

## Words to go by

We are instructed thus to remind ourselves that as human beings, we must gather our minds together and express Thanksgiving for the gifts of the Natural World.

From the hidden life of the soil, to the pollinators, to the medicine plants, the trees, the animals, the birds, the Four Winds, the Thunders, to all life we give thanks. To the Cosmos, the realm of the Sky World and the life-giving elements created there. To the Cosmic family that is our common lineage and about which we learn much from cultural and scientific inquiry, we give thanks. To the Father Sun, Mother Earth, Grandmother Moon, to the faces of our ancestors reflected to us in the stars, we give thanks. To all of them, we are instructed to express our gratitude.

One of my teachers likes to remind me that, "the basis of our unity is the love of our children."

Zaag 'i we win	love/caring
De be mowin	honesty/truth
De be se ni mowin	humility/modesty
Zoon ge ni mowin	courage/bravery
Ga naa de ni mowin	respect/honor
Ba gi di ni di zowin	trust/loyalty
Gi ken da maa win	wisdom/knowledge

We fear the cold and the things we do not understand but, most of all we fear the doings of the heedless ones among ourselves.

Inuit elder

As I research the bubbling springs on the reservation, I found a reference to the buffalo dance that we once had. It says, "According to old Ojibwe Tradition the fountains of the earth are door by which all four legged animals enter their spiritual homes and so to enter our world. A long tent was erected out in the forest at a natural spring. The tent was in the shaped long to assemble all the guests and it represented the medicine lodge at the site of a spring. The host of the

ceremony held a feast for all those that were invited. At the onset of the ceremony the host exposes his buffalo medicine bag and opens it up. The feast consisted of everything suitable for a buffalo to eat. Squashes, corn, corn soup, dried sweet corn, wild rice, but never, never, any kind of meat. Salt was used abundantly as the buffalo is very fond of salt. A dish of water sweetened with maple sugar is always added. Everything is place in large wooden bowls in the middle of the tent which is out at the spring. The host sits in the western side of the tent and calls for the buffalo spirit from the spring fountain from the earth. Before him are large quantities of kinnikinick and tobacco which must be consumed in honor of the buffalo. He begins by saying this is not for me but because it was commanded in my dream. He relates his dream that gave him the buffalo medicine and then proceeds to call the buffalo spirit from within the spring hole. The ones who possess notable buffalo power, wear buffalo head dresses. They then begin the dance and dance around the food bellowing, pawing and hooking like the buffalo. The host of the ceremony gets down on all four knees goring the earth, bellowing, bleating and snorting and at last drinks the maple water in buffalo fashion. All the food that the host provided must be completely eaten and when the last dish is empty because the helpers dish out the food to the guests, when the last one finishes he turns over the wooden bowls with his horns. The Buffalo dance and ceremony was held twice a year, once in the early spring and once in the fall of every year and each time was at a different spring until such time when it came back to the first spring again and traveled to the next.

Just think when we had our buffalo dance it was out at a spring in the woods, our ancestors probably held this ceremony at the same springs we go to.

You have the message and it is yours to contemplate. It is yours to assess and think about. And as the sweat lodge teaching that has been given every time I have sat in sweat by my good teacher Wes, what we do today will have an impact seven generations from now. Just as those who struggled to follow the message of the spirit to ensure that we were thought of in their times we too must overcome our obstacles to ensure that the gifts of our creator that were bestowed upon us are carried on in the same manner.