

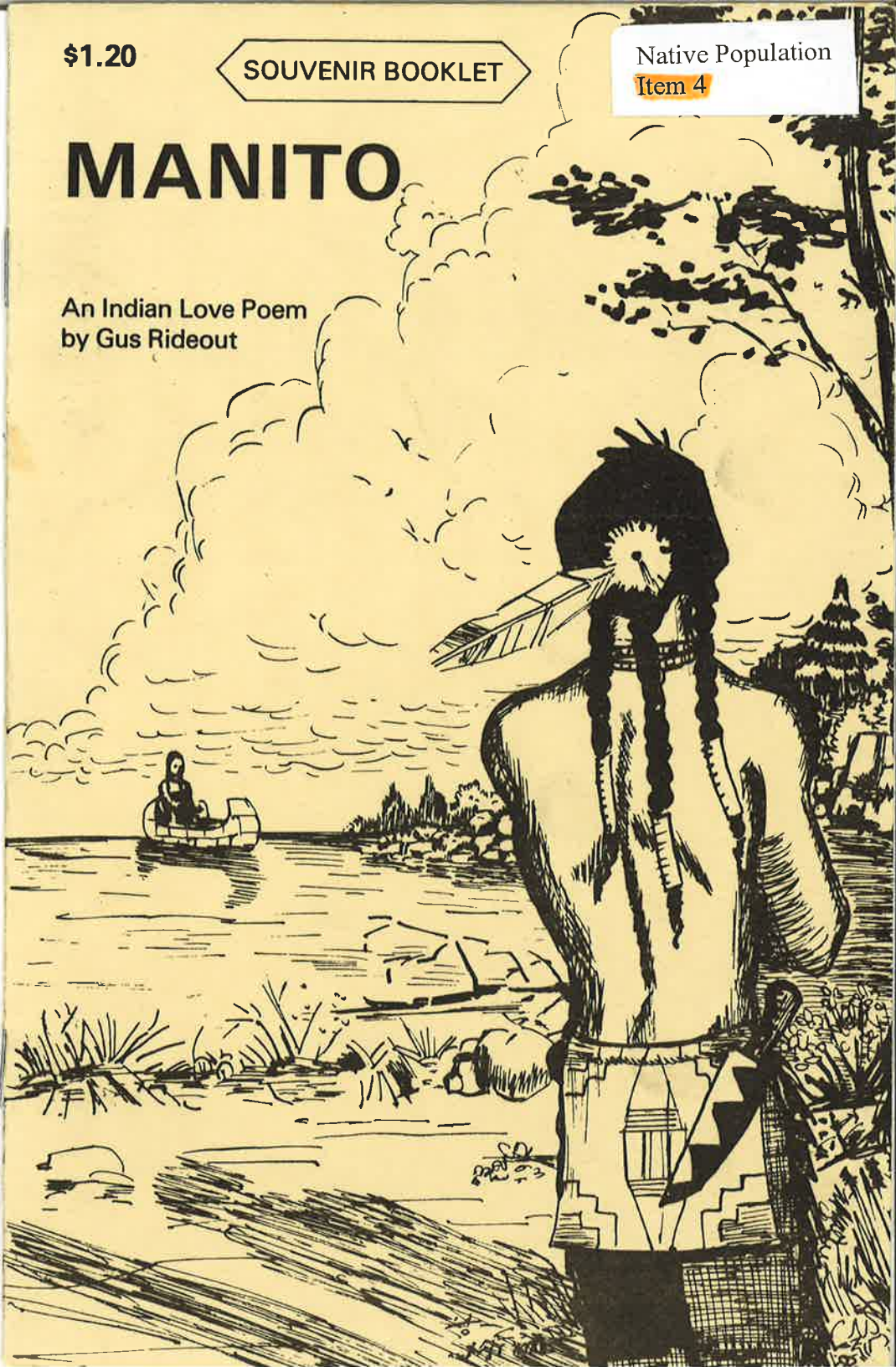
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SOUVENIR BOOKLET

Native Population  
Item 4

# MANITO

An Indian Love Poem  
by Gus Rideout



MANITO

## Manito

I walked the quiet valley of the deer and porcupine  
'Til I heard the gentle lapping of the lake  
That separates our tribal hunting ground  
From the Hurons to the West, and to the South,  
And to the North, until the rivers mouth  
Swings west again and beyond that point, unknown  
To the Algonquins.

