

Between two worlds and living in three

Dear city native,

We like your long hair and high cheekbones. We like that you embrace your culture and show it off. We would like you to come to our meetings with your beaded earrings and buckskin leather jacket to represent those other uncivilized ones you speak for. The ones we will not recognize.

We would like you to come and talk about reconciliation and bring up the same issues your people before you have been bringing up for centuries. We won't give you any actual power to solve them though, silly girl. We'll simply talk about giving you power and what needs to be done, and then we will not do it. We are much more advanced than history because we are talking about it! Your people should be thankful! Also we ask you to sit in the front row when you arrive. We will focus our cameras to show the public we are well represented and inclusive. When you talk, please do an accent. We need to show that you are an authentic native, or what everyone else thinks you are supposed to be. This meeting isn't about you, it is about us. Please refrain from saying anything truthful that will make us look bad. We are simply trying to portray what we think it is like in this new era of truth and reconciliation, not how you think it is. You can mention certain problems that are very broad or are in the past; like residential schools and genocide. You cannot say how it still affects you today, and how lateral violence is destroying your community or any environmental concerns that have a call to action. It is better for both of us this way. Oh how magnificent this will look on your resumé! You should be so fortunate we chose you to speak at our high profile meeting with all of these people who are much more

professional and adjusted than you. It was nice meeting you, and we hope to see more of your cultural knowledge, as long as you do not apply it. Take care!

Dear city native,

Where ya been all this time cuz'? A lot been goin' on since ya left a few months ago. Aunt Judy died of a cocaine overdose, little Tommy down the street got murdered by his drunk dad, your sister committed suicide after being raped and your best friend is now part of the same gang that raped your sister. Our family ain't ever perfect, but I just wish we could all sit down at the table like those people on TV and have a good time. Could be worse though cuz! Wanna go fishin' with me tonight? If we do we'll have to walk upstream now because a pipeline leaked downstream where we lived. Oh, also we don't live there no more. When you were gone bein' a fancy white person with white-collars, all of us downstream had to move into those swampy lands where nobody lives. It's kinda far from the rest of the Rez and the mold is suffocating the lungs of the elders. It's bad for the moose and fish we used to hunt. It makes sense when those hippies say we are apart of nature cuz we all dyin' like the rest of mother earth. I just don't understand why we people act better than nature, we all function the same and all of our goals are to survive. Anyway, we sufferin' over here and what have you been doin'? Livin' the good life, are ya? You keep sayin' that the education you're getting will pay off later and you'll help us later. We don't have time to wait for you cuz'! We are all dying and all you care about is becoming rich while your family slowly disappears one by one. You say you're leanin' so much, yet you don't even know how to speak Mi'kmaw! It's okay though, we're all loosin' the language down here too. The government said it was the year of indigenous languages. I think

that's good, but we dunno really how to speak English either. Nobody really knows how down here, so we supposed to learn? I bet they taught you though. You're the "special one" everyone brags about when you come home. Everyone is disappointed in the rest of us, but we just tryin' to survive! You don't even need to try to survive, and they applaud you? I don't get it. I just don't.