GIMINJIMENDAAN INA GAA-INAKAMIGAK?

(Remember When...?)



Fond du Lac Poetry Group:
Poems by 3 Elders and their Families

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Preface

Poetry is more than words on a page—it is a vessel for memory, identity, knowledge, and culture. It carries the rhythms of language, preserves stories across generations, and allows us to explore the depths of human experience.

For Indigenous communities, poetry can serve as a bridge between the past and the present and can connect personal and collective histories. It also provides us with a space for self-reflection, expression, and healing, reminding us of the ways we understand and honor our lives, heritage, and relationships with our present and past. Through poetry, language becomes alive, identity is affirmed, and cultural knowledge is passed forward in ways that are both intimate and enduring.

Between June and September of 2025, three Elders from the Fond du Lac Nation (Nagaajiwanaang) and four of their family members came together in a series of poetry gatherings that blended storytelling, cultural reflection, and creativity. During these gatherings, held in the Min No Aya Win Human Services Center on the Fond du Lac Reservation, participants listened to poems that sparked conversation and memories, and from these moments of sharing, new poems were born.

Guided by Anishinaabe values and traditions, the group drew upon their collective and individual memories, knowledge, and lived experiences to give voice to themes of identity, belonging, and connection to the land.

Through this collaborative process, thirteen poems were co-authored by program participants. Each poem reflects the group's shared spirit, experiences, and memories. Each session was focused on themes central to the community, like canoeing, powwows, and traditional foods, all of them deeply bonded to identity, belonging, and connection to the land. These poems capture stories of family, teachings from Elders, and the beauty and depth of the Anishinaabe life (Anishinaabe-bimaadiziwin). For Elders, particularly the ones who are experiencing changes with their memory, these gatherings offered a gentle way to reconnect with memories that sometimes felt distant; for their families, they became space to learn more about them, their knowledge, and honor their teachings and love.

The poems compiled in this book are not only creative works but living expressions of community, love, and life. They speak to the strength found in coming together, the healing power of poetry, and the enduring presence of the voices of the ancestors and Elders who continue to guide and inspire new generations of Anishinaabe people.

Organization of the book

This book is divided into eight parts, each representing one of the sessions in which this group came together. Every gathering centered on a theme deeply rooted in Anishinaabe culture—ideas that speak to identity, healing, resilience, and the land.

Each session culminated in the co-authorship of at least one poem. These poems were not written by individuals alone, but collaboratively. The act of creating poetry became a way of remembering—of bringing forward the voices, images, and feelings that continue to live in the heart even when words tend to fade.

The eight gatherings were facilitated by Allie Tibbetts and Jeanne Warttman, who helped create a space where participants could feel safe and confident, listen and share their experiences and memories freely, and find meaning in community.

Dr. Antonio Paniagua Guzman
Program Coordinator
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Session 1

Jiimewin

(Canoeing)

Flowers, trees... poem

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

It would be the water waves

Rolling and hitting the canoe

It makes me calm and relaxed

First thing I thought of was my brother paddling

Poling

I didn't paddle much

The man paddles

It's beautiful

Out there on the lake

It's all about ricing to me

The little sparkles on the lake

The little spirits

I don't go out at night

The swishing of the canoe mixed with the ricing

Everything is resting

Rejuvenating

As a warrior is crossing to get to the next island

The waves are hitting the side of his canoe

For me

That's home

Comfort

Home

Once I get home, I'm safe

You don't think about anything else on the lake

The lake, your ancestors

People from the past and what you were learning

A man shaping metal

I just think of my Grandma

She still went and riced

No matter how old she got

A good example to me of how to care for your family

I never riced in a birchbark canoe

Like crossing a desert, you can't go back and you can't go forward

A need for water to survive
All that live in the water
The creatures under the water
When I had my Mom and brothers
And my family was whole
Everything changed
When you're stopped
And ate lunch and visited and joked
Spirits, people guiding us
Water spirits
You have the moonlight, starlight
You're not in total darkness
Never will be
Venison in the night
Rice during the day
Always provided for
We did a lot of stuff that was cultural
But I didn't think of it as that
It was my life

Flowers, trees, wind, air

Facilitated by Jeanne Warttman

The trees will talk if you listen

Ask for rain

I've heard, I've seen

We've got to get in

The leaves turn when a storm's coming

The flop, they move to let you know a storm's coming

I smell it, feel it

How would you know if you never got out there?

