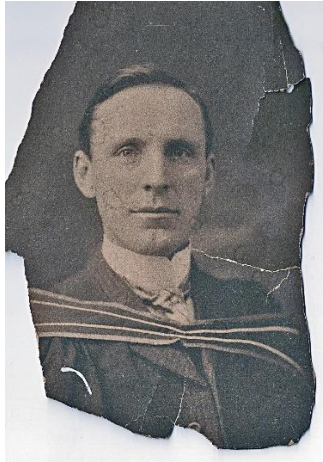


## SPIRIT GUIDE



I knew my grandfather only once,  
or, rather, he was a presence.  
The way lay through dappled woods,  
a cascade of shadows.

His walking stick, the measure  
of rocks, roots, resilient  
earth, ears tuned to the direction  
of muffled chirps,  
the rustle of slight scamperings,  
a caution of cliff where far below  
Lake Simcoe, a shaft of light,  
burned through a lattice of deep,  
dark green.

I don't remember him speaking,  
at least in words that reach  
the ear, but farther in.

It seemed we walked for hours  
in silence, yet full of sound,  
emerging on a field of seeding  
wheat and wild lupine.

Months later, when I was ushered  
into that grey, hushed

room where sorrowing adults sat,  
I could not find him anywhere

but somewhere  
farther in.

~Sheila Collins