

NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS

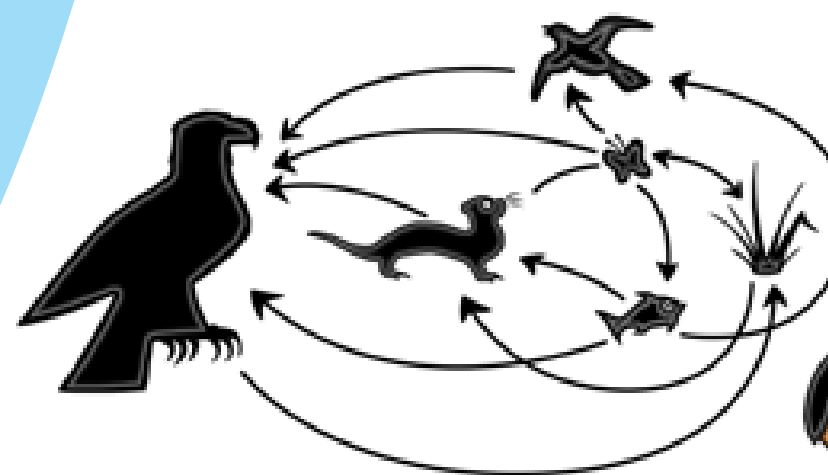
CHAPTER 4

After a morning spent with Tota Ma, Wari and Sewatis went outside for a bike ride to the water's edge with Sose. It was a hot day and perfect for a swim! They brought a delicious picnic lunch of fry fish and corn bread. Once they were down at the water, Sose unpacked the lunch and they enjoyed their meal. After a quick swim, the children packed up and headed back to Tota Ma's house. Once at home, the children began asking Tota Ma more questions about *A'nó:wara* and the challenges. The children were excited about the *fourth challenge*, to discover *A'nó:wara's friends and neighbours in the wetlands and how are they related.*

"Tota, there are so many different animals and plants in the world. How does anyone understand all the relationships in a wetland?" asked Wari.

Tota Ma replied, "There are many animals that are a part of the web of life that support *A'nó:wara*. I remember my *Akoso'tha* and Auntie Sadie explaining the many ways things are connected when they would sit together to sew or bead. They would say that every life form, no matter how small or large, has needs for food, water, shelter, and space. All things exist within a web of interdependence. If the web is damaged or changed, all life forms will be affected." Tota Ma enjoyed explaining these relationships to her grandchildren, just like her *Akoso'tha* explained to her long ago.

The grandchildren continued listening with interest. "Living within this web over thousands of generations, First Nations people have come to understand some of the delicate relationships that are necessary for life to continue in balance. Before European contact, the people of this territory learned how to live in peace with one another. The Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people practiced mutual peace based on respect, reciprocity, relationship, and responsibility. Our Haudenosaunee ancestors called this treaty, "The Dish with One Spoon." The 'dish' represented the



shared hunting territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee in the region of Southern Ontario. The Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe both realized that their territories overlapped and they had to share caretaking responsibilities for the land. Through this understanding, the two communities were able to co-exist and live sustainably with the earth and one another." The grandchildren were excited to learn about their culture from their Tota.

Tota Ma continued, "This is all part of our Traditional Knowledge passed down from one generation to the next. Giving thanks for knowledge is important. We give thanks to the sun and understand that the sun provides energy which all life forms need, either directly or indirectly. Photosynthesis is an example of the direct relationship between the sun and plants. We understand that some animals and birds get their energy from the sun, by eating plants. These animals are called herbivores."

