not pay minimum wage it does not cover those benefits. If we are lucky our non-farm work will have these benefits. Schools and hospitals are key in rural Canada just so that farmers have access to non-farm work with benefits.

As Canada continues to lose farms, I will lose neighbours and, therefore, my community and access to my non-farm work. I will have to travel farther for basic services, which will increase my workload. It’s a never-ending downward spiral.

It’s on days like this, that I’m going to bed at 1:00 am and getting up at 6:00am the next day, that I ask myself, “Why am I still fighting to farm?” Then I remind myself that it’s the sweetest job in the world. Who else gets to eat fresh honey right off the hive, work outside and inside, make things with sheet metal and wood, be a designer, a gardener, a mechanic, an accountant, a janitor, a personnel manager, and anything else that may be required? I just wish I could get more sleep.

Karen Pedersen is a fifth generation beekeeper farming with her extended family near Cut Knife, Saskatchewan. She is currently the Women’s President of the National Farmers Union.

The total hours at work included time spent on education. The extra time spent on education by the participants reflected the bus time that farm children endure every day to attend school.

References


VERÓNICA REYES

Sliced Images: the red and brown frontera

Yesterday I flew in from the Southwest landed in Buffalo airport via Niagara Falls Traveled down streets layered in hojas bleeding menstrual sun on the sidewalks witnessed every summer evening in the desert

Funny, how Tuesday morning I was in El Paso tip of the west Texas leaning against Nuevo México, a dry land that doesn’t want mexicanos around. Today in the evening I stand at the northern edge, A slice of tierra below the great lake. I am the four corners swaddled in a red rebozo

Hoy, the Texas heat swims in my veins, but the New York cold blisters my face The El Paso sun toasts my brown skin and the Buffalo thin air numbs my ears In a coffeehouse heaviness swallows me I sit there eating, drinking, and etching each detail of this foreign land into my mind and I am a poet savoring the world around me

Outside on the lit corner a poem stands alone Shivering, hovering beneath the bre sky

On Chippewa street and Delaware Avenue The names of city streets mask the First Nations the way Concordia cemetery marks its grave sites for native people who have walked this land near the Canadian bank and the Mexican border and streets of El Paso bleed invaders’ names San Antonio and Santa Fe burn under el sol

And the poem stares me in the eye, pleading Where are my people? And the land?

All nations have been placed on square plots The Tigua and Ojibwe live on reserved acres Their sacred lands, their home buried beneath concrete, buildings and marred with streets

The poem whispers to the black sky
In his story the pale bearded man tied hundreds of men, women, and children in a sacrifice with a wave of an ivory hand in two directions—South and East—over the river's water that streamed down the bronzed back of the mountain turtle. Men in dark robes poured the clear water on the people—the shade of deep red brown touched by the sky's hot breath.

The poem shakes her head, glances down Black eyes penetrate the layers of time She turns around and words spill out

They cracked the turtle's back and killed the jaguar. Hung its shell and skin on a tree to dry and threw the meat to the ground to rot.

And the holy bible burned a wooden crucifix on the back of Tonantzin leaving thick slashes. She screamed from the depths of her thick woods. In the wind, her spirit trails the body of rivers and the bearded man sliced the skin cutting bone. His eyes swallowed the land in a gush of red.

Cortés believed he “conquered” the Aztecas on the land of cactus where la águila waited grasping a rattlesnake in is beak and claw.

I sit in this coffeehouse wondering 'Am I not the branch of the mexica tree?'

She rubs her arms to keep warm exhales a frost-breath from her lips

Treaties scrawled on tree bark paper signed in feather ink by the white man and when Niagara Falls onto the rocks—the air evaporates into a raindrop mist

black words splatter below into a roar and they drowned in the rapid water, only to wander for nine-hundred miles and five hundred years with no home.

In the southern red corner lining the Río Bravo the Mexican Kickapoo crossed the heavy river The way two-spirited people walk two roads leaving the gringo borders on the blue map. They traveled over the long river into Texas left their marks on fair-skinned bodies and flew back home to the desert montañas surviving under the sun amongst the cacti.

Outside in the Buffalo wind the spirit poem leaves a gift—the red shawl—on the corner The poem, nods her head, and smiles wraps the rebozo tightly around herself

Their names live on in streets signs, cities burial sites for the native blood spewed in the blue north and in the red south along the calles of El Paso and Buffalo.

I sit in the warm coffeehouse listening to a jazz vocalist singing a sweet melody lingering in the air like sweet grass I stare out the window seeing the corner darken into a winter's evening in Buffalo.

Tomorrow, Sunday afternoon, I will fly back to the land of the Tarahumara and Mexican. Return to see the turquoise sky bleeding a red sunset from between a brown woman's thighs. She crosses desert montañas y la frontera every day to go back home.

Verónica Reyes is a Chicana jota from East Los Angeles, California, who is living in Canada as an educator and writer.