Out there on the water

It's the power to get where you're going

I didn't paddle deep

You learn from wandering

Total relaxation

Time to think and reflect, places to go and things to do

Calm down. Reset

We took an hour to get across the lake,

Time to appreciate our ancestors,

And my brother that

Took the time to take the time

Spirit Island. A little bit afraid

It wasn't my place to traipse around without an Elder

We're back on land. Relief

Safety is here

Paddle across Gichigami

When you get to land, you're safe

Ahhhh

Not everyone can feel the sand in their toes and the wind on your hair,

The beach

Walk the shore of any great body of water,

The air, the soft sand,

You know you're in heaven.

We walked in swamp water, collecting tadpoles

The mud felt so good on our feet,

Park Point. Wisconsin Point

Drift wood. Cranberries

Gathering place

Partner, husband, provider

My partner, my brother, passed

My kids won't be enrolled, they won't rice

But they're not losing everything

Old memories. I'm feeling something here

Wherever great men have walked

I will follow in their footsteps

And when I die

I want to be buried in a fireproof casket

Because I know where I'm going

Sounds like the last day of camping

Sunsets

When we saw the sun set, it was time to get home

You walk on the shore, the wind on the lake,

That's what you feel

They talk to you

The sounds, the smells, and you feel safe

My brother got the messages

Grab a blanket or a sweater in the breeze

Rain, rain wonderful and fresh

When I was young, I didn't appreciate these things

Be on the lake for that connection

We're all part of it. Nature

We're born, we live, we die. That's nature

We live, we love, we die

Flowers, trees, wind, air

We breathe it

We love it.

Session 2

Awesiinyag

(Animals)

Moose

Facilitated by Jeanne Warttman

I would enjoy
A moose is from heaven
I would chase a goose,
I would chase a moose
Do a moose call,
Looking for a girlfriend
Tall and strong, I look for rain,
Think about the small earth
I walk through the swamp,
Stay in a shady place
If there were enough beer
Would I favor a cool bog?
Yes!
Lay down and cool down
If I was a moose, I would call for a mate
I wound lie down,
Take a picture, if I could

Wolves can run through anything
Safe in the swamp
Where hunters don't go
Washing my horns,
I'd probably freeze
Stand like a post, I'd probably freeze. Afraid
Yes, it would be safe
Hunters don't go there
If it's hot, I'd lie down in bed
I'd be scared,
Stay away from humans
I'd drown- wouldn't want to come up
The smells of the swamp
I'm smelly today!
Shade. Shade in the swamp
Bask, soak it in
The moose, I'd hope would run away
They're as afraid of us as we are them
That's what grandpa used to say
Yes, I'd soak up the sun

Nights get cold

Soak up sun and get a tan

There's a place where the moose come,

Out of the woods

I've always stayed away

Run. Take off

"Hey, chief, can you do- rain dance?" He'd say

"Sure." Luckily, it rained

Turn the other way and run

I sang. I didn't want to surprise that moose

My singing, a strange noise in the dark

Moose are curious. Always

See them closer? I'd probably have fun. Probably faint

I've got a hundred stories, but not enough time to tell.

Woods

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

I cannot be
I cannot be silent
Stars are not silent
Very active
Fireflies blink on and off
They don't make any noise
Resting
Peaceful
I don't think I'd be afraid of that
I watched eight kids underneath me
Not silent
We were brats
Laying on the grass looking up
Little field mice scurrying around
Hunting
Large wingspans
Looking for prey

They can see very well

Hear better

Sometimes they'd bring news that someone's going to leave

I look away when I see them

Powerful recognition

Space is endless

It always was

Billions of stars shining

Might be other beings out there

Who knows?

Owls are up through the night

Searching

Watching

During the day relaxing

Connection

Ancestors

I can hear to connect deeper

Hollering at kids to get in the house

Everything changes color in the night

Flowers look different in the night

Snow sparkles

Moonlight

Fresh snow

We're not good at silent

I hear animals, owls, creatures in the woods

Never really silent

People, frogs, mosquitoes

I feel like a rooster in the henhouse

The world needs to be more quiet

A different type of listening

We saw a fox and my little nephew said, "There's a red fox."

We saw three of them playing

They're one of those animals that don't appear you need to be afraid of

I'd hit him with my car

I'd probably try to run like hell

I think he's searching for some food for his little pups

What are you leaving behind?

