



## *little brother*

Florene Belmore

A response to Rebecca Belmore's exhibition, *At Pelican Falls*

Outside, the sun has fallen below the horizon leaving behind a hint of red, which is quickly overtaken and absorbed into the darkening sky. The night has come. The trees have turned into black shapes, tall and angular, short and rounded. Above them the sky brightens, pricked with light from the stars as they blink at us from their side of the world.

A small wind brushes across the land, sending the leaves of poplar trees rustling into a shimmer of sound like a light falling rain. High up, nearer to the stars, thin clouds drift.

From the nearby lake comes a call of a loon. The single, lonesome wail rises then falls, cutting through the night, travelling far and clear, carried by the water. The call is followed by another and is the opening that gives way to a chorus of call and response. "I am here." "Where are you?" "I am here."

The calls are mournful, full of ache and questions. Then there is laughter. Together this haunting song binds them. As the night draws on their song recedes into the distance as they move up the lake and away.

Inside is small and quiet. Broken now only by the low, steady breathing of my sleeping brother. In the spare light cast from the window I see the small peak of his shoulder. I put my head down onto my pillow, welcoming the room's darkness to fold in around me taking me back into the stillness.

The quiet returns and sleep slides in bringing dreams. Images and echoes of past, present and futures, vivid and racing and then snatched away. Only impressions linger upon waking, until there's nothing.

Little brother is already up. We eat breakfast, wash our dishes, make our beds, take out the garbage; then we're free for the whole afternoon.

We stop at the corner store for something to drink. The plastic cup is cold and sweats in my hand. The cola flavoured drink is sweet and icy. Little brother always goes for the swamp mix, taking flavours from all the ice making machines, making a mess even as he concentrates not to. I wait for him as he painstakingly measures what he thinks are the perfect amounts of orange, cola and 7-up.

I dig out the folded note from my pocket and pay. We step out into the hot day. We get to the street that eventually leads us to the underpass of the railway. The path up the embankment to the tracks is well worn - another trip for another day.

"Half way," he says to me with a big grin, his missing top teeth showing a hint of the new ones coming in. He tags the girder, bends down, selects some rocks and puts them in his pocket.

Eventually the street meets the highway which we walk along until it comes to a bridge. At the bridge two lakes are joined by a deep and fast moving rapids. Below us on each lake, just out of reach of the pull and push of the rapids are a couple of boats. They are anchored and people are fishing from them.

We lean against the rail and watch the one boat in its place just above where the water becomes turbulent. We watch a man standing in the bow. He pulls his arm back extending the rod with it and swings it forward releasing the lure sending it in an arc through the air. There is a little splash where it lands. We watch him. He keeps the rod low in front of him, then slightly raises it up while slowly turning the reel winding the line in. We watch him make another cast and reel in.

Little brother impatiently nudges me to say let's go. We continue to the end of the bridge and go further up the highway. Finally we come to the wooded trail that leads to the beach where we swim.

The beach is in a shallow bay that is book-ended with points of low sloped granite. The sand is hot from the sun. We take off our shoes. I tuck my left-over coins into the toe. Little brother empties his pockets of the rocks he's collected along the way. I take both pairs of shoes and hide them in the branches of a low shrub. Double-checking they are hidden from view just in case somebody else comes.

Little brother busies himself with throwing his rocks into the water. I wonder does he realize the small steady waves won't allow them to skim. His cache depleted he looks to me as I wade in. The water is warm and inviting. I charge forward until it is deep enough and I dive in. The water rushes and greets me; a surprise, as I extend my arms up and kick my legs. Pulling myself forward, I feel a surge of strength. I'm free and untethered as I move under the water. I open my eyes and can see the sandy bottom. There are a few small clusters of reeds and low beds of rounded stones. I turn my face up and see the blue sky. I swim hard and break the water's surface.

Taking in big gulps of air I turn and see little brother. I call out to him. I call him to come in as I swim back to meet him. As I get close to him he splashes me. I splash him back and we laugh hard as we churn the water into a frenzy. Little brother breaks away and runs back up onto the beach. Breathless, I come in and we sit together, warmed by the sun, resting in shallow water.

**Florene Belmore** | Florene Belmore is Anishnaabe from the Lac Seul First Nation currently living in Vancouver, BC. She works as an arts administrator and has a long and varied career in the fields of visual art, theatre and book publishing. She studied creative writing at the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, BC and continues her writing of short stories.

**Rebecca Belmore** | A member of Lac Seul First Nation (Anishinaabe), Rebecca Belmore is an internationally recognized multidisciplinary artist. Rooted in the political and social realities of Indigenous communities, Belmore's works make evocative connections among bodies, land and language. Her group exhibitions include: DOCUMENTA 14 (2017), Athens, Greece, Echigo-Tsumari Triennial, Niigata Prefecture, Japan (2015); Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Art Museum, New York (2007); Land, Spirit, Power, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON (1992); and Creation or Death: We will Win, Havana Biennial, Cuba (1991). Belmore was a recipient of the Gershon Iskowitz Prize in 2016 for her outstanding contribution to the visual arts in Canada, Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2013, the Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Award in 2009, and an Honorary Doctorate from the Ontario College of Art and Design University in 2005.

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**At Pelican Falls  
by Rebecca Belmore**

**EXHIBITION**

08 September - 21 October 2017

**OPENING RECEPTION**

Friday 08 September | 7 PM

**ARTIST TALK**

Saturday 09 September | 2 PM

**PLATFORM**

**Director** | Collin Zipp

**Communications** | Ray Fenwick

**Admin Assistant** | Genevieve Collins

**IMAGE** | Rebecca Belmore, *At Pelican Falls*, 2017

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