

Mukwa (Bear) and Her Sisters Still Walking

The caked mud chipped
from their feet
dried and cracked
rested on the cold stone
far from the slow fire
cooking bannock and corn

They carried water
womens' stories
about giving life
Dreamed of full breasts
big babies resting
between trees and family
On a good journey
home

Two sisters walked
from Toronto to Bogota
with amputated toes
and breathing pesticide
still inheriting
the colonizer's disease

Indians in Canada and Colombia
are still dying
by the thousands

As they went on
they collected
Turtle Island stories
Like the one about sister Mukwa
and how she had protected her cubs so fiercely
They slowly cut off her feet
and finally her head
Her head was stuffed
Her feet boiled
Made into evil charms
to ward off her angry spirit

The story made the sisters cry
and laugh at the mess
then anger began

Mukwa and the sisters
Waited
Pulled by the animals
They held on

caught in the beauty of the universe
Comforted by water

Some say they are still waiting
for prayers to pile
and children
to notice the leaves
falling onto the shell
and to feel
the veins winding
their way
through everything

Rebeka Tabobondung