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Time Doesn't Matter

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Time Doesn't Matter

Content Warning: This poem contains images of colonial and racial violence that can be triggering or distressing.

On August 9, 2016, a young Cree man named Colten Boushie died from a gunshot to the back of his head after entering Gerald Stanley's rural property with his friends. The jury's subsequent acquittal of Stanley captured international attention, raising questions about racism embedded within Canada's legal system.

—*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*¹

This is not a poem. Ignore the spacing on the page
that might suggest rhythm, or units of time,

or fields: square sections of private property on maps
of stolen land. Ignore the amount of time

the farmer, the murderer, claimed for his handgun's hang-fire,
which is implausible, unheard of, impossible. Time

doesn't matter. This happened five years ago, give or take
two centuries. This is not a poem: this is the page

we turn quickly, because we don't want to read it,
because we want to go back to saying that was a long time ago—

why do we keep dredging these things up—
we need to move on as a country—that might have been

my ancestors, but it wasn't me! But
it's not hard to imagine, is it, how different this would have been,

¹ From the National Film Board of Canada: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up/>

if the murderer with an illegal firearm had been Indigenous
and the victim white: would there have been

a hanging? Mob justice? Martial law on the Prairies?
At the very least, the RCMP would have investigated

as if they believed a human being had been killed.
After he shot a man in the head in a car on his driveway

the farmer, the murderer, went back inside
and finished his morning coffee.

KELLY SHEPHERD's *Insomnia Bird* won the 2019 Robert Kroetsch City of Edmonton Book Prize.
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