

Know Who You Are and Know Where You Come by Debra Sparrow

For my grandfather, ShWienum (Edward Sparrow) born in 1898 in a Musqueam village at the mouth of the Fraser River. He died in 1998 at the age of 99 and one half years.

Driving along the shoreline  
of what is now called the City of Vancouver,  
my grandfather, ShWienum beside me,  
and one or more of my three children  
in the back seat, listening to him  
tell us the histories  
of our great lands,  
the same histories  
his grandparents told him  
as they drove along  
in horse and buggy,  
and the same histories  
their grandparents told them,  
walking along these shores  
or in canoe.

300 years of stories  
are still being passed on.  
ShWienum can rest, knowing  
as I have, as he did  
what we share  
as people of this land.

Blessed to have this time with him,  
I will take with me into the future  
the success and integrity  
of our people.

I know who I am,  
I know my history,  
and I know where I come from.  
My roots are planted firmly in the very soil  
that my ancestors are buried in.

I am connected,  
my children are connected,  
and my grandchildren will be connected.  
We will be here  
another millennium  
as we have been  
for nine millennia past.

When asked of the First Nations people:  
"Who said this land belonged to you?  
There are no signs on a mountaintop.  
It is not written anywhere."

Anywhere you open the earth,  
the evidence is there.  
It is written  
in the earth.

From A Hurricane in the Basement and Other Vancouver Experiences (Portrait V2K, The City of  
Vancouver Millenium Project, Vancouver, 2000.)