how harsh the conditions,

Delicate blossoms persevere,

Teaching me about resilience and hope.

Elegant yellow orchids,
Your lady slippers, delicate lilac calypsos
Fancy pink showy ladies, growing in maskêk
To revere and marvel at, not to pick,
Because they are a special class.
Exquisite wild irises
Growing along the creek.
At kaskascêwiyahk, clothed in
Vibrant blue-violet; like ballerinas
Dance with swaying bullrushes,
Lily pads and lilies, performing
A graceful waltz in the wake of the boat.





Roses, sweet fragrant roses.
So abundant everywhere
we ate the petals and the rose hips.
But the seeds bring trouble.
Wisahkêcâk learned a lesson.

Tiger lilies, bright red-orange hue
Growing along the tree line.
With cowslips and daisies
Lending their own unique shades
Of color to the ground.

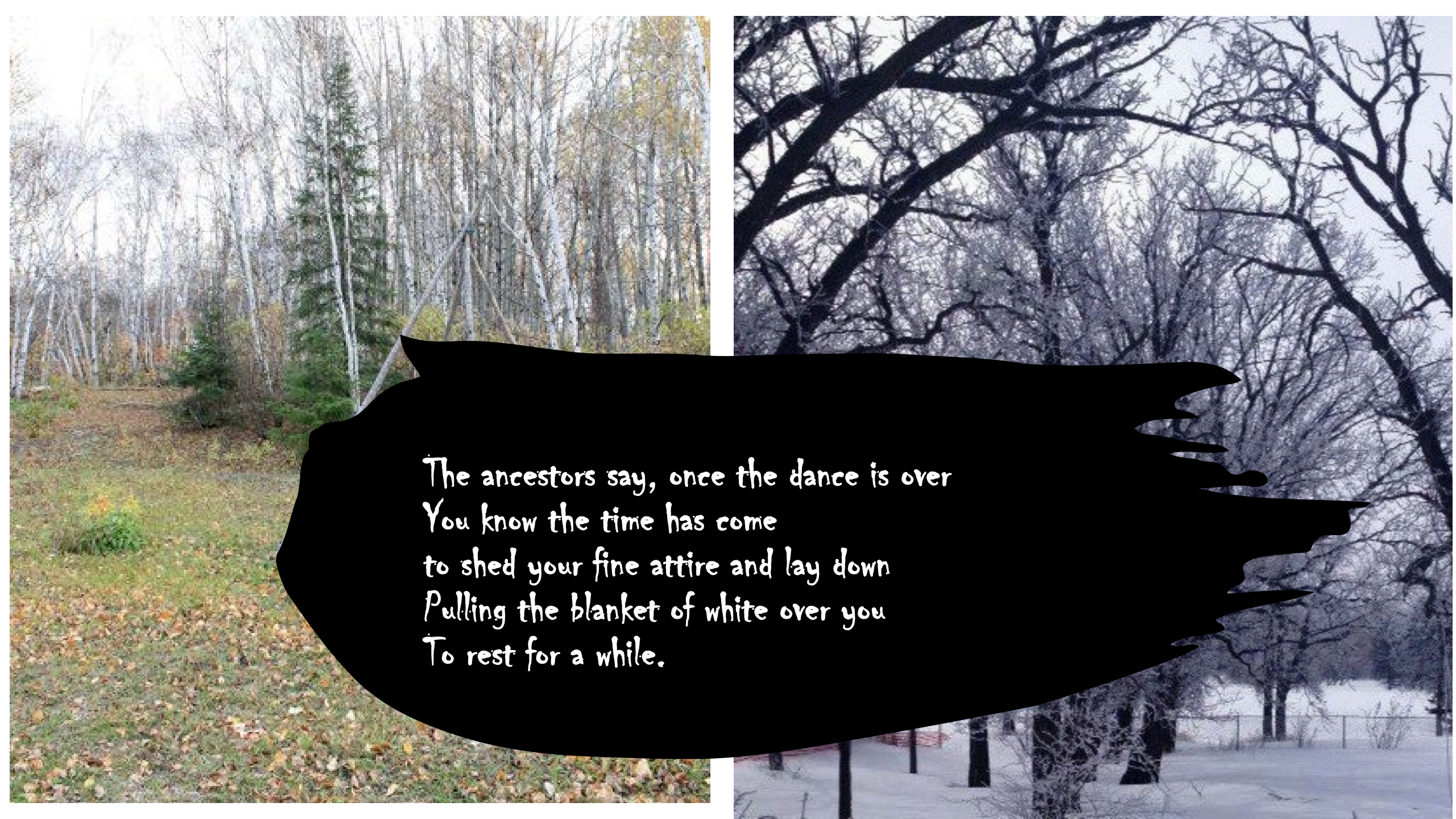


I loved you as a child
Because of your beauty
And your abundance of life
Breathtaking colors
Blue skies, flowers, the foliage.



Trees changing into dazzling robes
Of golden orange in autumn
Ready to dance their last dance.
Tamarack, birch, and aspen
Goldenrod and fireweed
Heralding bird migration.





The ancestors say, once the dance is over
You know the time has come
to shed your fine attire and lay down
Pulling the blanket of white over you
To rest for a while.



I knew you when I was young
You were vibrant, beautiful
You had so much to give
You were my playground
I slid from high banks onto the frozen river
On pieces of cardboard,
Skated along frozen ponds
Lakes and rivers.
I swung on a rope tied to a tree
Jumped into the water.
This was the life you gave me.



I knew you when I was young

But we are older now

And time has done its work

Altering our appearance

As we age gracefully.

You provided my life's needs and

You sustained me throughout.

We are older now

nikawi, but you are still beautiful,

I thank you for your gifts.

Kinanaskomitin.