

Living Nations, Living Words: A Map of First Peoples Poetry
Poem commentary by Kimberly Blaeser, 2020

Speaker: Kimberly Blaeser

Date of recording: July 13, 2020

Location: Farm Lake, adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota, poet's cabin

Length: 4 minutes, 48 seconds

START OF RECORDING

Kimberly Blaeser: Boozhoo. Kim Blaeser indizhinikaaz. Anishinaabekwe indaaw. Gaa-waabaabinganikaag indoonjibaa. I'm Kimberly Blaeser. I'm Anishinaabe from the White Earth Nation.

[Kimberly Blaeser reads "Poem on Disappearance"]

KB: In the popular imagination, Native peoples appear primarily after the so-called discovery of this continent. In this poem, I wanted to suggest the reality that precedes invasion and colonization: the autonomy of Indigenous tribes, their place-making, embedded relationships, their lifeways. And I wanted to underscore the consequences of settler colonialism, the losses, swathes of disappearances—not just the claiming of land ownership by imperial forces, but the results that ensued from a mindset of exploitation—losses of natural spaces, yes, but also the disruption of longstanding traditions, losses of resources and species. Finally, I wanted to suggest the way the stance of capitalism renders even the bodies of Indigenous women as objects of commerce.

This unfortunate transformation of Turtle Island, Indigenous America, I render poetically not only through image, but through literal absence as well—through the blank spaces on the page.

Yes, the poem is a lament, but I hope it allows a re-vision of the "idea of Indian," which then may make possible another understanding of place and history.

Miigwech for your attention. Thank you very much.

END OF RECORDING