

Autumn Circle and Hummingbird Soars with Thunderbird

Renee Lehen

Autumn Circle

Drowsy in convivial pipe smoke,
Crimson sun longs to fall into downy clouds
As the loons prepare to fly across the Turtle's carapace.

Eastern loon stretches her wings with youthful eagerness.
Southern loon offers fish. Eight wings shall fly on four full
stomachs.

Western loon tests the wind with her bill and
Northern loon wonders if he will hunt in beaver's lake again.

Alone and together.
Pensive and garrulous.
The circle closes.

Soon wind and wave will freeze into a silent truce
Until the messengers return.
Autumn sun reposes.



Author's Note: This poem was written in autumn, in a world of deep reds and vibrant oranges, strikingly similar to the hues in the painting. The mood of the image and the theme of the poem reflect a spirit of warmth and cooperation as families prepare for winter together. Across Turtle Island, beings of all ages and forms confront change together, yet on their own terms, as the seasons turn. This ekphrastic poem is inspired by "Ceremonial Circle Talk" by Douglas Fox, c. 2000.

Hummingbird Soars with Thunderbird

Deer antlered, owl eyed,
Wolf toothed, turtle backed—
Bird of Thunder!
Is Little Hummingbird soaring with you?

Once, facing east,
In the maternal embrace of White Pine
Little Hummingbird watched you
Dancing in the wind, dipping wingtips in the waves,
Taunting Mishipeshu.

Father Bear growled his irritation with your antics
And lumbered off.
But Little Hummingbird abided.
He offered tobacco to the wind and water on a rock
And captured an echo of your spirit in paint strokes.

Deer antlered, owl eyed
Wolf toothed, turtle backed—
Bird of Thunder!
Does Little Hummingbird fly with you now?

Author's Note: Renee's has written the poem, Hummingbird Soars with Thunderbird, in response to Brian Marion's untitled undated acrylic artwork (A11.26/056). The term "Little Hummingbird" refers to the late Brian Marion.

The poem honours Marion's life and death through verse rooted in Ojibwe imagery of animals and mystical beings. Repeating first and last verses reflect the cyclical nature of all life. The poem is written in a spirit of gratitude for Marion's art including this powerful untitled piece, below. This ekphrastic poem is inspired by "Ceremonial Circle Talk" by Douglas Fox, c. 2000.

This poem won first place in the Journal of Integrated Studies 2018 Ekphrastic Poetry Competition.

Renee is a registered nurse who lives and works in Stratford, Ontario. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies. She completed her MAIS in Heritage and Social History in the spring of 2018. She enjoys writing and being outdoors in all seasons.

