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For all our grandchildren.

It is beautiful today the snow is finally all gone, the sun is shining and the crows are calling. If you were here and we could all go for a walk, we would hear the geese honking as they fly to their territory. We'd see ducks building nests and hear frogs in all the ponds. And maybe we would sit down by the water and we would tell you how our long ago moshoms and nokoms used this time of year to teach us by taking us for long walks to pick duck eggs or to dig the fresh bulbs and stalks of cat tails to be eaten for supper. As we worked they would tell us about all the creatures who were either just waking up like the frogs and the bears, or the ones who were coming home after a long journey to far off lands. " Nah to tah, listen." They would say. " That is Ayiikis the frog, he has been asleep for the whole winter and now he is telling us about all the dreams and visions he had while he slept."

The old people would listen and murmur, " Emmm.. Huh. Ahhhee, tapwe kah ayimun." Then they would translate to us. "Ayiikis says that this will be a dry summer and times will be hard for all of us."

We would be so impressed and we never forgot Ayiikis, or the cattail bulbs and stalks we'd had for dinner, which were taken from his territory, the pond by the south pasture.

We think of those old moshoms and nokoms often now, we remember their wisdom and depth of knowledge and wished we had paid more attention so that we would have more stories and teachings to share with you. Stories that would help us all become better human beings on this earth, better relatives to all the creatures who share it with us. Recently I found a wonderful book called *Wisdom Sits in Places*, it was written by a man called Keith Basso. Mr. Basso spent nearly all his life with the Apache people and in this book he writes about his life with them. He tells one story in particular which reminded me of some of the old people I have been privileged to know. This story is like a poem and I think it belongs to the category of "Payatik mamtoonaytah nee kahn" "Think carefully, gently first." Something my nokom use to tell us as we sat by the water on a spring day. Thinking is good for us, it gives us wisdom and that is what this poem is about. The speaker is an old cowboy called Dudley Patterson:

"The trail of wisdom, that is what I'm going to talk about. I'm going to speak as the old people do, as my grandmother spoke to me when I was a boy.

Do you want a long life? She said. "Well you will need to have wisdom if you do. You will need to think about your own mind. You will need to work on it. You should start doing this now. You must make your mind smooth. You must make your mind steady. You must make your mind resilient.

Your life is like a trail. You must be watchful as you go. Wherever you go there will be danger waiting to happen. You must be able to see it before it happens. You must always be watchful and alert. You must see danger in your mind before it happens.

If your mind is not smooth you will fail to see the danger. You will trust your eyes but they will deceive you. You will be easily tricked and fooled. Then there will be nothing but trouble for you. You must make your mind smooth.

If your mind is not resilient you will easily be startled. You will easily be frightened. You will try to think quickly but you won't think clearly. You yourself will stand in the way of your own mind. You yourself will block it. Then there will be trouble for you. You must make your mind resilient.

If your mind is not steady you will easily be angered and upset. You will be arrogant and proud. You will look down on other people. You will envy them and desire their possessions. You will speak about them without thinking. You will complain about them, gossip about them, criticize them... You must make your mind steady. You must learn to forget about yourself.

If you make your mind smooth, you will have a long life. Your trail will extend a long way.

How will you walk along this trail of wisdom? Well, you will go to many places. You must look at them closely. You must remember all of them. Your relatives will talk to you about them. You must remember everything they tell you. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it, and keep on thinking about it. You must do this because no one can help you but yourself. If you do this in your mind it will become smooth. It will become steady and resilient. You will stay away from trouble. You will walk a long way and live a long time.

Wisdom sits in places. It is like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must remember their names. You must remember what happened at them a long time ago. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it. Then your mind will become smoother and smoother. Then you will see danger before it happens. You will walk a long way and live a long time. You will be wise and people will respect you."

Hiy hiy, merci, thank you and have a good spring.