



Sitting High: 1884

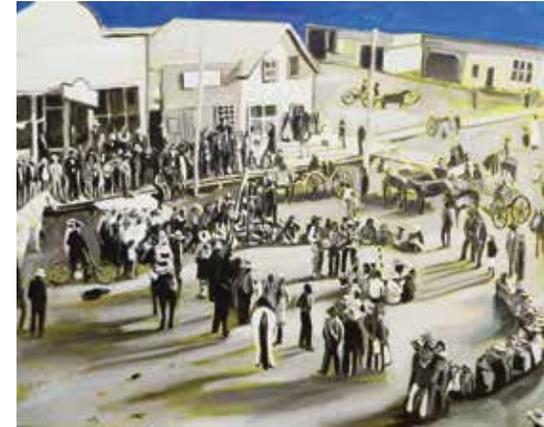
Looking at them with 21st Century eyes
It is hard not to only see destruction and shame

Do you suppose they know
what lies ahead? The way
the horizon here can bend
up or down, concealing
or revealing, by atmospheric whim
the shame of the edge of the known.

Do they detain the man?
Or accompany him to an important meeting?
aspen and fence at attention
like bars of a jail, or an honour guard.

Sad horse in a pretty dress
and these unsmiling Mounties
one wears a name - McCauley - that will
become synonymous with struggle.
Is it sternness? Arrogance?
Do they see how long
is the journey past that?

Chief Ermineskin, sitting high
Wears regalia that will be outlawed,
That will survive; that will become
Flag and stereotype and homecoming.



Circles: Indian Dance

I don't believe this is Edmonton
But squint and research and there it is
the wide, dirt road of Whyte Avenue
where the Dairy Queen is today,
the same place where Pride gathers,
a century ago, a celebration.

Are they blessing a voyage, or offering tribute
to treaties signed not long ago? Do they
take back the land with their song?

Drummers, singers, Elders
send a prayer up on smoke
pass the pipe, passerby
watch respectfully, bespectacled,
with bowler hats and bicycles
buggies and Red River carts.

Why have they gathered?
These settlers and newcomers
original Nations next to the Union Jack
out in front of the General Store?

This is Edmonton, the wide, dirt road
a century ago, a celebration, the same
Land, we all take it back in our songs.



Royal: The Gamble

we will wear cloth caps and stand in your lines
for wage earning jobs, hopeful
that the buffalo, those weary piles of souls adrift
will forgive our flirtation with necessity
and see in our finery's flash
in our sober dancing
atonement, anguish, remembrance
a promise.

we will send him like an avatar
into the face of the camera
as if to say, we are children, mild and meek
we are not made of tatanka now, we walk
the roaring tide has subsided
and we do not remember the wind

but we're not simply waiting, forgetting the promise
we abide, eyes fixed on what it will take
to bring them home again. we are here
with the weight of what you have done
this unspeakable, uncounted crime
a child, though, may yet wear beads
our pride and our fear.



Camsell: First Baptism

Her kimono blooms.
Did her uncles carry ore?
New life, southern child.



Steinhauer: 1975

Caution in his eyes, and the Long View
from Saddle Lake to Legislature
this Hewer of Stone carved his place
among the names recorded here.

About to cut into cake,
About to celebrate; public servant,
Hewer of Stone, what wish does he make?
The long view, for all his relations.



Sam and Cliff: Pacing

Sam Sinclair knew
politics is a runner's game
pacing is everything.

The last time I saw him
Sam asked, 'Who are you
working for now?' I knew
just what he meant.

How do you serve the people?
It was given that I would. This
Is what his generation
Raised our generation to do.

Sam, Cliff, Joanne, Thelma, Stan,
those oldtime politicians
toiled the long course til they won
Métis rights in the Law of our Land.

The race goes on.



Circles 2: Our Dance

This, now, is our dance
purses, backpacks, satchels
suits, uniforms, and jeans
this is us at work
at play, a joyful day
in Churchill Square
A circle to celebrate and remember
To come together, today
and tomorrow
in the spirit of Wicihitowin
the best of all we ever are.