

This effort is dedicated to our grandmothers. Our grandmothers who kept the fire burning through a long time of darkness. Our grandmothers who passed on our teachings. They shared their life experiences so we would be permitted to grow and become the best human beings we could be.

The fire is the spark, the impetus needed to create life. It is often seen as symbolic of the values and beliefs central to our society. We see the fire in all aspects of our life. Yet there was a time when the women who went before us were encouraged to leave our ways on the path and learn new ways.

It was very early on in our work to prepare this issue that we agreed to dedicate our efforts to our grandmothers. Those Indian, Inuit and Metis women who managed, often despite great adversity, to hold on to those ways, teachings and feelings that would ensure we would know who we are.

Our grandmothers would be our teachers. They would help us learn the questions we would face as we travelled through life. We were taught about the natural world. We were taught life skills. We were taught values and attitudes. We came to share a vision.

These women who we call grandmother wouldn't always be our "blood relatives." Some of them wouldn't necessarily even be biological grandmothers. They were nonetheless traditional teachers who had a great impact on all our lives. They left moccasin tracks so that we could follow. They were as different and diverse as we are. The bond they shared and passed on was a dream of us living the good life we were intended to have. A life based on peace in all our relationships, and not one based on material possessions.

When each of us came along there wasn't always enough time. Those who were available shared freely those things they knew. We were encouraged to talk, to communicate and, most importantly to feel. Some things were difficult and some grandmothers themselves lost the good red road; when they

lay down their load it would be harder on those who would follow. Destruction of the natural world, belittling the status of woman, depression and the system would all contribute to our losing some of those life teachings they were responsible for. Yet a few held on.

Perhaps now more than ever we need to look towards those grandmother-teachers amongst us. In these turbulent times the grounding, being tied to the natural world, fulfilling our life cycle responsibilities is more important and relevant than ever.

One of the most powerful teaching methods we have is "walk what you talk." Most of the time we never had any formal instruction. The stories of our people are often shared over tea and talk. In our traditional ways even the smallest child's voice must be heard and considered. Our grandmothers ensured we were heard and felt like we belonged.

Women are Keepers of the Culture. It was our grandmothers who held on to what they could of our identity as a People. It was they who in their own indirect way would ensure we would be able to know who we are. Oftentimes the fire would grow very dim, but still our grandmothers persisted. We

were taught that the time we are in is only borrowed from future generations — generations yet unborn. Our thoughts, words and actions impact seven generations from now. It is these children held sacred by our Mother Earth for whom we must leave a true fire.

Many of our grandmothers have already gone on. Many were called before they could teach us. They now help and teach us in other ways.

There are many grandmothers we could not speak with while we were preparing this issue. We do, however, recognize your work and contributions. To our grandmothers we say *nya-weh*, *meegwetch* for the teachings. We offer this dedication in recognition of your work.

There are now a few more of us to find the Kindling for the fires.



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