

I thought I'd talk about duality, which in language means: meaningless speech sounds that combine; according to the rules to form meaningful words. In race; duality is understood as the process of biracial identity development. Then I thought I'd talk about historical trauma and its connection to the Universal Law of Opposites which is the opposition of two concepts or two aspects of something, a duality of knowing and belonging, if you will. All these rules, processes, and laws are Western concepts. I was asked to come and tell someone's story, maybe my story, maybe YOUR story; and couldn't really figure out how duality of Western concepts and indigenous storytelling could connect so I will just respond to the words I most often hear.

Are you a real Indian?

Where is your family?

(WHERE, is my family?)

Three generations lost to 'school' or 'care'.

I made a new family in the community. See? My family is here! (Cousins)

Where is your Tribe?

(WHERE, is my Tribe?)

I search for them every day. I gather them in little pieces. See? I can gather!

What is your Blood Quantum?

(WHAT, is my Blood?)

My blood is equal parts Dangerous Auntie and Fighting Irish. See? I'm a Warrior!

Are you a REAL INDIAN?!?!?

(Am, Am I REAL?)

I can KEEP it REAL. Is that what you mean? See? I keep it REAL!

Historical Trauma is in the PAST!

(Past, has it passed?)

It was in my cappuccino foam this morning~ the swirls, the curls, remind me of my baby sister's hair. She was murdered. Year before last. See? Her trauma is historical, though. It ended!

Do you speak your Language!?

(Is this? Is this MY Language)

I speak. It jumbles in my brain and chokes in my throat. It comes out as words: but, to YOU they have no meaning. To me they mean EVERYTHING. See? They're mine.

(PAUSE.THINK)

TA. TA. Odayin. (There. There. Heart.)

TA. TA. Odayin. (There. There. Heart.)

See? My identity is attached to the endless process of knowing that my words carry conflicting meanings in two worlds Native and Western, attached to two feelings; loss and love, and in two times past and present. And THAT, is real Indian.

Aniin~Niindijnakas Dogwagin dodem niindaow Annishinabe Odawa Yotengi nidowniijiba, Chi Megwiich

“ I see your Light. I am Autumn, I belong to the True People of the Odawa Nation from the City of Detroit, big thank you.”