



The Wintered Spirit

Not everyone embraces the call of wintertime, a season so vital to our inner spirit. Every human spirit needs rest, silence and solitude at some time or another and winter provides this essential opportunity. In partnership and guidance from Mother Earth, we are offered a sense of renewal by trusting and accepting her invitation to return, rest, reflect and restore.

The winter season often carries mysterious energy, a time when we find ourselves hypnotized by its darkness, called away from the distractions of life as we retreat into our homes, escaping the snow and cold. Who can't resist changing into PJ's and indulging in decadent comfort foods as sleep comes early, easily and summons us into dreamtime.

My winter dreamtime often brings me back to a time when I was a child skating on the river behind our home. Like my mother, I shared a love for skating and learned to skate when I was very young. At the age of five I would eagerly collect my 'boot blades' which were an alternative to real skates (which I didn't have until I was 10 years old) and stepped out onto the ice, determined to teach myself how to glide, spin and stop without falling. I am fortunate to dream in colour and with great detail as I recall the vivid blue-gray winter sky with shining peach and purple threads across it and how the wind would catch my breath creating small clouds of silence. Feelings of exhilaration and awe ignite my spirit each time I dream. I inevitably awaken feeling rested, refreshed and energized.

With each passing year I find myself courageously embracing winter's invitation to rest, reflect and rejuvenate my spirit. I keep a personal journal beside my bed where I like to reflect on my day before sleep or record my dreams in the morning. Often times my memories and my dreams bring me back to those glorious days of skating on the river. I would skate for hours no matter how cold or dark it became. It was only when I was called in by my mother to come in for supper that I would return to our house and undress on our back porch enclosure. Discarding my wet mittens first I would reach for the heat emanating off the woodstove making my hands tingle. With the help of an old wire coat hanger and a couple of clothes pins, I would carefully hang my mittens overhead which made a sizzle sound as each drop would hit the top of the stove.

My reflections often bring me back to a time when my family would gather on Sunday afternoons for traditional storytelling. Aunties, uncles, cousins and friends would begin arriving mid-afternoon in anticipation of feasting, sharing, daring and comparing. How I loved taking in the delicious odours of my grandmother's cooking wafting through the kitchen doorway as I anticipated large bowls of moose stew where I was taught to sop up every drop of gravy with huge slices of homemade bread. My mouth waters now just thinking of it.

Card games would ensue with sounds of my uncles slamming down their fists on the kitchen table as they celebrated their winnings. It was uncle Eugene who played fiddle tunes well into the evening until my aunties took over with their hand drums and traditional songs celebrating the season.

Storytelling was saved for the end of our night. Hunting and fishing stories have always been my favourite— never really knowing when the trickster stories would appear. From tales of outrunning an eight point buck through the woods to reeling in a hundred pound muskie, the stories that were told with such precision and detail fascinated and entertained us all.

Time has a way of passing quickly and although there are only a few hunters left in my family, storytelling remains a favourite. Never does a Sunday pass without my reflecting on the great stories and storytellers of my family. Each winter, I coordinate one weekend where we gather as a family to re-tell the best stories ever told, the ones held so strongly in our hearts and in our memory.

The magic of a glowing fire coupled with the stories of my elders brings warmth and good memories to my spirit offering me assurance that like sleeping seeds nestled in the womb of the Earth Mother, the seeds of life will also be tended to. I stand in absolute gratitude for the wisdom of my ancestors who have taught me that what is needed for future growth is deep within us, simply waiting to burst forward with the wild joy and anticipation of the next cycle of the earth.

May you accept and allow without hesitation Mother Earths compassionate embrace.

Raven