

Pawaatamihk

Janelle Desrosiers

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A Half of a Half of a Half-Breed

Who am I, this
half of a half of a half-breed?

A settler on my homelands
a rebel, a resister, a revolutionary

A failed Catholic
self-consciously smudging

A seed or a bead
maybe a seed bead

A granddaughter of settled savages and savage settlers
or of farming foragers and foraging farmers

Surely there was once room for love on the Prairies?

Even though eventually
there was no room for lii Michif

My muscles, my bones, my veins are woven like sweetgrass
from sinew and stories, bannock and the buffalo hunt
Fur trade and fire bags, beaded flowers and fiddle music
horses and hide and humility, pride and piety and patriotism
Kitchen parties and colonization, road allowances and resistance
settlements and scrip, surge and resurgence and self-determination

Death and birth

Woven into a red sash, red like the river, muddy river, muddy blood, mixed blood,
red like my Métis blood, red like the blood that brings with it a new life, that births a new
nation

A hard, but beautiful, birth?

Biography and Community Statement

Janelle Desrosiers (she/they) is an AuDHD Michif (Red River Métis, registered member of the MMF) and French-Canadian Two-Spirit mother, entrepreneur, designer, writer, and artist. She was born and currently lives in Treaty 1 Territory, also known as Winnipeg, Manitoba, with her son and husband.

On a journey of decolonization and divesting from sick systems, she explores the concepts of beauty, joy, Michif culture, queerness, neurodivergence, mental health, and motherhood through her work.

She comes from a long line of entrepreneurs, artists, farmers, hunters, leaders, and resisters from the southeastern Manitoba towns of Ste. Anne, Richer, Ste. Genevieve, St. Norbert, and Vermette. Her family names are Desrosiers, Dugas, Tougas, Vermette, Villebrun, LaLiberté, Rocque, Bérard, Hughes, and Collin.

Her Vermette ancestors were known for their role in the buffalo hunt and participated in the resistance. Her third great-grandfather was Antoine Vermette, a renowned buffalo hunter, and his father, Joseph, lead missionaries across the prairies to bless the hunts. Her great-uncle Bernard Vermette was active in the Métis community and leadership, as a musician and the leader of the “Vermette Orchestra”, as the Mayor of Ste. Anne, and a member of the Board of Directors for Louis Riel Capital Corporation.

Janelle is inspired and bound by her ancestors’ roles as leaders, artists, and invested community members.
