

Short report from the **1<sup>st</sup> annual gathering of the wisdom keepers** (June 2011)

Our theme was "Education"

- A fire had been lit and a pipe ceremony was lead by Grandfather Donald Parent
- Grandmother Heather Sole said the opening address followed by a Water ceremony
- A grandmother's big healing drum was awakened
- We had 3 working circles: knowledge, organisation & project
- Sharing circle
- Closing address by Grandmother Martine Vaugiens Gadbois

Results from all 3 circles: *WE MUST WALK OUR TALK, TEACH THE TEACHERS*

**KNOWLEDGE:** school system not adapted to today's children. School of trades in the 70'S...today school of life, our children are hungry for that knowledge, listen to the children.

**PROJECT:** "*Earth Day, Every Day*", celebration on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012 at Petrie Island. (which we did on Petrie »Island). Teachings and fees were also discussed

**ORGANIZATION:** community living, keeping contact, building strong circle, reconnect with mother Earth

## **2nd annual gathering of the wisdom keepers**

Our theme in 2012 was "Forests and water"

Kwe to all my brothers and sisters,

I will begin by thanking all the people that contributed to the success of the **2<sup>nd</sup> annual gathering of the wisdom keepers**. Migwetch to the Creator that brought us all together at this great site of the Tucker house; to the animals who gave their lives for our feast; to Grandfather Sun, Grandmother Moon and our sister the Water for all the vegetables, the fruits, the cereal and all the other good things that we ate over the week-end; to Roy Barnes for his words of wisdom and for leading the Chanupa Wacan and to all to Chanupa carriers; to Solomon Wawatie for his wisdom and all the helpers with the Sacred Fire; to Jacob Wawatie for his teachings and words of wisdom; to Grandfather Donald Parent for his support over the years and his wisdom; to Joe and Solomon Wawatie who started cooking on Wednesday prior to the gathering; to Joe Wawatie and all the helpers in the kitchen; to Dannielle Ayotte, Danielle Chénier and Susan Barnes for taking the role of group coordinators; to Brian Sarwer-Foner for his continuous support; to the Earth Mothers and all the people that helped cleaning up after the gathering and

to all that couldn't be there but were with us in Spirit and in support. Now the most important thing is continuity and unity.

On Saturday morning we began with an opening address and the Chanupa ceremony around the Sacred Fire, Solomon reminded us of the importance of that fire and mentioned that we are all adults and not to wait to be asked to tend the fire. We proceeded indoor as it was a very cold morning, after welcoming everyone we began with the words of wisdom from Grandfather William Commanda: **"Traditional people of 1st nations have established the two roads that face the light-skinned race as the road to technology and the road to spirituality. We feel that the road to technology.... has led modern society to a damaged and arid Earth. Could it be that the road to technology represents a rush to destruction, and that the road to spirituality represents the slower path that the traditional native people have traveled and are now seeking again? The earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing there."** William Commanda, Mamiwinini, Canada, 1991

Then we had the Water ceremony and we sang "As One" a song written by Denean, a Cherokee woman who gave the Earth Mothers her blessing to sing her song.

**AS ONE WE WALK THIS EARTH TOGETHER  
AS ONE WE SING TO HER OUR SONG  
AS ONE WE LOVE HER  
AS ONE WE HEAL WITH HER  
HER HEART BEATS WITH OUR OWN AS ONE.  
AS ONE WE JOIN WITH HER OUR MOTHER  
AS ONE WE FEEL HER SACRED SONG  
AS ONE WE TOUCH HER  
AS ONE WE HEAL WITH HER  
HER HEART BEATS WITH OUR OWN AS ONE**

Before introducing Jacob I spoke a little about SOS POIGAN explaining that the logging is still going on, they are cutting 6 days a week, more than 2000 trees a day, this is clear cutting, nothing is spared; here is more information:

*Poigan, one of the most spectacularly beautiful areas in Quebec, in the Traditional Anishinabe (Algonquin) unceded territory is being clear-cut logged. It is a place of spiritual importance for the Anishinabe people: "Poigan" means the "Peace-Pipe"! It is also an area rich in biodiversity and one of the few remaining moose yards that had not yet been depleted by habitat destruction from forestry operations. Now it is!*

*Poigan is not only on Unceded Ancestral Anishinabe Land, it is also within La Verendrye Park, a green area on the map, officially designated by the government as a Wildlife Reserve. Wildlife is not being protected, quite the opposite, wildlife is dying because their habitat it is being damaged and destroyed, including endangered species like the spotted salamander. Nature is being decimated, the Anishinabe disrespected and the public lied to. It is time for this to stop*

*once and for all!*

*The Anishinabe have been in conflict for decades about the logging practices in the region, and the people known as the Algonquins of Barrier Lake are divided: the traditionalists who still live in the woods, and those who live in the Rapid Lake Reserve. This July, 2012, when cutting started in Poigan by Resolute Forest Products, members of the Rapid Lake community started protesting but did not stop the logging.*

*An agreement of sorts was signed by only four community members without consulting the traditional people who live on the land and want all logging to stop. Solidarity groups like Indigenous People's Solidarity Movement (IPSM) and Barrier Lake Solidarity (BLS), who were helping the Rapid Lake community members protesting in the sidelines, earlier in July while the cutting went forward, are now claiming "Victory" due to a weak, sketchy and hastily signed deal, whose details are ambiguous and unclearly communicated, while still the cutting continues!*