There in a quiet cove I cleared away,  
Built my wigwam, made my fire ere close of day.  
I sat beside the fireside to watch the sun sink, lower, lower;  
Sinking in fire between the pale red clouds  
And the deeper, blood red water.  
Then, suddenly, I saw against the pale red setting sun,  
A birch bark canoe, coming swiftly in my view.

The ripple from the prow like a hungry water snake,  
Seemed to roll and turn, blaze and burn, all along the wake.  
The paddler, against the setting sun, sat tall and dark and young,  
I saw it was a maiden from her form.  
Surely a chieftains daughter, proud and silent, strong of arm,  
Sent to welcome me or warn me of some harm.

These forebodings filled my mind as, my right arm raised in peace,  
I stood to welcome her, the stranger from the West;  
Her final paddle stroke drove the birch-bark on the beach  
And she 'rose and stepped so lightly on the sand.  
I saw her eyes, so deep and dark; she wore her raven hair  
In neat wide braids on either side, her face was oh so fair,  
Her back was straight and she was tall, as a princess ought to be.  
Those eyes were blank, her bearing proud  
As she closely looked at me.

No beauty here that could compare to Shaunahea by the water;  
Her face, her eyes, would make the sunset plain.  
Even the most beautiful things could gain  
More beauty, when Shaunahea came.  
Her eyes were sunshine over midnight,  
So bright, so deep, so all-encircling strong.

"I come in peace!" Her teeth flashed white,  
May I share your wigwam for tonight?  
The sun has set, the lake is wide,  
My tribe, the Hurons to the West

Are all along the other side  
Where hunting is the best.  
And when I saw your wigwam shine  
As the sun sank in the sky,  
I took this small birch bark canoe of mine  
And gifts of beaver meat and fish.  
I bring our tribal welcome wish,  
'May all your hunting dreams come true'."

"I thank you fair princess," I said,  
"And any night my lodge is always yours;  
Your gifts are welcome and your wishes good.  
"My needs are small: a shelter from the storm,  
Some meat or fish, a fire to keep me warm.  
I sleep when I am tired and all my dreams  
Are filled with pleasant spirits for I seek...  
But now the night grows cold and you are tired,  
Come, come and rest, my lodge is warm inside  
With skins of caribou and moose and black bear hide.  
The spirits of the Algonquins welcomes you,  
Willi guard you well when sleep shall close your eyes."

"You speak well, and the Algonquin spell  
Sits well with you O brave, but will you speak  
Of what, or where, or whom that you would seek?  
The old ones of my tribe are wise and good;  
I'll ask them anything that you would know.  
The Hurons know the mountains, lakes and wood,  
Far to the West, even to the shores of the greatest lake  
Whose North shore mountains stretches low and long...  
Stretches to the Northward, cold and blue  
And to the Westward stretches on and on."

"The chief, my father paddled many days  
And many nights he spent along the lake,  
Until he saw the West shore through the haze;  
Than he returned, in fear, because the spirits spake.  
And wiser yet, my fathers father knows  
The secrets of the winds, the rains and snows...  
Can warn us that the approaching storm will come  
Tomorrow or the day beyond, for he knows.  
But he too listens closely, when he seeks  
The old ones wisdom; his mother.  
She was the old chiefs mate; he of the many scars,

Who fought the Irondequoit, the white mans wars,  
So many summers now, long, long ago.

