

THE SPIRIT OF WOLASTOQJ LATUWEWAKON THE MALISEET LANGUAGE

By Imelda Perley

In the Autumn of 1995, a young man approached me and requested an interview for the radio show at the University of New Brunswick campus. He wanted me to share my views about the Maliseet Language. I accepted and as a token of respect received tobacco. Before we went on the air we "smudged" in order to cleanse our minds and spirits. I held an Eagle Feather to symbolize truth and honesty. His question was "What does the Maliseet language mean to you?"

Without a second thought I immediately responded in Maliseet and continued the entire interview in Maliseet. It was only natural to respond to something so close and personal in the language that comes from within. I told him that our Maliseet language teaches us to live in harmony with all of creation and that it is the language of our ancestors. It is our duty to learn the language of our ancestors so that we never sever the ties to their teachings.

Language teaches us who we are, where we come from and how to survive in our culture. All of us need to find strength in the language so that we may preserve the teachings for the ones who are not born yet. The spirit of language is dynamic and glows in each of us, for we are all descendants of the ones who went before us. Each generation is responsible for maintaining and preserving a part of the language either through song, prayer or stories.

As I continued to share my experiences in the language, the station director signaled that time was over. Only then did I realize that I was still speaking in Maliseet. I was a bit embarrassed since it was an English speaking audience but the station director nodded that it was alright. Actually he enjoyed the show and commented on the beauty of our language. I was asked to return so that I may share stories in the language for the benefit of our Elders, so that they may hear their language on the radio.

Imagine how lonely it must be for the Elders when they no longer hear their language. Imagine how happy they will be when their grandchildren can say "Nuhkomoss naka Nmuhsuns Koselomol" "Grandmother and Grandfather, I love you".

All of us are dreamers and *dreams do come true*. My grandparents taught me to never stop dreaming. It is one of my dreams that my grandchildren and their grandchildren will hear their ancestral language in all Maliseet communities. The best part of the dream is that the love of language is in

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF LANGUAGES MICMAC LANGUAGE

By Charlotte Francis

The Micmac language is one of the most beautiful languages spoken today. I count myself lucky that I can and do speak Micmac. I didn't realize how lucky until I saw the statistics on the number of Native languages being lost today.

I started looking at the Micmac community where I live and realized that we too were losing our language. Almost everywhere you go you hear young children speaking English instead of their Native Micmac. These children are only two years old and up and they are not speaking their language.

If we want our language to survive we have to start with our children. Children at this age are like sponges. They can absorb so much information. Children imitate the sounds, words, sentences and grammar that they hear being spoken around them. If that language spoken at home is Micmac then that is the language that the child will learn.

I remember growing up at home, the only language my parents spoke to us was Micmac. We never learned to read or write the language until we were adults, but it was spoken all the time. To hear elders talk about our Micmac language, it is as if they are talking about their child whom they love and cherish. In a way it is like a child. You have to nurture it and protect it to keep it alive. Once you start neglecting it then you start to lose it little by little. And where would we be without our language? How would we pass on our Micmac traditions, cultures and values without the Micmac language? How can we be proud of who we are if we cannot speak our language, because it is only through our language that we can identify who we are.

There are some things you can say only in Micmac that will convey what you mean. If you say it in English it loses its true meaning. This is because the Micmac language is so expressive and descriptive. One word can have so much meaning. Once translated into English it loses its true meaning.