

I Am From
by Kristen B. French

I am from an education of belly laughter
And repeated stories around the dinner table.
I am from woman magic
and secrets in the kitchen.

I am from frybread, the aroma of coffee and berry soup.
I am from dreaming on the banks of the Spokane river
watching for my grandfather in the distant rolling hills.

I am from walking barefoot in the grass.
I am from shimmering quaking aspens.
I am from the smell of Birch Creek.
I am from many generations
that live and love in Montana.

I am from the colonizer and the colonized.
I am from the Oregon Trail and the Trail of Tears.
I am from the boarding schools, Chemawa and Haskell.
I am from Daughters of the Revolution and the Lincoln Memorial

I am from “you don’t look Indian.”
“What are you? Mexican?”
I am from “You can set
your teepee up in the front yard”
and “Are her eyes blue?”
No. That’s a shame.”

I am from glorious familial love. I am from centuries
of strong women, Sandra, Joyce, Violet,
and all my relations. I am Tsiwaki.

I am from “never rely on anyone to take care of you
always take care of yourself” and “I believe in you.”
I am from Sonia and Dale and their unending guidance and support.

I am from portables that smell of dust and bones.
I am from teenage pregnancy and not fitting into small desks.
I am from endurance and perseverance.
I am from an Associate’s Degree, a Master’s, and an Ed.D.

I am from books, paper, and pencils.
I am from teaching the future.
I am from dreams of empowerment, revolution and justice.
I am from the pedagogy of hope and love.

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