The tales are kept alive by the tribal story teller,  
On the long cold winter nights, in the long-house by the river.  
Her eyes are dim, to mountain, lake and wood,  
But seems to gaze inside and grope,  
As if to gather wisdom from some inward catche  
Stored up from long ago.  
'Yet many snows have passed,' my fathers father says,  
'Since he was young and yet this aged one looked than,  
Even as she is now, so very old and wise."

The princess paused and looked at me,  
She now had spoken and sat waiting there  
For me to answer, but in the silence, rapt,  
I could but gaze, she was so lovely sitting there,  
So that I longed to gaze into her deep dark eyes  
And stroke her raven hair.

"I seek a greater Manito yet," I told her,  
"Than any that the Algonquins know so far;  
Greater than the spirits of the snow and rain,  
Than he who rides the storm clouds in the air.  
Greater than the wind spirit that tramples down the trees,  
That whips the waves and sends them to crashing on the shore;  
I seek the spirit stronger yet than these."

"I have been told, 'he comes to those who seek,  
Who keep themselves unspotted from all wrong;  
Whose heart and mind is pure, whose hand  
Will not be used to harm a fellow tribesman,  
No matter what his band or totem.  
And so I wander all alone, still seeking,  
I know not what, nor whom, I only know,  
That I shall not return until I find him;  
Or find, that he cannot be found. Now I have spoken."

She nodded gently, as if to hold the silence  
A little longer yet: to clasp it like a blanket,  
To shield her deep dark eyes, her thoughts, her mood.  
Than sighing softly she lay back  
Upon the skins and softly murmured,  
"I am so young in wisdom and I lack



Your deep concern for everything around.  
I oftentimes have respect, but I am proud  
And sometimes I have only scorn for those  
Who never miss a chance to boast aloud,  
While in the hunt, or battle, weakness shows.  
O I could tell of times when I've grown angry  
Because my plans were thwarted, or I was wrong.

I have the urge to love but I have hated,  
Have stooped to weakness when I would be strong.  
I have worn my pride like a tribal mask  
Many times, while my heart shed bitter tears...  
That I may learn from you, is all I ask.  
I seek to understand myself, my pride, my fears:  
Why am I Shaunahea? and for what purpose,  
Or was I born for naught, save as a flower,  
To grow and bloom and leave my seed,  
Than die and go into the darkness once again;  
To be forgotten by the lake, the woods and wind...  
Would you forget me if I never came again?"

She softly sighed again and ceased to speak,  
Lay staring at the darkness and I rose,  
Took the amulet that I had fashioned  
From snow-white ermine pelt and had placed inside  
A squirrel tooth, an eagle claw, and musk;  
A talon from the great white bear  
And that, of which you dare not hear.  
I trust its power to bend a lesser spirits will,  
Its mystic presence would so cast a spell,  
That he, the wearer, would be safe from harm  
And never lost, nor hungry, nor alone;  
The spirits of the forest know this charm.

I took it from its hiding place inside my deerskin garment,  
My fingers tingling from its beaded magic;  
Took its neckstring of braided rawhide,  
And in the twilight there I breathed a prayer,  
Took the amulet and knelt down by her side  
And hung the braided string around her neck.  
Because I knew its magic charm would keep her close  
or bring her back to me...  
So that some far off evening  
I'd find her waiting where,

So I could gaze into her deep dark eyes  
And stroke her raven hair.

She did not speak, but in the twilight there  
I saw her eyes grow big and warm, her raven hair  
She pushed aside and lovingly caressed  
My sacred amulet and pressed it to her breast.  
In just a little while she fell asleep, while I,  
Lay staring at the starlight, such a pleasant sight,  
As I lay there, half asleep, dreaming far into the night.  
Until at last I fell asleep with the first breath of dawn;  
When I grew awake again, Shaunahea, she had gone.

