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Genetic Memory

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Genetic Memory

Amber Blaeser-Wardzala

my Soul is s t i t c h e d together
 by pieces of trauma
 passed
 down
 through
 generations.
 you do not know
 my history.

ancestral fingers
 lost
 to Boarding School Machines.
 every night, i count my fingers,
 always surprised
 when i make it to ten.
 what is the opposite of phantom limb syndrome?

siblings carried on backs
 through snowy minnesota country:
 we're going Home now.
 hiding from police
 and everyone else—
 you never know who might squeal.

only
 Three
 Hundred
 And
 Five
 Miles
 to
 go.
 their trip, documented in my dreams.

my own tongue trips over these english words

forced into our mouths

with bars of soap

at indian schools.

wash your hands

for twenty seconds

to kill a Pandemic Virus.

how long do you wash a child's mouth

to Cleanse it

and kill the Indian?

how long do you scrub

to erase a Language, a Culture?

how can this language be

my first language

and yet

feel so unnatural in my mouth—

like trying to speak the tongue of Martians.

when words

leave

my lips,

i do not want them back — do not want

that alien language

in my mouth again.

it always returns—

like Spiderwebs.

i'm starting to believe

that a White Man's treaties

are like glowsticks:

made to be broken.

relocation, after relocation,

is there any

space on a Turtle's Back

for Indians anymore?

i'm starting to believe

i am a Ghost

t r a p p e d

in a White World who is

unwilling to remember me,

unwilling to acknowledge my reality.

they say the past is in the past.

they're wrong: the past is in my veins.

Gimikwenimigom inawemaaganag.

Mikwendaagozidaa apane gosha.

i haunt my own steps

through this colorless world

and S C R E A M

generations of history.

but my voice

chalked up by skeptics

as only w i n d.