When you feel like it's going to rain

You can sense it

Our sense isn't as good as the animals

Air changes a lot

Fire, smoke, dust, pollen

Blows up the sky

A deep breath

Full big belly breath

Two different meanings of smell

Like a male dog, scent your area

I think I'd run away scared

I seen hedgehogs scratching out in the woods

It scares me to get away from them

I'd rather wash dishes

I've never seen one

They're smaller than a porcupine

I think one of the worst things is getting sprayed by a skunk

My Grandma and Grandpa used to tell me if you see a bear in the woods to say

"Makwa akooniimaa"

Things that are screaming will chase things away

The kids would go out and play

And I'd be in the house cooking

I'm a town girl

Curiosity

How they use their nose to find things

Frogs at night

Searching for food

A little source of protein

A little snack

A big apple on a tree

When I was teepee creeping, I'd knock on the tent and they wouldn't answer

Flies aren't out at night

Mosquitoes, yes

Looking for food

Echo location

Flying freely

Limited on what they can do during the day

Nocturnal

They have the world to themselves

Screaming

Swooping

Going right around the broom

Coming out to enjoy the night sky to eat

Looking for a moonbeam through the trees

The dark is both

Warm, friendly, good

Providing for your little babies

You can get scared of the dark

If you're the one who is the prey

If her husband comes home, silently silently sneak away

Singing with their mother there

Like a baby when they go to sleep

That's their nest

Sharing the warmth

Well-cared for by their Mom

Fluffing out her feathers

That’s where they should be

Siblings

Watching them

What time do you feed?

Session 3

Indinawemaaganag

(Family and Community)

Geneaology

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

I think of my grandparents and my parents

A tree hanging down from the weight

My great-grandparents were from Fond du Lac

Oh those Grandmas!

I wished I'd had one

I think of them ricing and picking berries

When I was twelve years old, I stood on a branch

It broke

I broke my arm

The family tree was broken

If there was a tree, we were up there

The oldest granddaughter

The weight of that

The blood memory

The responsibility of being the oldest

The caring

Generations of love

You see Grandma caring for her elderly husband

You carry that on

Silently, silently leaving her bedroom when her husband came home

I don't forget the faces

They show up in other people's faces

Never truly not there

Beautiful times in those times

Kitchen full of knees

Grandma's lap

Green eyes

When I see owls, I think of my Grandma

When I see owls, it reminds me of the past

I think of my Grandma

They say I look like her

And it made me feel a little closer to her

I think you can love someone even if you didn't meet them

I have a little story

His dad passed away

"Can I give him a little kiss?"

Caskets dropping

It was horrible

Almost all of us are alive

There were twelve of us

We all handed the rope to the next one

My Great-grandma's hands

How dark they were

Very wrinkly

All the things she taught

Wishing I had more time to learn

Look at this hand

So ancient

I'd like to hold her hand again

I hope I can give that feeling I had for my grandparents

Mostly I think I want to know all the knowledge

Foraging

Healing

Skunk sac

All that knowledge is gone

When you learn the good things and bad things in life, you understand

Watching my Mom and Dad's love grow

The difference today and the simple times

We talk more about our feelings

Here's a deer that shows I love you

Here's a moose

How do you say "beautiful deer"?

"You don't say that; everyone knows that."

The noisiness

It was busy

Hiding behind doors

Lots of kids all the time

Thinking about loss

My body speaks Ojibwe

It's still in us

There never was a quiet moment

We had all of it
I wasn't taught traditional ways
But I know I'm different
In a good way different
I just remembered a song my Grandma sang
"Gibaabanaa"
I know there's a waabooz in it
You're going to be white
You're not going to have the troubles we did
Out of love and protection
I got out of a speeding ticket
The duality of our life
My Grandpa played with Finnish kids
Went into the military and moved to town
The internal struggle
Why am I fighting so hard to keep it?
But that came from a hurtful place
My Grandma pretended to be black
They were treated better than the Indians
Something amiss in my life

My identity

It's partially my fault but not

I do that with grandkids, great-grandkids

Twinkle, twinkle little star

They know more than I do

My little granddaughter said, "Grandpa, be quiet."