Away to the Westward the sun shone on the wake  
Of her birch bark canoe, far, far across the lake.  
I stripped and sprang into the water, swam along the shore.  
Went ashore and gathered some driftwood for my fire  
And over it and back a bit I hung a haunch of meat,  
To catch its smokey flavor while cooking in its heat.  
I thought, as I was eating, that I should trap some fish to eat;  
Or go into the mountain and hunt a deer for meat.  
But I mostly lay upon the sand and dreamt the day away,  
While gazing to the Westward, 'cross the lake.  
For I knew she would return in her light birch bark canoe  
And the setting sun would twinkle on its wake.  
But the sun sank slow, so slowly, on the lake.

Shaunahea, in your bark canoe,  
Shaunahea, how I long for you,  
All day I have gazed across the water.  
For the sun is almost set  
And your not returning yet;  
Oh Shaunahea, you cannot forget  
For you have my amulet  
To guide you back to me.  
Oh Shaunahea ... And suddenly!

As the sun had almost dipped below the water,  
I thought that I could spy, a speck in its blood-red eye;  
Shaunahea, coming back in her birch bark canoe.  
I built up my fire so that the flames blazed high.  
The birch barks high prow I could see more clearly now;  
The paddler, straight and tall  
With strong rhythmic paddle strokes,

Coming swiftly, ever nearer, from the West...  
Coming swiftly, Shaunahea, the indian princess.

Her face still bore that regal haughty look,  
Her eyes, deep dark, like a whirlpool on the river.  
Her voice was like the waters of a little babbling brook.  
As she told of things the chief, her father, told her."  
"In the long house, this morning, I asked the chief, my father,  
He says, 'The greatest spirit is in fire and water.  
Water kills the fire spirit,' he said, 'for water  
Is a stronger spirit yet, nothing can kill it daughter.'  
He says, 'The great Manito, who is chief of all the spirits,  
Made the mighty rivers, streams and lakes.  
Made the great fire spirit, that could eat up all the world,  
Even the people, the Algonquins and the Hurons would die.  
But the spirits of the waters makes the fire spirit sleep  
And sends him to a death dance in the sky.' "

Tomorrow I will ask my mother if she knows  
Of gentle things, like sunshine and the wind that blows  
Gently in the tree tops and the breath of spring,  
Bringing the flowers and the birds that sing.  
Perhaps she will tell me, surely she must know,  
If an Algonquin brave can meet with Manito.

She lay back upon the hides with her fawn like grace;  
Flickers from the dieing fire playing on her lovely face.  
Long in the night I gazed at her, so peaceful sleeping there  
And longed to gaze into her deep dark eyes  
And stroke her raven hair.

When finally I fell asleep, I dreamt of deep dark eyes,  
Nor wakened 'till the morning sun was high into the sky.  
The princess had departed and her birch bark canoe  
Had departed to the Westward and disappeared from view.  
The tiny wavelets whispered, as they washed along the sand;  
Told me, "Shaunahea would come back to me again.' "

"At the deep black water, where the mountain meets the lake,  
I cast my fishing line for trout or splake.  
Than, when the sungod travelled Westward in the sky,  
I split my catch and hung them up to dry  
Over by the fire for the smoke to slowly cure...  
For a fire of squawwood beaver sticks

Makes the best smoked fish of all.  
And so I fed it tenderly, as the sun sank down to rest,  
With many a yearning anxious glance  
Across the water to the West.  
Seeking for Shaunahea in her birch bark canoe,  
Longing for Shaunahea to come into my view.

And once again she came with her fawnlike grace,  
A sombre saddened glow upon her lovely face.  
She squatted by the fireside and her glow increased its splendor;  
Than she spoke of gentle things, things her mother told her:  
"Of sunshine on the mountain tops. of moonlight on the river,  
Of breezes on the hillside, of flowers in the valley,  
Of running sap and ducks and geese, in wild rice time...  
But of Manito she spoke in awe, not knowing  
Only fearing silently the sublime.

