

The Métis in the 21st Century Conference

June 18-20, 2003

Saskatoon

Day 1 – Tape 4

Start Clip: 02:01:05:22

Rose Richardson: Wild mint, which we'll be having some tomorrow, is used as a regular beverage and is used to clear chest congestion. As a child, when we went picking berries, my mother always got us to pick yarrow in case we got stung. Yarrow was used to counteract bee stings and to regulate our sleep. Balsam bark or tamarack were used as a herbal tea to cure ulcers. Since their belief was that ulcers was caused by a bacteria, balsam bark and tamarack are considered to be antibacterial and anti-fungal. Rat root was used to keep your throat clear, to keep your throat clear of infection and to stop coughing. It was also used to prevent tooth, a toothache, and had many other medicinal values. Being spiritually in tune with your own body and the plants just became a way of life for us. For example, stinging nettle is used for many purposes, including the treatment of arthritis. When you are using nettle for healing, it will not sting you. Nettle is whipped on to the aching joints to relieve pain. We never questioned how it happens, you just know it works, and you show gratitude.

As a young child, the elders would come to see my mother and to borrow me to be their guide to find medicinal plants. Some plants were so sensitive that they would become transparent—or as my mother would say, “[speaks Michif or Cree]”—they would hide from certain people, or they would simply relocate if they were not respected. One-tenth of the medicinal plants in each area could be picked to make sure that there was always plants left to propagate. Plants were not picked during the flowering season unless the whole plant was used for medicine. It is believed that every, it is believed that for every illness there is a plant or analogy within your own environment.

In the last few years, we have been attending an international gathering of traditional medicines and healing, and that's how that, Nekaneet

around Maple Creek. The first year after making a presentation at the gathering, a man approached us and told us that he had come from Montana, and he felt that he had to tell someone a story. When he seen us, he recognized us and told us that "I have to tell you this story." When he was very young he became very ill and had to be put in the hospital. After he was there for some time, the doctors told his mother that one of his kidneys was shrivelling up and that it could die. The doctors claim that there was nothing they could do, but that he'd have to live with just one kidney. After he'd been back home for a while, a Native lady was walking past her home, on her way to town. She asked his mother how the little boy was. And his mother told him about his kidney problem. The lady then showed her a little flower, which she said should make a tea, that she should make a tea out of, and have the boy drink it for one month, saying that it might help him. He said he took the drink and drank the tea for one month. He told us that that was sixty-five years ago, and he'd never had problems with his kidneys since then. And that is amazing, that sixty-five years later, he should tell us this story when we have so many people that are having problems.

There are many other healing plants. That is why we must set up a mechanism that will help us to prevent what we know and what we have. Land has to be set aside to preserve these medicines and to allow them to grow in their natural environment. We are people of the land. We must remain protectors of the land. Last fall, I heard on the news that because many people were using alternative healing medicines that people in the medical professional, that people in the medical profession, would be trained in alternative use of medicine. I listened and I wondered, "Why retrain? Why not utilize the human resources and the expertise we have available?"

It's very important that people understand that this is part of our culture and this is part of our heritage.

End Clip: 02:07:55:10