I can't sing! I have a Finlander voice

My Grandma was funny

She would make medicines for people

Can you imagine that? Twelve kids

I used to sit in my Grandma's lap

And she would read to me

She was froze in a sitting position

I could read before kindergarten

Phonics

My Grandma had rheumatoid arthritis

They'd put her in the canoe to rice

She'd tape my ears back with the old Indian hospital tape

My Auntie Linda

Her voice was just as beautiful as she was
My Grandma working in the match factory
Printing press
My Grandma was special
A spirit
They tried to teach us
Sewing, making pillows, quilts
How to survive
Making clothes
Sew and sing
Cook and sing
Teaching us how to can things
It was mostly watching
Going back in time
Log cabins heated by wood
Old floorboards
Kids outside dancing
We lived on the main drag
They hollered at us
A field with one tree in it

What would I do if that was my tree?

I can see it

Laying in a hammock

In the mountains

Feeling the breeze and the ancestors move through

I remember climbing up a tree

The biggest pine that didn't burn in the 1918 fire

Could see Cloquet up there

I couldn't get my arms around it

My Grandpa used to ride the rail cars

The sights he'd see

How'd he meet my Grandmother?

They had their own ways of getting places

Tell stories about coming down from Canada

We'd just laugh

Get bawled out all the time

I lived in San Francisco

I had a badge and a uniform

Relocation program

Did your family hunt and pick rice?

Yes, once it's ready

By the river there

I remember bringing up water

I've tried to think about those ancestors

Learn the language

I feel like I'm sliding down a tree

Still Anishinaabe forever

Only way I get to heaven

Just keep climbing

How do you lose something if you don't know it.

Session 4

Makizinan gaye ziibaaska'iganagoodayan

(Moccasins and Jingle Dresses)

Powwow

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

I don't know what a sun-slant is
I think about dancing by the lake
In Sawyer
That's where we used to run outside and play
Somewhere in that bush
When I was little
They put the drum away
There was too many people drinking
They had a fair
But I wanted to dance so bad
But nobody would go out there with me
I waited until I got brave
And then I went out there
And it was over
I learned to not wait
It's a gorgeous thing to see and hear that
My Grandma always used to sing in the house

They'd bring in the wood with things we had hidden

My Grandma was the same

Thought it'd be better if they fit in

Went into the military as soldiers

I learned about my language secondhand in books

The jingles and the feathers

I remember someone dropping one

No one was upset with him

If you make a mistake it's okay

A veteran picks it up

My Grandma and Grandpa

We lived in town

We called it the hill

We weren't allowed to speak Indian

You found my dress

Like eagles dancing in the sky

Children running around

Jingle dress dancers

Traditional men dancers

Shawl dancers
Everyone gathered ‘round the sacred drum
Kids everywhere
Frybread truck cooking lots of frybread
Ogimaa
He comes in with his staff
What I think of is the men
Head movements, dipping
Reminds me of the animals
I think you can feel it when you’re there
They stopped them from that
Because it wasn’t “right”
We never had much choice
I remember once at a powwow
My little granddaughter
“Can you see them Grandma?”
She could see spirits
I can’t
I only see them at a sweat
The powwow brings them to you

Good medicine

The individuals at the drum but the collective of the drum

The jingle dress dancers can dance for someone and they heal

We went down to a valley and we had to sit there

But we would crawl up and listen

It was good listening to their songs

It's part of the drum song

When you're drumming, the drum is speaking back to you

A voice

A heartbeat

Like water is the blood of Mother Earth

The drum is the heartbeat of the Anishinaabe

Sneaking blueberries

Big berries

That food was good, though

Berries

It's the beat

And when you feel that inside you

You can dance

I make sure I dance that veteran's song

To honor them

Give thanks for that

That effort they made for the people

He was selling the drum

Five hundred dollars, sure, I'll buy it

I gave them boys that drum

You'll be honorable men when you grow up

I don't know if they still have it

That was yesterday

My Mom would tell me, "You're going to be white now"

It was hard because I loved the music

It was sad it had to go that way

A sad story

Her mom used to rub lemons on her

We make dresses for different reasons

Three hundred and sixty-five jingles

Put one upside down because we're not perfect

Three hundred and sixty-five

One for each day of the year

One upside down not only to be wrong but to hold water

A lot of symbolism

When they take three breaths

It should be four

I think of dirty feet

Those little dusty toes

It was beautiful in my eyes

To see those colors

I get the chills thinking about it

But in a way I loved it

I loved to see them dance

"I wanna play with those people"