Tomorrow I shall go to her who knows  
More than any other of my tribe.  
The old one who has seen so many snows,  
So many summer rains, that now  
She sits and gazes inward, as if she grows  
Familiar with the silent spirits and she learns  
Knowledge that is hidden from the longhouse councils of our tribe.  
I may be late returning, for she only speaks when she will speak.  
But I will wait to hear, for I would know with you,  
Who, what, or where is the great spirit, Manito?  
Do not have fear, I shall return, now I have spoken."

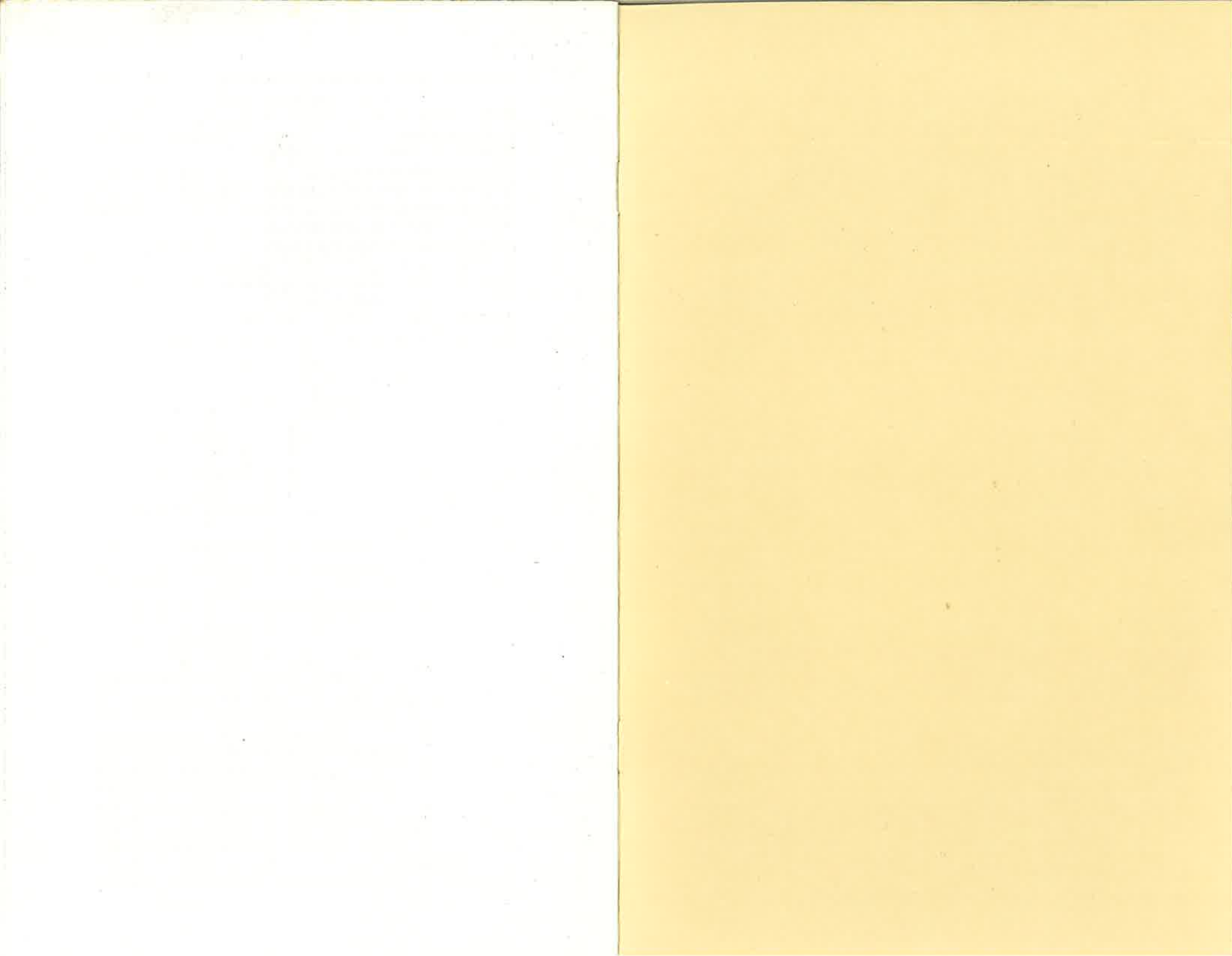
"She 'rose, holding my amulet, she went inside  
The wigwam and I followed silently,  
For I had no words to speak, only a sadness  
Welling up inside of me like a rain cloud  
Comes up to dull a cloudless day.  
The morning came, she went again,  
Again, all day I waited and all night;  
Adding driftwood now and then to keep my fire alight.  
With the early streak of dawn, I gazed across the lake...  
No birch bark canoe, no sunlight glinting on a wake,  
No Shaunahea, no beautiful princess, nothing  
But the morning sunlight on the placid water.  
All day the spirits sighed with me and on into the night,  
Only the grey owl called, no other sound.  
The fire died low, blazed up and cast sad shadows on the sand.

