Mipit

Amanda Buffalo

Her laugh jingles
As we dance
In waist high sweet grass
Moccasins shuffling in the dirt
Her heart is bigger than her whole territory
That s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-s
Coast to coast to coast

She waits
Patiently
For me to catch up
In the bush
In the teachings
In the language

She tells me stories
Of days gone by
Stories of the old people
Teaching me to hear
To l-i-s-t-e-n
To the wind in the trees
And the northern lights
No, she never strains
To hear the caribou's song
While she licks
Shake 'n' bake gopher
Clean from the bone

She carries

The weight of the world
The anguish
Of generations before
L.....O.....S.....T.....
To colonialism
But her blood remembers
The songs of the old people
Hands dexterous as they scrape a hide
Or weave traditions
Like spruce root
Through the community
To strengthen it
To ground it

She teaches me
The ways of the people
Overcoming
Generations of tragedy and
Despair
Bringing the spirits
Back to our world for a visit
For a taste
Of singed, sizzling porcupine
Burnt in a plate on the fire
To feed the connection

I see her old soul
Darting behind eyes
That glisten with mischief
And she dances
In a burst of cold sunlight
Cedar hat slipping down
Hair kissed by the wind
In one drum beat
Reclaiming
EVERYTHING
That was nearly lost

She waves to me
 As she skips off to fourth grade
 Carrying the sovereignty
 Of a Nation
 In her flower-covered backpack
 Her culture sewn like beadwork
 Into the soul of a girl not yet of age
 Heart bursting with passion
 For the teachings that she carries
 On to the next
 And the next
 And the next generation
 Never tiring
 In her journey
 Of a thousand years

And I know
 The ancestors
 Are proud

AMANDA BUFFALO comes from the Cree and Haudenosaunee nations and is a community activist, an Auntie of many, and a connoisseur of tea, bannock, and dry meat. An advocate at heart, she dedicates her time to supporting both community-based and global approaches to Aboriginal women's equality in the health, economic, and legal fields.