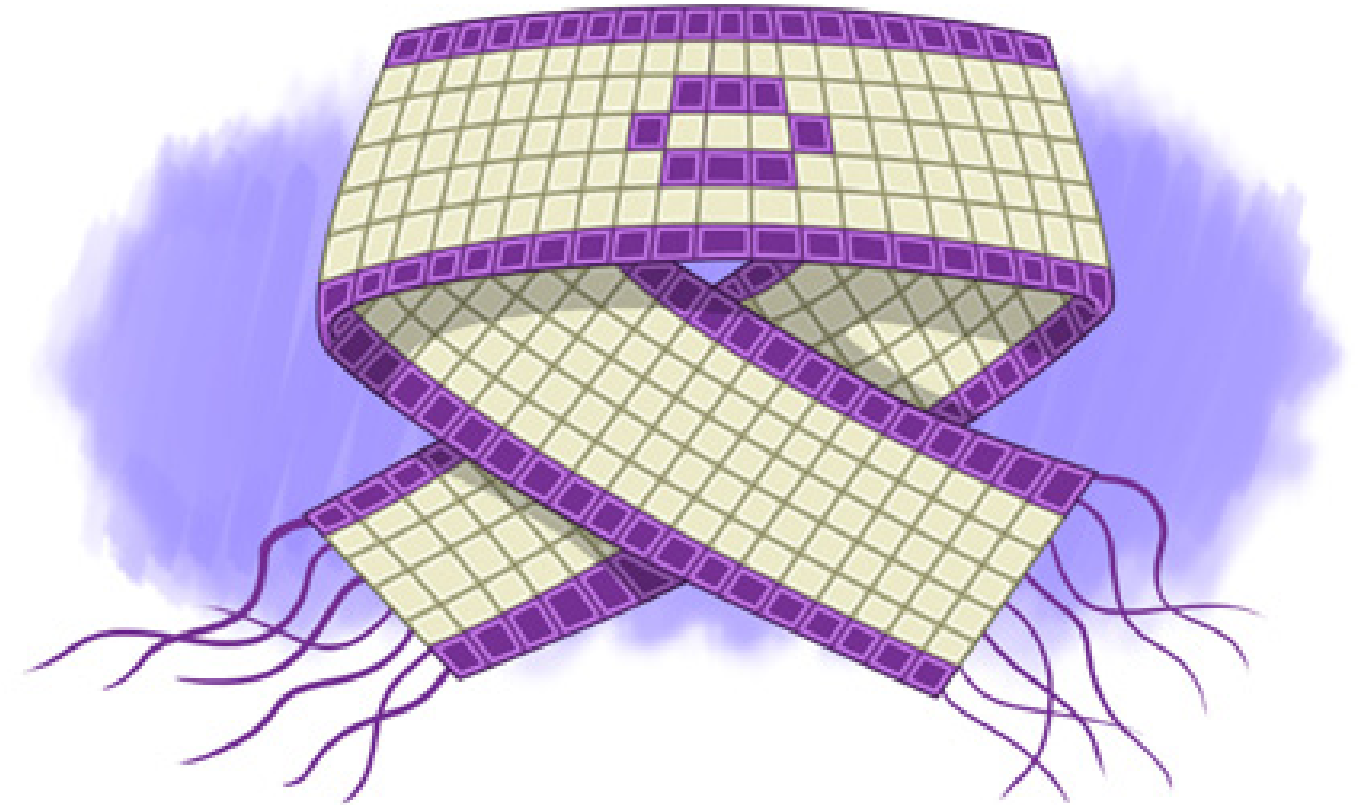
"I knew that already," exclaimed Sewatis. "I learned about that in my science class!"

Tota Ma continued speaking. "Some animals get their energy by eating other animals. What are these called, Wari?"

"That is a carnivore," she answered. "Omnivores eat both plants and animals to get their energy," she said proudly.

"Good job, my girl!" exclaimed her Tota. "The relationships between animals are similar to the relationships between First Nations clans. We understand that our clans have interconnected responsibilities. We must acknowledge that our First Nations communities function best when clans work together for the health of all. These understandings are thousands of years old and they are very important to Our People," Tota Ma explained. The children stretched their legs listening to their Tota speak. This made them think about their own clans.

Tota continued, "the *Kanyen'kehaka* Nation is divided into clan groupings. *Kanyen'kehaka* clans are inherited through their mother's blood lines. Traditionally, these clans had special characteristics and responsibilities within the community. Clans also served as a system of traditional government. There are three clans comprised of turtle, wolf and bear.



Sewatis asked his Tota what else she knew about the *Kanyen'kehaka* clan system. Tota answered Sewatis with enthusiasm, "Clans sit together in the longhouse for ceremony. *Rotinonhsyonni* clans are inherited from their mother, which is different from the Anishinaabe people who follow their father's clan."

These clan teachings helped Wari and Sewatis understand their connection to Tyendinaga and to family members they had outside of the community! The children understood the importance of strong family ties. It was also exciting to learn that clan members are not always blood related and that one can meet new clan members in all sorts of places, even in the city.

The summer had come to an end and Tota Ma was going to miss her grandchildren when they went back to school. However, Tota Ma had faith that Wari and Sewatis were leaving with information that they would share with their classmates and friends. They had made so many plans to help *A'nó:wara*. Tota Ma could hardly wait for them to come back and visit over their winter break to continue their work!