The Elders

They wanted to play with the Elders

Children running everywhere

The kids are there for fun

It takes a village to raise a child
We learn
We watch
We teach
In the mornings they did ceremonies
It's just different
It's competition
I don't like that
Everybody's changed
People learn by just watching
Nobody has to tell them
You just let people learn
You grow
By what we learn from the Elders
And they carry on tradition
The only way to learn about life
If you follow their trail
There's places to go
Things to do
Raise your families

Live and love
People say, "You're not an Indian"
My Dad was a full Finlander
I loved to dance
With the kids
I was like a little mother
Two babies at a time
Yet I loved it
My kids have grown a lot
My daughter has learned the culture
And followed the powwow
My other daughter has a ribbon skirt
That's a way to ease into the powwow
"Grandma can you teach me to rice?"
My niece took me out too
And we never would've seen that golden eagle
We put tobacco out
I know that golden eagle is important
When you live this long
You have a story for everything.

Session 5

Nibiikaang

(Lakes and Rivers)

Gichigami

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

Lake Superior sparkles like diamonds in the sky

The more wind blows the more sparkles you see

I wish I knew the name for the little spirits

The little sparkles you see, they're spirits

Water spirits

When I was young, the old people would talk

It depended on the weather when you'd go out

They'd put out

The lake is beautiful when calm

When it's angry, it storms

Beautiful when angry

That's what I like the most

Being on shore and watching it hit the rocks

And they're all different

A different splash

I think of the fish

And they always provide

Water is life

The old people used to say the water is the blood of mother earth

Every drop of water has the same function when it comes up

When it comes up and it spreads

Evaporate

When it rains

Filters through the clouds

Any way you look at it, water splashes

I think of healing and comfort

Dancing on blue cloth

The sky and water

If you've ever dropped a rock on water

It just keeps going

Have you ever noticed it connects?

It just gets bigger

A Jar of Rocks

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

Many different kinds of rocks

Rock or mineral

Different sizes, shapes, colors

Rocks

Dry or wet

How it shines when it's wet

It looks different from being in the water

Glug-glug

A clink and a clank and a gurgle

I think somebody lost their rocks

The beauty of minerals

Can you hear them?

I'll touch it

I ain't afraid

I was at Lake Superior

Running around on the rocks

Smooth

A spot that felt real funny
I guess the lake made it that way
Wet
Spiritual
Connected
Gritty
You should see the difference
Standing on the shoreline
But I feel magical

The River

Facilitated by Jeanne Warttman

My mother used to sing that song

It takes a while to cross, going up Knife River in the daylight

I can't picture the moon on that river

Wonder if it looks the same on the other side

The moon

Change my moccasins to Nikes,

Leather soles to rubber soles

Brand new Alumacraft, paddles, knocking sticks

That'd be style

Nothing will stop us

Make rocks into jewelry and sell it

Beautiful jewelry out of rocks. Minerals

Dad paddled up the river to hunt, where the deer go to drink

Dream maker. Hmmmmmm

She left me. Niini moshehn

Nana mooshe. Heartbreaker

That stuff comes through the air. Will it always be there?

Every woman is a heartbreaker

Thank you. Miigwech

Where the lake brings me (in the old days, it was the highway, right?)

I'm going that way

The river

Wherever it takes me.

Session 6

Manoomin gaye wiisiniwin

(Wild Rice and Traditional Foods)

Manoomin

Facilitated by Jeanne Warttman

Dad kept the first rice of the season

The best tasting, it smelled so good

Ah, just really good

Green rice

Real good green rice

Thrash it, fan it, now it's nice and clean

Not burnt, not black. Green

Cooks up in three minutes

Butter, lard, salt, and pepper. A meal

The good eating is when it's green

The black rice is in the store

What is that?

I sold it in San Francisco

The good stuff. And they said, "What is that?"

They thought the black burnt stuff was a delicacy

It hardly popped open, not like the good green rice

The color of cattails, purple stalks in the lily pads

Rice. It could be so tall,

I hoped my brother would take us to the stuff that's not too tall

Always leave some for the ducks.

And you don't even have to try

Bag it up and keep going

Wild rice was a winter food

Anishinaabe moved from east to west

"Go till the food is on the water," they said

Wild rice. It seems to last forever

They were given a sign: migrate to the Great Lakes

Anyone doubt that story?

