

DANIEL POITRAS

An Apology

I need to apologize.
My writing hasn't changed this world.
I thought I could spit enough stanzas
that it would fill up dead lakes.
Pouring over old work,
would push the poison out of our oceans.
I purposely picked fights with every whiteman I know.
But as unsettled as they were by our conversation,
they never abandoned their homesteads.
I dropped F-Bomb after F-bomb,
hoping to rattle foundations and topple entire buildings.
But still there is no room for our tipis, longhouses and totems.
I attempted to create rich imagery
to counter the ravenous logging industry.
Create a safe space for lost coyotes and slumbering bears,
but I'm still too poor to buy any kind of justice or groceries.
My metaphors weren't deep enough to hold pemican through the long winters.
None of my lines are nearly long enough for the buffalo to run free again.
And despite covering page after page with bright blue ink,
it wasn't nearly blue enough to remind our children of the sky they left at home.
So they are left in the dark,
without answers, without resources, without options.
So I have to use this cutting humour
to bring them down from rafters.
I cannot force any of these similes into smiles.
I mounted many horses and arguments,
slung plenty of arrows and insults,
but none of my verses managed to fight off indifference.
I'm sorry I couldn't be the saviour we all need;
I'm sorry my poems weren't good enough.
All sound and fury.
And I'm sorry for that.

Daniel Poitras – Poet Statement

My mom once told me this story that when I was a young, I had these blonde braids. I had gone to school on my reserve and was teased mercilessly since I looked like a white boy with braids. Apparently my Cree/Stoney heritage was incredibly important to me. She went on to say that I was stuck in thought for days about the idea of cutting my hair. It was a really important decision to make, and I suppose I chose to cut off my culture since I don't remember having long hair.

When I think about that story, I am caught in the same thought. I come up with several ideas about what to write about, but then I am held still at the idea that if I am presenting the appropriate message about my culture? Is my poem or story forcing conversations about the stereotypes or is it just reinforcing them? If I could speak Cree or Stoney, I believe my portrayal would never have me question how I stand with my heritage. But I don't speak any of my mother's tongue. And many of my ideas will never become their own art simply because, like when I was six, I'm still a white boy with blonde braids.