



misipawistik





absorbed in thought  
I stand atop high limestone cliffs  
gazing across the divide at a shoreline  
that mirrors the one upon which I stand  
looking downward to the space beneath  
dry riverbed full of shrubs and willows  
struggling to grow on a bed of rock  
where wild rapids  
once danced.





*mighty grand rapids, wilder than any*

*I have seen in my lifetime*

*where every summer, father*

*expert boatsman*

*would load us up to take us*

*for a summer of gathering, harvesting*

*preparing for winter*

*picking berries, digging root*

*drying fish, smoking moose meat*

*sleeping in prospector tents.*







spirited grand rapids, so alive  
full of energy, oh, Singing Waters  
you lulled many a child to sleep  
with your comforting song,  
kâ nikamômakahki nipiya  
heard in the distance  
ê-matê pêhtakwahki  
singing their song as they leapt and danced  
over limestone rocks.  
father understood you, knew your rhythm  
when to slow, when to go faster, when to cross  
to the other side,  
onikahpik, so perilous  
churning whirlpools and eddies  
where spirits of ancestors whisper  
in the sound of the swirling water.

*amazing misipawistik, so full of life  
thundering over this same riverbed  
since time immemorial  
white waters, so wild  
so loved by those who knew you  
ever revered and respected*



there you rushed  
eager to reach the end of your journey  
having passed by mountains, prairies, and forests  
now morphing to something much grander  
as you merge with the calming depths of  
the vast lake  
mistahi sâkahikan  
your waters joining together.







*silenced dear rapids, defenseless, stilled  
dammed by a concrete wall  
no more dancing and singing  
no more leaping and jumping  
over limestone rocks.  
vanished, so quiet.*



*no longer carrying families,  
exuberant, laughing, shouting children  
enjoying the thrill  
as you bounced them along your white waters  
spray from the waves wetting faces.*

absorbed in thought  
I stand atop high limestone cliffs  
gazing across the divide at a shoreline  
that mirrors the one upon which I stand  
I call out to the cliffs, our grandfathers –  
nimosômak, will you help with my sadness,  
and share the pain  
as I grieve for the thundering misipawistik?  
waters which cascaded between your cliff walls  
since the beginning of time  
I keep you in my heart  
till my spirit joins with yours.







today, no more dancing and singing  
no more leaping and jumping  
over limestone rocks  
sleeping, resting  
laying silent.