I'm just getting ready to fight!

Grandpa walked me around the lake

I was fifteen and he taught me. I got the best

Duck wheat. The smell, kind of swampy. Freshness

All the bugs and worms

When we rice, we see friends. I loved it

We learn. You're never too old to learn

I tipped! Don't brag. I learned my lesson

Don't be playing around in that boat

Sweet grass. A sacred medicine

Asema, cedar, sage,

Grandpa told us stories

Fall in, you get teased. You smell

A boat full of rice, my pole got stuck,

I jumped back, and I'm full of duck shit

That girl, she never quit laughing

Laughing and ricing go hand-in-hand

My brother dropped a pole and said, "Duck!"

And a duck flew by

He held his jacket to the wind and we sailed to shore

Hitting at the muskrat with the darn knocking stick

By the time you get to shore, everyone's laughing

A nice time

People. Kind. Helping

If you tip, nice people come help

Do you check the rice all summer?

They're ricing now

You can't go too early

Put asema out first. It makes it safe

Give thanks to the Creator, the rice spirits

We always had a good season

Don't take more than you need

The state used to control our lakes

I said, "No, you have no authority here"

I was appointed the first wild rice officer

I went alone, and I won

Harvest and offer tobacco

A drum and singing at the community feast

I didn't sing, but our prayers sound like song

Take care of each other

More or less, the door is open

I lived all over

I learned, and learned, and learned

But there's nothing like coming back home

Grandpa sat us down, told us stories

"The water's holy in the lakes," he told us

I've seen a lot of bad stuff, too

It's a peaceful time now, thanks to some people

Grandpa said we need to know that this is our land. It's our right

It was a hard time

Mom and dad watched carefully

Water is the blood of Mother Earth

Old people used to say that, 80 years ago

Everybody had a way to survive

We've come a long way

I appreciate so much

Gratitude

Never take it for granted

Ricing brings humility

The circle

Take care of things, and they'll take care of us

Balance, physics and metaphysical
Live in a good way.

Session 7

Aadizookaanag

(Storytelling)

Aadizookaan

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

When I think of quiet and a dark room

The power goes out

You can hear every creak

Whispers or silence

We lost power for four days

My Mom made candles of paraffin

That was the time to tell stories

Stillness

In the backseat looking out the window at the moon

You'll meet your doom

That's how I came into this world

Backseat of a Buick

Mindimooyenh

Akiwenzii

I think of my parents

Telling me you'll be okay

When it storms the lights go out
Imagination
Telling stories in the dark
Picturing everything
My Mom was a good storyteller
A bull chased her once
Our puppy would come up and sit by us
Tail flapping
I was never scared
So many kids
In the dark it wasn't a fearful thing
Interruptions
My demons
I'd see witches and skeletons in the trees
It just went away
Secrets
When I hear people whispering
Talking shit
The oral tradition
A story that's ten thousand years old

Can’t get it on Google
My Grandma
What her life must have been like
She could cure things with plants
Going down to the spring water
Fresh, clean, scrumptious water
The spirits of that
The water spirits
Don’t pee in the lake!
Wanna hear the story?
I was playing with this boy
Overalls, long and stringy
That boy jumped backwards
I got up there with my stringy pants
I jumped
The knob in the tree hooked my pants
Landed on my arm
Ran home crying
Raggedy ass pants
I got a tree story

He climbed up a tree
And someone sawed it down
Living in Duluth
Little birds in my front yard getting worms
I couldn't hear my Mom call my name
But I could hear the birds
The migizi is watching
To make sure people are living the right way
Gas
He said someone boogid
Those little helicopter things
Carried by the wind
We used to climb trees when we were little
And pretend we were one of the trees
Songs
The music of the weather
Birds
Quiet breeze blowing off the fall leaves
You can see them floating down to the ground
My Grandma used to say

The older you get the slower your skin snaps

My Mom's hands

Very wrinkly

Very old-looking

His face

All those years ricing in the sun

The texture of hands change over time

Rough and dry

As you age they're so much more silky

Softer

Just like our hearts

There's a lot of time in our hands

Water

Cleaning toilets

We were the rinsers

I don't know how she ever would've stayed caught up with laundry

So many kids

Did she use a wooden spoon?

