

**Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, November 2008**

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### **Wishing you a kind and gentle Kanokiswinikisikow**

Kaskatinowipism, in Cree, the Freeze Up Moon or as we would say in English, "November," is upon us again with her usual rattling of skirts and bones.

"Hey, hey, Tahko tew notokwew," my father used to say, when the Freeze Up Moon came roaring in at four in the morning like she did a couple of Saturday ago.

"Watch out the old woman has arrived."

I don't know why dad called that particular autumn wind Notokew, but she certainly does remind me of my great-grandmother when she'd had enough of our family's nonsense. There would be a flurry of skirts and I'm sure her old bones rattled as she moved around the house in the early morning and we all knew sure as the Creator made little green apples that today was the day we would be cleaning up our act, be it our spirits, our house or our yard.

And all over the community, in all the houses everybody's granny was acting the same way. It was as if they all had a meeting and said "enough is enough; let's get these kids back on track."

As I laid in bed and listened to that wind I remembered those old grannies who taught us how to survive whether it was though "Notowe mahchiwin," which means old lady hunting, the snaring of partridge, rabbits, and other small game or taking care of and respecting "wahkotowin" our family and environment.

And, last, but not least, their hard work to make a better world for their grandchildren. Grannies didn't get mad often, nor did they often call meetings of the families and chastised them but when they did, everybody, right down to the babies listened and tried their best to do better.

But, of course, times changed. Putting wahkotowin first and listening to old women was not exactly a modern thing to do and so like everything else these important cultural values broke down and the old women were pushed to the background, to the kitchens, the berry patches, to tanning hides and finally the bingo halls. What a loss for all of us.

So perhaps that wild autumn wind is a reminder to us about the importance of wahkotowin.

Another beautiful Cree word is "Kanokisiwinikiskikow." It means the day we "honor the veterans," the men and women who went away to fight for our country. It is the day my family honors great uncle Gabriel Vandal, uncle Thomas Campbell, uncle Robert Campbell, uncle Ambrose Dubuque, uncle John Dubuque and uncle Lawrence Klyne. They all came home, some wounded but alive, except for uncle Lawrence Klyne, who was killed somewhere in the South Pacific.

Great uncle Gabriel or Moshom Gabe as we called him was our granny's brother. He served in both WWI and WWII and also spent time in a prison camp. We never knew

about his heroic deeds until after his death when we were told that he was one of the survivors of Juno Beach and was a highly decorated soldier.

Neal McLeod, a grand nephew of moshom Gabe, has just published a book about him called Gabriel's Beach, which is available in book stores across Canada. We are very proud of these uncles and we honor them as we honor all the veterans who have served or are serving our country.

Speaking of war veterans, Claude Petit, good friend to many of us, community worker and fighter for the Rights of Aboriginal War Veterans of Canada, has been ill but is resting comfortably at home after a bout in the hospital.

Claude is a veteran of the Korean War. He served with the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry, enlisting when he was 15. He comes from a military family and is very proud of that history and we are very proud of him.

Send him a card c/o Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre or if you have his number call him and wish him a speedy recovery, we owe him a great deal. He has long been a role model and leader in our community working to make change for our people and in particular our youth. If you're reading this Claude, best wishes to you and get well soon.

And to all the men and women in the armed forces today, I am sure I speak for all of us when I say our love and prayers go out to you. To the veterans of past battles, we know that remembering is often painful so we wish you a kind and gentle Kanokiswinikisikow.

Creator, grandfather/grandmother spirit take care of all of us and bless our country. Hiy, hiy.