

Activist Summit: Building Activism by Building Our Membership December 2-4, 2021 via Zoom



Debra Sparrow, Cultural Educator and Knowledge Keeper



Debra Sparrow was born and raised on the Musqueam Indian Reserve and is self-taught in Salish design and jewellery making. Her work can be seen in various museums and institutions including the University of British Columbia, Vancouver International Airport, Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, the Royal B.C. Museum in Victoria and the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle.

Debra designed the logo for the Canadian Men's Hockey Team for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver, B.C. Debra also continues to work on pieces close to her heart at her home in Musqueam. It is Debra's hope to educate others about the beauty and integrity of her people's history through her art.

Debra is an acclaimed weaver who has been weaving for twenty years and is deeply involved with the revival of Musqueam weaving. She is active in a program at the Museum of Anthropology designed to teach grade four children about Musqueam culture and history. Debra has also been an instructor at Langara College, teaching a Reconciliation Weaving course.

Debra and her sister felt a need to find their roots; they wanted to know what their place was in the world. Their grandfather had told them that they had to know who they were and where they come from, otherwise they were nothing. They decided that their path to this knowledge was through traditional crafts. Debra chose to pursue jewellery making, but later found herself involved more and more with weaving. Along with her sister, Debra co-founded a group of women weavers in the 1980s who rejuvenated Salish Weaving tradition and were able to reconstruct the lost weaving techniques.