The tub was round

You could see all the action

Shuffling cards

Gin rummy

They were always giggly when they got together

We took our baths in that round tub

My Mom would melt snow

Laundry tubs

Soapstone

She could get us all at one time

I didn't have time to fool around

Saturdays, that's all

Dance like powwow dance

Dance 'til you drop

Constellations

Star stories

The rushes by the side of the river

I thought you were the mashkikiiwikwe

Just happy when you're alive

Alcohol, cars, women

You’re missing the men

That’s a matter of your life

Measure of time

So much living

Even in the dead of winter

Tracks in the snow

I didn’t start seeing signs that reminded me of him

But I see signs that remind me of her

I’ve been seeing birds

Red birds

And I think of her

Pecking birds

I think of her

Hummingbirds

She shows me herself

Before I didn’t

Or maybe I didn’t pay attention

Or need them

Maybe the pecking is to get your attention

Life is short
Babies
The moments are precious
Time flies
Been missing my Mom, too
Thinking of her
I know my Mom's around
I talk to her at night
"You know what to do"
If you believe in the spirit world
You'll be with your family
Past, present, future
My Mom wanted us to not go down that path
I just get sad with that
When my Dad got a deer he'd take the liver
But wouldn't explain why
You'll always respect the Elders
Passing it down through generations
They left whatever they could
But not all their life is told

Everybody sings their baby that song

I've sang it to the little ones

Our responsibility as we get older

Family traditions

Speaking from the heart

When we drop food we're giving it to the spirits

You'll follow that

And it makes you a happy day

When my Mom was dying, time went so fast

When I was growing, time went so slow

I wanted more time

You get engaged in a story

Makes your time more meaningful

They're trying to send you some love

It is hard to let them go

The four directions

How large that circle is

Past, present

What will that circle look like in the future?

Circle of life, you know
That's a hard one
I believe whatever hits me
I have to remember they're children
And I didn't sometimes
Everything goes in a circle
Ancient people
Rocks in circles
I went up a mountain one time
And got to see a sacred circle
I was just a young man then
We were lucky to get up there
Snow was always there
He came home like a piece of meat
Full of mud
Is that what this is supposed to be?
Teaches us to stay in balance
The ancestors have taught us that
To move in a good way
Your family is a circle

Everything we do is in a circle

The pipe

The drum

I learned the hard way

Challenges

Growth

Well, I listened to my Mom

She said, "Don't smoke," so I didn't smoke

I tried to teach my kids

People are always striving to beat the record

Hunker down

Lot of firewood

Be prepared

More hibernation

The tradition of sewing more, beading some

To rest

Fall is so busy

Ricing, picking berries

Rest

Reset

I always judge the neighbor's woodpile
Don't throw stones at people
The old woodstoves
Very warm
Cast-iron
Dried popple
Green one
Birch
Cut it up, put it by the house
Put in a couple birch, burn it to red ash
Only wood is all we had for heat
Stacking, piling up
That's what I remember from growing up
I love the smell of wood heat
Cozy
Run up in my parents' lap
"Let me steal your heat"
We huddled around the dryer to keep warm
Feet in front of the heater

Our cat would sit on the iron bed warming his paws

Wood heat

Dry warmth

Black nostrils

Candles made out of shoelaces

The lights came on

And the baby had black on her nose from those smokey candles

Re-piling wood

Rewashing dishes

She loves you: that's what that means.

Session 8

Anishinaabewitwaawin

(Anishinaabe Culture)

First People

Facilitated by Jeanne Warttman

Home

It's home! How cozy is that!

Welcome. Build a house

My sister, ricing. She pulled up a muskrat house

The muskrat, it burrowed into a sweat lodge. His house

Everything has a soul- little muskrats, beavers, ants

The animals can talk to you, give a message

That's what I think

What color are our souls?

The muskrat

Powerful, selfless, picking up the earth, helping

The other animals could not do it

The insignificant muskrat could

Hazelnuts

Grandpa and I picked two bushels

We had them for Christmas and holidays

Ripe, delicious, always had them before we moved to town

Things changed after the war

Prepare for cold and winter

Harvest manoomin, canning, get ready for winter

Drums and pipe

We canned meat yesterday

Almost done with the harvest

Prepare for the moose hunt

I like moose... just sayin!

