

Poems

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Sinixt People

Stillness and lemony scent as we
head up the old trail.
River flows to the right –
geese calling out, mosquitoes sparking and whining.

The Sinixt pit dwellings come into view among the rushes –
immense earth bowls the People lived in
year round on the edge of the River,
the home of the Salmon and the Beaver.

One legend speaks of an Elder
of the clan who teaches the People
to dig houses underground to survive
the drought of that time.

Another legend tells us of their travels
South near the (now) border following game –
stories of an Old Woman wintering alone in a cave
who was saved by the Mice and the Frogs.

3,000 years ago, the smoke
from their cooking fires drifted
across the valley floor
toward Frog Peak,

Many years ago we
discovered a large frog pictograph
on the rocks of a cave
near the Columbia River.
Across the river today

Six-hundred acres stand protected
by a tall Woodsman,
while the mysteries
of the People's courageous lives are unveiled.

(Carol Ladas – Gaskin © 2015)

Absolute Attention is Prayer

I thought I could hear
the cherry trees singing
all the notes from white to pink.
Their arms are stretched wide open
budding bright buds, flowers breathing light,
leaves color of plum, unfolding their hands.

Magnolias lift their
white, pink cups
to the shining crows
adjusting their feather tips
skimming over the folded leaves
praying in the branches.

The giant blue heron floats
down, then drifts
upward into the fir branches.
Her mate floats in silently.
They rest in the fragrance
of the trembling blossoms.

In my mind:
the peacock shudders;
his shimmering thousand eyes
converge upon her.

In my mind:
Swallows stitch my life
from tree to tree down the promenade
a hem stitch, doubling back on itself.

Today the swallows are hiding.
Perhaps their wings
are folded in prayer.

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