

**Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, January 2008**

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There are special moments, events and things that stand out for all of us at the end of an old year and hopes, dreams and resolutions for the new. A special event for me in the past year was the convocation ceremony I attended in Ottawa in October. It was the convocation of Tracy Lindberg, a Saskatchewan Metis lawyer, scholar, blues singer, novelist and Director of the World Indigenous Knowledge and Research Centre at Athabasca University. She is the first Aboriginal woman to receive a PhD. in law at a Canadian University. She also received a Governor General's Gold Medal for Excellence in the writing of her dissertation. Tracy received her LL.B at the University of Saskatchewan and her Master Degree in Law from Harvard University. Congratulations Tracy its not just your mom and kokom who are proud of you, we all are.

The "moment" was watching Nelson Bird's award winning television documentary, "Calling Home the Spirits." This show follows a group of Second World War Veterans with their families and leadership as they make the journey to France to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vimy Ridge, and to bring home the spirits of fallen comrades and family members. This was a beautiful and moving documentary, thank you Nelson for bringing that journey and ceremony home and making it a part of our experience.

A wish for the New Year is that the people who talk excitedly about the revitalization and beautification of Riversdale, will take some time to think about the people who do not "own" homes in this soon to be trendy part of town and ask themselves, "what is going to become of the people who also call this place home." Where are they to go? The really sad thing about revitalization and beautification of "place" is that it usually means displacement and dispersal of a particular group of people. I think all of us need to remember that some where in all our collective histories, we were once that particular group of people.

And about resolutions, well some friends of mine just finished celebrating the Feast of Epiphany and this made me think about a New Year resolution. The Feast of Epiphany is the day which Christians mark the arrival of the three wise men at the birthplace of the baby Jesus. We are told that as these wise men looked beyond the pitiful surroundings of a dirty stable they had an epiphany. In other words they experienced a miracle when they looked into the face of that baby. I am sure that this must be the same miracle that we experience when we look into the face of a great - grandchild for the first time. Otherwise how does one describe this feeling of awe, love and infinity? Perhaps we can't, maybe the emotion we feel is just too powerful and that is why it is a miracle, an epiphany, which by the way means, "to see the face of God."

In thinking of great-grandchildren I think of the huge responsibility we have. When I was a young parent I was too busy protecting, providing and nurturing to think too much about all the things I think about as a great-grandparent. Like the state of the world for example, all the wars and suffering created by humankind. The burning of our Earth and the changes that are happening as a result of that to our environment and to the lives and inheritance of our children. I think also about what I am prepared to do to change that, because for sure it has to be more than recycling or being energy efficient although that's important. In the midst of all this thinking I am reminded of my great-grandmother and her role in my childhood and influence in my life.

My great-grandmother was never still, she worked right up to her death. When she could no longer do the work of a younger woman, she took over the cooking, sewing and tending of the children. When she could no longer do that she sat in a corner and told stories and sang songs to the babies and anybody else who would listen. As old as she was, she always had a keen and critical mind. She cared passionately about social justice issues, culture and land and if she could no longer fight for them, she made sure she taught and reminded everybody around her about their responsibilities. She believed in community building, solidarity, developing networks, educating children and she was never afraid to speak up, saying that this was the role of grand and great-grandparents.

I am also reminded of something else she used to say and that was if we didn't have time as parents to do something or if we messed up, not to worry because the good Creator gives us a second and sometimes a third chance as grand and great-grandparents to do or to undo. So my resolution for this year is not to sit around just thinking but instead to educate myself on Uranium mining, nuclear reactors and tar sands development. I don't know a whole lot about these things, but I should because they are important issues in our province and our country. Are there any grand parents or great-grandparents out there who want to get educated about those issues with me? If you are interested write, email or leave a message for me in care of *Eagle Feather News*.

Happy New Year to all of you and a very special Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary to Jim and Marie Favel at Ile a la Crosse, and many, many, more to come.