Muskrat- a guy from Red Lake,

Sings with his mouth wide open

They started with a smudge song,

A good start

My mother taught me so much Ojibwe

Grateful

"Ginanaa giinaawe o ingii wey ha... o giimaakwe... o... gitchii daa kwe"

"Warrior woman, you are lost, and we are coming to find you"

Such an honor

From the heart

You don't hear pop songs in native language

Anishinaabe, the first people, landed where the food grew on the water

That's wild rice

Food. Seasons

Prepare for the winter

Gee whiz!

Big bags of wild rice stored for the winter

I believe wild rice is one of the four sacred medicines

When you riced, dried, fanned, danced it out,

When you can say you've done it this way,

then you can say you've done it the Anishinaabe way

It was our way of life

Mazaan. Know what that is?

He ate it and couldn't go to the bathroom for three days,

so puffed up with that wild rice mazaan

Wild rice

I told my kids it's like gold

They know what it's all about, not an easy task

When the powwows start, I'll have braids again

I cut my hair. So much grief

They had ways of taking care of things in the old days

We don't do it anymore. There are ways to help the animal spirits

I was the person who took care of the babies

Cooked, fed them

They said I did okay

The kids hug me. It was beautiful

You did more than okay, you did great

I love them

Wild rice. The beginning of the story

Anyone here know? Raise your hand

This is true

The Creator told the Anishinaabe:

"The white skin are coming, travel to where food grows on the water"

Wild rice. Stop here

When I was little boy, my grandpa passed the story down

Oh. Never heard that before

In the old days they could drink from the lake

I was nervous because of the loon poop

At one time water was pure, even swamp water

If we ignore the gifts, we won't stay healthy

"Drink the water from the trees," she said. "It's full of nutrients"

How many have ever tapped a maple tree?

We all have

It's time for me to take you out to the sugar bush, bright and sunny, beautiful

I brought knowledge

I packed maple syrup at grandpa`s

We'd boil and boil. It went over and he hit it with a pine branch

I was nine when I helped grandpa

A long process, but worth it

How do you know we're good and free?

I was always with the kids. They give me a hug, grab my legs

Always been with the kids

My mom did that to me

It's good. It will always be good

Keep your thoughts clean, then you're free

Swamp tea. Sometimes that's all we had.

Ezhi-anishinaabewiyang

Facilitated by Allie Tibbetts

I right away thought of my Grandmother

She passed away in the same bed I was born in

I would think of her most walking in the woods

Spirit of the woods and the lake

Bimose

Bimaadiziwin

Walking in a good way

Sometimes I don't remember any of that

Feeding babies

Sometimes I want to cry

People would just slide in

It wasn't teaching you

My kids were my brothers and sisters

Anytime they fell down they'd come to me

It was me

I thought I was doing good

Grandma taught me a lot

In her Indian language

I took care of a lot of babies in all those seasons

Aren't you that little lady who took care of us?

They say those things now

I have that joy

I help them

Tap me on the shoulder

Blow me a kiss

Do I deserve that?

Yes, you do

It's rewarding with these kids

Like this little one

According to the weather if you can't eat it, walk away

A different season of life

Reflective

Planning for the next phase

Reflecting on the past and relatives

Time is changing

Forty-one winters old and just learned to listen

My Grandpa to take care

My Grandpa loved me `til the end

Rub his back for awhile and lay him down to sleep

We take care of our people

Like a rooster in a henhouse

Grandpa helped when he quit talking

He'd tell you stories

And then he was gone

Bizaan

When you're passing away your family comes to get you

Spirit world

Your family comes to get you

You have to believe in the spirit world

A medicine man said

When you pass on you'll be in the spirit world with all your family

Past, present, future

In the end, he did tell us what he was talking about in Indian

My children know "Wewiib, wewiib!"

I should be telling them "Be still, bekaa"

Space is endless

Space never had a beginning

It always was

Different worlds

Lots of suns, moons

Might be a world of beautiful women

It is a beautiful feeling to send them up in a good thought

The continuation of life

You're born

You live

You love

And you die

And our ancestors did love us

The Creator gave us gifts

Our ancestors gave us love

To walk in a good way

They came to talk to me about an Indian person

They had passed away and people were coming to get them

Use your heart

The ancestors before us hung onto the languages and our songs

The wherewithal to reclaim

That's powerful

I picked up everything I could

The spirits taught him what plants to use to heal

It comes to you

A vision

Chi Miigwech

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