

MONICA MCKAY

Ah Sim'

Ah sim'!, can you hear the drum,
Ah sim'!, it is the earth mother's heartbeat,
the beginning of my people began when we were moved from
the spirit world,

The gift from K'am ligi ahl ahl, (the all-being, omnipotent
one), to be clothed in flesh and bone, but the sacred gift
of the spirit-soul, protected in the midst, of this body.

Ah!, can you not hear my brother, Raven, tell you how
K'am ligi ahl ahl, gave him the privilege of bringing light
to this Island, earth, together with my brothers and
sisters, whom you gave the appearance of animal; eagle,
beaver, wolf, frog, owl, bear, raven, and Killerwhale, who
have taught us how to harvest and nurture the land,

The spirit mother, is generous, she has taught us well, to
recognize the dignity and sacredness of the cycle of life,
my brother and sisters; salmon and moose, with your lives
we will endure...

My history, goes back to the beginning of time, My
bloodline, My inheritance comes from the women from my nation,
Who are the holder of all stories, property rights, and names
Nisga'a woman, you are privileged to be given the gift of
"Life-Giver," "Life-sustainer; provider, teacher," within
you, is the power to re-create life
My beginning, the time after the woman whom I call mother
joined with the man I call father.
aa es bebi', aa es bebi',
memories of warmth,
woman who is mother to my mother, Giigs'
hot sun, song of the fly, smoke of hemlock, tickles my eyes
as we turn flesh of salmon,
softly I hear you, call me, Monica, are you awake, I answer,

Yes, would I like some tea with cinnamon, I tell her yes
I have known you since I remember
I look at the clock, it is 3 o'clock, I wonder what she
would like to tell me
We sit and she begins her story, she tells me again the
story of her two mothers, she is lonely.
I listen.
the woman she was born too, had a sister that could not
give birth to a female child, and was very sad, so the
woman who gave birth to my giigs', gave her to her sister.
The woman has the power to re-create life, it is important
to our survival, she is provider, sustainer, teacher,...
She tells me of her mother, her mother's sister,
She remembers gentleness, stories, learning, I listen.
we finish our tea, and she reminds me that daylight will
come soon,

Ah sim', I hear the gulls, and the hear the river stroke
the beach.
I smell birch, and the stink of the rotting oolichans, I
hear laughter, and the choir of human voices talking.
I see the woman who is my mother's sister, who I know as
mother, motioning me to come to her. I have rested long
enough, I join her at the lip of the beach, and reach for
cedar strips, in water drawn from the river.
Woman who is sister to my father, whom I call mother,
reminds me that the longer I have my hands in the water,

time will convince me that it is not cold.
I reach for an oolichan, quiet and listening, I watch my
mothers as they string yet another oolichan together.
I tell them that I have forgotten how to maneuver the cedar
through the gills, so that my oolichan becomes part of the
strip, my father's sister, limps towards me, and gently
takes it from my hands, and slowly shows, me again, the
ageold process.

Ah sim', I hear the voice of my father,
we sit in semi-darkness, the paint of the fire splashes and
dances on his face as he tells us the story of the frog
woman.
I sleepily look around the room, the women and men who are
brother and sister to my father listen, the children who
were born to these women, my brothers and sisters sit and
listen
I look for my mother, she sits in the corner with the
daughter of her eldest sister's daughter, I listen.
She says very gently aa es, bebi, aa es bebi,
I move closer to the woman who also is my father's sister,
she begins to stroke my hair, I listen.
Ah sim', my mother stands by the piano, and is speaking
I am in my giigs's house, she is talking to my sister, who
was born to my mother's eldest sister.
"You have decided to leave your mother and father's house,
you can no longer return as their daughter, you are going
to join with the man you have chosen to marry, you will
enter your parents house, as their daughter-woman, you no
longer are their daughter-child.
Remember, what your mother has passed on to you, your
grandmother, what I have passed on to you. All that you
have listened to, will return when you decide the time is
right to have your own child.

it is our right, we have the power to re-create, within

us." We listen, after she finishes, my mother's mother
stands and speaks, after her, my grandmother's sisters,
after them my mother's sisters.

Ah sim', the woman who is also my mother's sister, is
crying
I look for my mother, and go to her, I place her arms
around me and ask, why?
The man whom my mother's sister married, is missing,
We wait, We wait in silence, we wait as we tell stories, we
wait, ...the phone rings, he is dead.
The pain wells up, I join with my family as they lament the
taking of my uncle's life. I look to my mother, I feel her
pain as she realized life without her husband, I take her
pain and make it mine,
the crying quietens, my grandmother motions for my mother
and they leave the room, they will begin to bury my uncle.

Ah sim', I hear silence I am coming back from within, I am tired,
I feel naked...

Nisga'a words English translation

Ah!	listen
Ah sim'	be quiet, listen to me
giigs	grandmother
aa es bebi	(a phrase a mother would use to comfort a baby)