I dozed the night away and sighed again for morn  
To come and drive the shadows from the lake;  
To bring again the birds, the wind of dawn  
To move upon the water and the land.

At last, the morn,; the sun and wind appeared,  
The bluebirds swept the surface as they fed,  
While I watched and sighed and waited,  
Called on great Manito in the sheer solitude  
Of yearning. And he answered, this I know  
Because my yearning ceased ere evening and I watched  
In calm serenity, the shadows grow again  
As the sun sank glowing in the Western sky.  
The waters turned to fire, the sky to shafts of burning brush,  
And ere the spirit lights went out,  
I saw the glint of lightning far away  
And leapt in gladness, for I knew without a doubt,  
It was Shaunahea coming back across the water,  
Coming back to me again and like an echo clear,  
That comes back in clearer tones,  
This time I'd see her clearer,  
Feel her inner presence nearer,  
Would bolder gaze into her deep dark eyes  
And stroke her raven hair.

This time her paddle strokes were tired,  
Her eyes downcast, her cheeks a dusty rose.  
She held the silence long into the night,  
Gazing through the flames with softly smiling face.  
Until, at last I sighed because my heart  
Was bursting at the sight  
Of Shaunahea, when the fire burned bright  
And bathed her face in radiance, so soft,  
She seemed a spirit princess that would vanish in the night.  
Unknowingly I clutched her hand to hold her,  
To keep her near me, lest she be gone,  
Like the spirit lights that fill the Northern sky  
And vanish at the coming of the dawn.  
Hiding her face against me with a sudden sigh,  
She whispered softly, 'Now I know,  
I did not need to ask the old one, what is Manito?  
She sighed again and showed her glowing face,  
'She would not tell me, only smiled her toothless smile,  
Patted my head and said, "Foolish maiden, why do you return?"

'Twas then I understood and went away alone  
And wept for joy and sang and laughed again.  
All day I sat alone and far into the night  
I held your amulet.  
Then with the dawn, I 'rose and bathed,  
I dressed my hair and ate.  
Then asked my fathers leave, my mothers blessing;  
I now am here because they too believe  
That Manito was guiding me and shall  
Preserve my journey with your amulet.  
Now I have spoken and the fire burns low;  
What would you have from me, your amulet  
Returned to you, or shall you leave it here?'  
'Til dawn I gazed into those deep dark eyes  
And stroked her raven hair."





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The Kawartha Lakes and Trent Canal System attracts thousands of tourist both summer and winter. It's a paradise of lakes and uncluttered woodlands. Boats, everything from large pleasure craft to small canoes, can be seen going up and down the canal and through the many locks from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. Especially interesting are the lift locks at Peterborough and the conventional locks at Lakefield, Buckhorn, Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls. Whatever your choice of diversions, Boating, Fishing, Camping, Picnicking or just sightseeing in summer; Hunting or Snowmobiling in winter, we have it here ready and awaiting your arrival.

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This souvenir booklet was purchased from:

an interesting place to stop.

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