

Where I'm From

Novelist and poet Wendell Berry, among others, has voiced the idea, "If you don't know where you're from, you'll have a hard time saying where you're going." A basic premise of multicultural education at United Tribes is that we must know who we are, and where we come from, in order to appreciate the diverse world in which we live.

A poem by George Ella Lyon is called "Where I'm From." We used it for a writing assignment in the Multicultural Education course during fall 2011. The poem lends itself well to an exploration in belonging. Here is a sample of four of the Teacher Education students' poems.

– Lisa Azure, EDU 290
Multicultural Education Instructor

Where I'm From

by Daniel Miller, Three Affiliated Tribes

I am from a beautiful land,
from Notre Dame Stadium to Allen
Field House in Lawrence, Kansas.
I am from the lush and fertile green
and gold landscape of New Town.
I am from the grain, the sunflowers,
and the winding narrow creeks.
I am from powwows and family
reunions; I am a Bearstail
and a Miller from Ireland.
I am from a family of
gifted athletes and dancers.
I am from a family
of cowboys and ranchers.
I am a Christian; I am a child of God.
He sent his only child to die on the
cross for me and my sins. The Lord is
my Father, provider, and protector. In
Him do I trust my life.
I am a father and husband.
I am a family man with a purpose;
taking care of my loved ones
is that purpose.
I am needed every day,
from big tasks to small tasks.
I am needed.
I am from New Town, the Fort
Berthold Indian Reservation.
I am a half-breed, an Indian and a
white Irishman.
I am an American.

Where I'm From

by Nikita Knight, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

I am from a large empty bag of M and M's, from Applebee's and Petro Serve USA.
I am from the trailer on the left,
where the sun rises over the brown hills and where you can still smell clean air.
I am from spider dandelion hemp oil, the bamboo, bird of paradise, clear water.
I am from the gathering at holidays, pug noses and elevens,
from Mark and Darla Shupick, Long Days, Knights and Jensens.
I am from the one who yells at gatherings and causes the most stress at family events.
From "Don't look outside the window at night or the Gee Gees will get you"
and "Back in the day Rapid City bus to Ellsworth Air Force Base only cost twenty-five cents."
I am from being baptized as a child to growing up in a very spirited Christian family.
I am from Pierre South Dakota, days and nights, peas and carrots.
From the "one time your father ran down the street with a straw in his mouth,
tripped and ended up losing a tonsil"
and "your uncle Roni lit a fire cracker in his back pocket and now has a mean o' scar".
I am from covered in mud in the front yard, sleeping in the car, sitting on the couch,
taking short walks with the animals and giving love.

Where I'm From

by Eliza Neigum, Bismarck, ND

I am from the 80s, born on the 1st day of the year, in a place where many are born.
Where the cries of new life and the smell of fresh skin is overwhelming.
I am from a crack house. A room filled with homeless drug addicted people.
Lost in the world of addiction and hurt.
I am from the honey bees that fly free amongst the cotton plants,
the place where my ancestors slaved for years.
I am from Southern Baptists and Christians, born God fearing with no sins.
from Shonetta and Erskin. Clayborne or Hopson would be my last name.
I am from a dysfunctional family, where yelling and cussing is the means of communication. What
is not norm for many is our way of life.
With the voice of, "You are in a better place" and "They gave you up because they loved you"
echoing in my ears.
I am from a single mother, drug addicted, welfare abusing, non motivated woman,
a woman who is lost and will someday be found.
The person I get my looks, smile, laugh, and attitude from.
These traits I have collected from her do not limit me but only drive me.
Des Moines, Iowa is the place I am from, youngest of 3 children.
Where cornbread, greens and fried chicken were served at most every meal.
From the separate but equal classrooms, underground railroad,
and the efforts of my ancestor Harriet Tubman.
From the white debris on my mother's nose.
The Midwest East side of the D, from behind the tracks where murders and burglaries are the
regular. Where poverty is dominant.
A place I have come to love but refuse to let define me.

Where I'm From

by Shanaye Packineau, Three Affiliated Tribes

I am from the country, from John deer tractors and Wrangler jeans.
I am from the rolling hills and country side along the beautiful Lake Sakakawea.
I am from the sage brush, the sweet aroma it brings.
I am from family gatherings and constant bickering, from Mervin and Tina and Packineaus.
From respecting your elders and always being generous.
I am from the competitive and intelligent.
I am from Native American beliefs and Christianity backgrounds.
I'm from Minot, North Dakota, of Norwegian and Native American ancestors,
fry bread and lefsa.
From the politician I call my Father, the gardener I call my Mother,
and the athletes I call my brothers.
I am from where you wake up to cows mooing, to the smell of manure when the ground thaws.
From the hills and beautiful scenery I call home.
I would never ask for anything more.