

The Home In My Heart

I keep trying to go home. I become enveloped in a panic teetering on the precipice of terror. I try to run away. I do not know where my home is. Have I forgotten? Did I ever know? What has led me to this place?

My soul longs to smell the soil of the Cowessess Reserve. My body aches to touch the water that springs from that ground. My lungs yearn to inhale the winds of my ancestors. My heart palpitates in anticipation of embracing relatives who have never known of my existence.

Why am I so culturally weak? Why am I estranged from people whose blood runs through my veins? Why have I never uttered my mother tongue?

Was the belief in a zero sum game, the root, of this rotten tree? Did blood money pass from the hands of the occupiers to those of the decimated? Was the desire to not have any more babes to nurse, at the breast of mother earth, who had been raped by the invaders, the reason that band numbers are so low?

Or was it lateral violence?

If the British Empire could get us to fight amongst ourselves, we would weaken that much more quickly.

Our families had been the source of our strength.

Like Samson, without his hair, Delilah was able to overpower.

When the pilgrims arrived, they were a pitiful lot, starving, full of scurvy, short statured, generally unhealthy individuals. By contrast, the American Indians, and First Nations were much taller than most you see today. Before colonization we were Athletes, Soldiers, Doctors, Botanists, Marine Biologists, Educators, and we took care of each other.

Most Nations had hereditary chiefs, and complex systems of governance. We had respect for sustainability. Our women protected the earth. Our women protected the water. Our women protected the children, and our men protected our women.

Indigenous people are not extinct.

Many, (more than will ever be recorded in historical accounts,) many Nations did succumb completely to Genocide. Languages did die with the last speakers. Cultural practices were forgotten.

Decolonization cannot take place inside of institutions formed by systemic oppression. Endemic racism is not reversible through Truth and Reconciliation.

The new restrictions on Freedom of Speech, that had formerly been enshrined in the Canadian Constitution, and more specifically The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in what is disguised as an attempt to preempt hate speech but in actuality is really just trying to avoid an overthrow of the government, prevents publicly admitting the fact that under The War Measures Act, Canada is still at War with the Sovereign Nations of this land's First Peoples.

Laws that used to make it illegal to counsel terrorism, have been relaxed so much that now, there does not have to be any words that call for violence, there does not have to be any attempt to commit a crime and yet you can still be charged, convicted and imprisoned for Acts of Terrorism if you tell the truth about what the government is continuing to do to Indigenous People.

How many reserves have boil water advisories? How much land is still unceded? Are the Treaties enforceable? How many people were: infected, shot, hung, stabbed, raped, beaten, and forced to watch these same atrocities happen to their children?

The fact that Indigenous People still carry so much self-hatred that they would rather take their own lives than live in a place where they are taught from birth that their culture has no worth.

A lot of Native People hang themselves until dead at the end of a rope because their feet do not touch the ground and their necks can no longer lift their chins up proudly. This symbolizes the loss of connection with the earth that has since time immemorial been the touchstone of our relationship with the creator. This is not spirituality. This is religion. When you can feel the power of creation in a drop of water you know for a fact that there is something bigger than just ourselves.

Savages, heathens, pagan false idol worshippers, there were many diminutive and pejorative words that were used to describe us when first Europeans came to conquer this land.

As any good host would do, we took you in, we fed you, we housed you, we clothed you, but you wore out your welcome and now it is time for you to go home.

Home? Home you ask? You say, "but I was born here?" "I am Canadian" There is no Canada. The United Nations in Honouring the Royal Proclamation of 1763 should be recognizing representatives of each First Nation at General United Nation Assemblies.

Canadians believe that we live in a multicultural utopia. The melting pot, as our Southern Neighbours encourage, we are not. We will allow each ethnicity to set-up its own ghetto. You can speak in your own language; we will even provide translation in government offices in your primary language. You can dress in your culture's traditional garments. You can celebrate your religious holidays. As Canadians we welcome the world.

As long as you are not Aboriginal. If you are Aboriginal, you were beaten for speaking your language. If you are Aboriginal, your clothing was considered barbaric and completely uncivilized. If you are Aboriginal, it was illegal to hold a potlatch.

First we were called Indians. Many laws still include the term. Perhaps the name came from the fact that many had similar skin tones to the people of the continent of India.

Then we were called Aboriginals, but there is this backlash because the Ab in Aboriginal means not, as in not original.

Then we were simply referred to as Indigenous. As though we are on the same Linnaeus classification as plants or animals that are indigenous to a region.

I refer to Canada's National Anthem, "Our Home and Native Land!" It is admitted plain as day; this is Native land.

I think people who have descended from those who immigrated here should go back to the country of their primary ethnic background.

Are you aghast at the suggestion that everyone who is not a direct descendent of an Indigenous person should be deported?

Why are you not offended that Indigenous Parents have been alienated from their own children for generation after generation since the beginning of this insurgence?

The mental hospitals are filled with Aboriginal People. The correctional facilities are filled with Aboriginal People. The foster homes are filled with Aboriginal People. The addiction centres are filled with Aboriginal People. The alcohol treatment programs are filled with Aboriginal People. The morgues are filled with Aboriginal People, and the 90% of Aboriginal People who died in the first wave of colonization were not even buried.

Imagine the rampant stench of decaying flesh. Try to picture everyone you love dying of Smallpox. What would it have sounded like? The nights would have

been filled with the howls of mothers holding the lifeless limbs of their disease riddled babies.

Husbands lost wives, children became orphans, whole villages wiped out by a single blanket. Thank you Hudson's Bay for killing all my ancestors. No I will not be coming to you for a gift registry.

What will make this home? Can cycles of poverty ever be broken? Is homelessness a private person's dilemma or is it the result of hundreds of years of colonial patriarchy? In the School District in which I spent all of my formative years, School District 61, the Aboriginal Nations Education Division's motto is: "Aboriginal Pride Through Education." More than a decade after I graduated, I found myself in an Indigenous Studies lecture, in the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year, at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston Ontario, and the instructor, a Metis man named Captain Thibeaux said, "I want you to go out and educate the other 1200 officer cadets of this College about what is so great about our Indigenous Culture." I said, "first you have to convince me that there is anything great about the Indigenous culture."

Being non-status, living off-reserve, having had no benefit of any relatives who knew anything about First Nations culture, and really modelling myself after the blonde haired, blue eyed foster mother who raised me, I had not learned anything in school, in community, on the territory of the People on whose lands I am a visitor, that ever made me feel welcome; therefore, I had no cultural pride.

Home is where the heart is...yes a hackneyed cliché to be sure but when my children were born, all of a sudden my heart lived outside of my body. When the BC Ministry of Children and Families took my 3-year-old daughter, 5-year-old son and 9-year-old son on November 20th 2014 and put them in a foster home until January 22nd 2015, Mary Lou Madam and Dave Shulte burned my home to the ground.