

*NOEMIE DESCHÊNES*

**Power of a Round Dance**

One, two, three, four,  
People mobilize to the beat.  
All become points,  
The beat—a centrifugal force.

One, two, three, four,  
The curve transforms into an arc,  
More points anchor,  
The arc grows into a circle.

One, two, three, four,  
They are inviting me.  
Can I do this?  
I'm scared, but the rhythm flows.

Paaikw, niisu, nistu, naaw,  
We orbit together—  
A flawed circle  
Where we all play a role.

Paaikw, niisu, nistu, naaw,  
One, two, three, four,  
Aastim niimutaw:  
You come, we dance, and we stand strong.

Let beat move you.

This is the power of a round dance.

Note: *Paaikw, niisu, nistu, naaw*, and *Aastim niimutaw* are in Naskapi, an Indigenous North American language. The English translations appear in the lines below the Naskapi expressions in stanza 5. The poem's lines syllable count follows the rhythm of the round dance mentioned in it.