

bury the competition by: Tawahum Bige

i learn about my people from fellow cree and dene
just to forget immediately
ingrained western pedagogy
from residential school teachers
and crossholding preachers
still tryin' to kill the indian in the child
a hundred years later
blood memory goes back further
what incantation unlocks that
my train ran off the track
safer by pipeline to prison system
it makes me wanna smash shit
and i used to smash shit
but beneath the hurt and angry
is my endless ancestry
i put down my tobacco and lift up my prayers

have you ever brought the remains of the dead
to this stage with hope to heal and mend instead?

i've dug up my ancestors' ashes
for this poem—is it enough?
excavated urns
pour out the darkness
smudge the ink
trigger ptsd
to sprinkle all over the stage
hoping to strengthen the links
between me and my past
my presence with your emotion

this invocation could spark creator's wrath
but the most i bring up is my own
and yours—but trust me
it is enough—to watch this house go up
this blaze tastes of shame
smells of dust and shattered ghosts

i've unearthed my ancestors to write this poem
when they've been with me
this whole time
whispering
let us rest
you are always enough