



From Silence to Self

Melanie Carpenter

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I was given a life and a name and with it,
a story that was not mine.
Each time I stepped outside its lines,
I was called negative,
and hateful, for simply being.
Hands and voices shaped me,
used me,
wore me down in quiet ways
until I could barely hear myself.
So, I chose silence over noise,
distance over crowds.
Too many voices made me disappear,
and I was tired of being lost.
All my life, they told me who to be, and how to exist
as if I were something to be written in perfection,
not lived.
But time taught me differently.
I turned inward,
chose myself,
walked away from anything
and everyone that could not walk with me.
and in that leaving,
I found...
People who see me,
community that holds me,
and ceremony that grounds me.
Now for the first time,
I am full of love, and breath,

of my own being.
I have found my place!

Biography

Melanie Carpenter is a Red River Métis woman born and raised in St. Vital, Winnipeg, Manitoba on Treaty One Territory, the heart of Turtle Island. Carpenter is a descendant of Cyfroy Janssonne (Sifroid Johnson) of Lorette, Manitoba and my Métis ancestry traces back to the Cadotte family of St. Norbert, Manitoba.

Carpenter's family history continues through Virginie Jancon (my second great-grandmother), her son Edmond Leonard (my great-grandfather), who married Clarisse Cadotte (Cree woman, my great-grandmother) of St. Norbert, Manitoba, and their daughter Beatrice Edna Leonard (my paternal Métis grandmother), who married Orville Carpenter (my paternal grandfather). Of their six children, one was their father, Wayne Carpenter. From his voice to theirs, their story lives on.
