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Full Grown

Outside the far window
 a wheeling flock of geese, April,
 and the sun mixes with snow and rain.
 They've paired up, mated, by summer
 the goslings will be walking a foot tall
 on the river island. By fall
 they'll be flying south, looking full grown,
 facing the distance, the guns.

My students all look full grown
 though they forget their pens, pencils,
 tissues for runny noses, cough
 into the general air and ask again

what time it is.
 Some have fallen to the side already—
 there's nothing like the gaggle that crowded

my room in September, food brought
 to them with the fun. Now the sun
 of April changes again to snow
 and a biting north wind. It's nasty
 out there and the geese, far out
 that window, are getting ready to bring
 their young into this world.

They don't have long to get them grown,
 those geese. One student rubs her nose
 down her sleeve. Her mother would cringe
 if she could see. But she can't.
 Her young has flown off over
 the trees, the wind is strong,
 and in the pits below, the hunters have loaded
 their guns.

Studying History

Four o'clock at the Hi Way Café, the darkening
 end of a stormy day. We're here from school
 for Cokes, fries, and nothing to be happy about:
 January exams, History tomorrow, books out
 on the table, actually serious about being able
 to learn a thing while we're here.

Francine tells Hector who's in for smokes
 how Dusty took three hours to come over
 from Swift Current, finally followed the Coke
 truck, she says, could hardly climb the Gull Lake
 hill, ploughing snow he turned off here, frostbitten,
 worn out.

We ask each other questions about Napoleon,
 Wellington, Nelson, the Armada. Old man
 Berquist steps in for coffee and pie. Behind us
 Francine tells him about Dusty, same blizzard, same
 Coke truck all over the road. Four hours
 to get here.

I ask Rob about one of the Louis, he asks me about
 George III, Francine tells George Lemieux about Dusty
 nearly dying coming over from Swift Current, how
 an hour drive took five.

We roll our eyes, try to memorize heads of state, heads
 in a basket, know Dusty had a time of it coming over
 from Swift Current, Francine shaking her head as she tells it,
 worst blizzard she can remember, longest it's ever taken
 anyone to get here from Swift Current.

William Robertson teaches English and Creative Writing in the ITEP program on the U of S campus and English in the SUNTEP program in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He recently edited a collection of his creative writing students' work entitled *Where I'm From: ITEP Creative Writing 2005--2013*. His latest collection of poems is entitled *Just Living* and was published by Coteau.