*The traditional people, led by the Grandmothers, are still making a stand. They stopped the machines for several days, and then two elders were arrested and spent 8 days in jail for protecting their homeland! On August 6, 2012 a group of the traditional Anishinabe went to court in Montreal to stop the renewal of Resolute's injunction allowing the company to clear-cut in their territory against their wishes.*

*The Anishinabe's concerns were completely ignored by the Harper appointed female judge, Claude Dellaire. She postponed the case until Sep 10, while renewing the injunction for Resolute to keep on clear-cutting Poigan until then, totally disrespecting the Anishinabe's demands. Severe restrictions on any activities to interfere with Resolute's operations in any way or to even promote the idea of interfering with the logging were also placed on the Anishinabe as part of this oppressive judgement.*

*The traditional people have been ordered to stay away from their own home territory while a mega multi-national was given full rights to keep on destroying it, unencumbered. This is injustice of the highest order and must not be tolerated! The clear cutting is still continuing and it is estimated that up to 25 acres a day of old growth forest ecosystem is being destroyed! This is a crime against humanity and ecology and must be stopped!!!*

*Grandmothers March into Poigan and go up against the machines, July 23, 2012*

*Barriere Lake Agreement not accepted by Traditional Council, July 24, 2012*

*Traditional Algonquin Elders Arrested for protecting their territory, August 1, 2012*

*Traditional Algonquin Elders are Released after 8 Days in Jail*

Jacob follows-up with his teachings on Turtle Island, I love that teaching!

Then we had lunch, I have to say, and I think everyone will agree, we ate very very well all week-end, freshly made bannick, Moose, Beaver, Duck soup, Deere, Walleye, many salads and many delicious desserts just to name a few things, yummmmmmmmmmy.

After lunch Brian talked to us about the ERA project "Ecological Response Ability" and the importance to be responsible: *"If you break down "responsibility", you get response-ability. We all possess many abilities; each of us can nourish them, develop them, and discover new ones. Then we can realize our potential by focusing on how to best respond with our abilities to what is most vitally imperative. Each of us individually, and all of us collectively, can respond with our*

*abilities to ecology. Yes we can! We can create changes in our own lives and band together to co-create greater changes that positively affect our whole culture, through all sectors of society. What is required of us now is a new era of Ecological Response-Ability (ERA).*

*We can ask ourselves what would ERA look like? ERA Economics, ERA Politics, ERA Education, ERA Technology, ERA Industry, etc. etc. We need to be talking about it, meeting and organizing, starting locally, taking care of the land, making differences in our communities, based on individual action and collective caring, driving the people to come together to collaborate in co-creation, and care for Ecology: Life and All Relations. Yes we can! "*

Next on the agenda was to have 3 working groups

After supper we drummed and sang a few songs and closed the circle. In the evening Jacob shared his family photo album and stories; it was a long day and after saying goodnight, I went to the Sacred Fire to say thanks for the great day, the sky was filled with stars and the night was beautiful.

Sunday morning we had a Water ceremony around the Sacred Fire, once indoor Grandfather Donald did a drum awakening, we did a few songs and we began our sharing circle, everyone had a chance to meditate on the conversation they had the day before within their respective group. Here are some of my reflections, please add your own comments and thoughts, just do "respond to all"

I think you will all agree that one thing that came out of the gathering is Unity. Everyone had so many great ideas, so many projects, where do we begin. Our main focus must be to raise awareness on Water issues, forests and all our relations. Building strong circles and walking our talk is another thing that was brought up a few times during the week-end and you will notice from reading this document that it also came out the previous years.

Start using the proper words, we know that French or English translation can never describe our ceremonies and sacred items, if you don't know the proper words ask an elder, maybe if we start using the proper words people would stop misusing our ceremonies and misrepresenting our sacred items. Creating a strong circle of Wisdom keepers is also very important. We must have a presence at the winter festivals this year and raise awareness, we should ask all the people we know to send us the information about winter fest in their communities with contact names if possible. I love the mob flash idea. We must make our circle bigger, the province of Quebec and Ontario is a large territory where destruction is an ongoing thing. There is no need to re-invent the wheel, many events already exist. These are just a few points, complete list from the 3 groups are attached.

The holiday season is just a few weeks away and I realize that many of you will be very busy, but if you have some free time, please join us in planning our next events that are not that far away. World Water Day on March 22<sup>nd</sup> (2013 being declared the year of the Water by the United nation) Earth Day on April 22<sup>nd</sup> at Petrie Island for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and of course around the same time we need to organize a traditional sugar bush teachings with Jacob Wawatie. Creating

a library is also a big ongoing project that needs our attention, this idea was brought by Jacob back in 2010 and it is time to start putting it together. Letters must be prepared for schools, community centres and other organizations from day care centres to seniors group; it is important to link with other like minded groups. We need to organize fund raising activities to be able to achieve our goals. Please send your comments and thoughts to all.

(Francine Payer)

I want to leave you with this:

The seven grandfather's teachings: WISDOM, LOVE, RESPECT, HONESTY, HUMILITY, TRUTH and BRAVERY.

The grandmothers already have six teachings: HEALING, INTUITION, BALANCE, HARMONY, COMPASSION and GRATITUDE. The 13 teachings are part of the grandmothers' lives.