



POETRY

Borderland

Patricia LeBon Herb



The poem 'Borderland' is inspired by more than 24,000 miles of fieldwork that Patricia LeBon Herb conducted in the borderlands between the United States and Canada together with her partner Guntram Herb. Their work seeks to document the challenges of native nations divided by the US-Canada border. The poem was featured in a poetry column in the Addison Independent in Middlebury, VT and on Guntram Herb's website:

www.border-rites.org



Patricia LeBon Herb is an artist and poet who lives in Middlebury, Vermont. Her poems have been featured on Larry Robinson's poetry lovers online forum and she was a keynote speaker on Verbal Onslaught, Middlebury College's monthly spoken word event. She has exhibited at the National Association of Women Artists Gallery in New York City; Johnson Memorial Gallery, Middlebury College; Walk Over Gallery and Art on Main in Bristol, VT; Champlain Maritime Museum; Fletcher Allen Hospital and the Maltex Building in Burlington, VT (www.lebonherbart.com). She was a local curator of fine art in Middlebury and has been a judge for the fall 2010 Woodlands Native American art exhibition in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Her artwork has been reproduced on the cover of books published by Oxford University Press and Rowman & Littlefield as well as on posters for the International Film Festival at Middlebury College, Addison County Humane Society, and WomenSafe. She is currently working on an art-book with prose, poetry, essays, and illustrations about her Anishinaabe Native American heritage. She is an enrolled member of the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

Borderland

As we zig zag the
US and Canada border
from Maine to Seattle
and into Alaska

We travel through Native lands
families and friends separated
long lines of cars and trucks
on land and bridges
close communities
divided

Passports to be shown
sunglasses off
those with a DUI
cannot cross over
even as passengers
or ever again
I heard it said

Sometimes it's a long trek
other times not
Reservations and Reserves
two separate lands
on one border
or another

Veteran Elders come
to participate
at Eagle Staff gatherings
some well into their 90's

Regalia and bundles
inside the car
the border patrol
depending who you get
know better now
to not go through them



Officers with good training
have learned to respect
the ways and traditions
different from theirs

Indigenous men
women and children
come to participate
in a pow wow
a celebration
a sacred circle
on the other side

First Nations go south
Native Americans go north
First Alaskans go east
Northern First Nations go west

To participate and celebrate
to give thanks for each other
the earth
the land and waters
animals and trees
stories from another time

Everything done in a circle
intricately sewn regalia
headdresses, jingle dresses
made with feathers, beads
and the hide of buffalo
caribou, deer, and seal

Songs and traditions
from long ago
to say we are one
in a circle

with no borders

*Patricia LeBon Herb
Ziibinkokwe, Turtle Clan*