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Shed Skin

Sheryl Lain

Bain School for Shan Anderson

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Shed Skin

by Sheryl Lain

They say my house is a museum –
My family's shed skin dusts the lampshades and carpet corners.
Like snakes we shed thick skin we learn to wear outside.

In this old school
The students, now grown away--their letter jackets too small to cover their gains,
Left behind more than
Shed skin to remember them.

Commentary by author:

I wrote this poem about the lingering memory of all the students I have taught, how their essence remains with me still. I taught English starting in 1968. My first classroom taught me to adjust. Half the students were Native Americans and teaching them the concept of Manifest Destiny touted in the American Literature anthology of the day seemed disrespectful, even mean-spirited. I carry with me much more than the kids' *shed skin*.

Sheryl Lain is retired and volunteers at Bain School for Shan Anderson in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In January 2015, she wrapped up four years working for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as instructional leader, sharing statewide with teachers. Prior to this, she taught secondary English starting in 1968 on the Wind River Indian Reservation. She also directed the Wyoming Writing Project since 1996. The National Writing Project published her teaching book called *A Poem for Every Student*.