SHIRLEY WILLIAMS

When I was a child

Take a look —
See the beauty of the world
Use your eyes to see the beauty
for when you see something
only you can see it.

Only you can interpret
what you see.
Look how clear the water is.
When I looked
I saw — Beauty! Water
shining and dancing
before my eyes.

To see, to look,
to appreciate beauty of things
is a prayer.
Then, I felt good.

I felt gladness.
I felt joy.
I felt whole.
Beauty!
Life so precious
it’s a gift of Master.

My paw-pa used to say
Use everything you have
and always give thanks
for what you see
for some day you may not see.

In the morning always face the sun
for Kiisis gives heat and light.
Be sure to day
Megwetch!

When night comes
wait for the moon.
She provides night light
to us to see
so we won’t get lost.

Shir-o-lee, daughter
let us stop to fish
for we are near the rocks.

Look into the bee-ing
until you see three large rocks
for that’s our fishing mark.

Shh — hear the rocks speak
for they have spirit, too.
Whenever you are in trouble
speak to a rock
for you have a special asin, too.

The asin we have is the
foundation of us
for we need
a stone to stand on
for when we’re weak.

Life is like sharp rocks
full of mountains to climb.
climb hard, my daughter,
and you will be strong.

Always, my child,
look and listen.
Use your eyes to see
the world.
Breathe Nodin, the wind
for you will feel whole he said.

Then, I felt
a bite on my line.
It’s a fish, I yelled.

Paw-pa smiled
then laughed so hard
that I lost my line.

Let’s go home he said.
Megwetch! Nodin!
then I heard Nodin sing.

We will go home, Shir-o-lee.
I will carry you home.

Ojibway words:
Daw-niss-san — daughter
Paw-pa — father
Nodin — wind
Shir-o-lee — Shirley
Shawn-zee-mo — John Simon
Kiisis — Sun
Megwetch — thank you
bee-ing — water
asin — stone