



MORNING PRAYERS

CHAPTER 1 - NTAM GINJIGAN

Nokomis Annie marvelled at the beauty of a new day. The early morning light was just beginning to fill the eastern sky. *Biidaaban* was calling the sun back for another day's journey. It was time to sound the *dewegan* and sing a morning song to greet all of Creation. As Nokomis Annie got ready, she thought about the importance of giving thanks to the Creator for all the gifts given to the *Anishinaabeg*. Although important, it was sometimes forgotten.

Nokomis Annie liked to use a morning prayer she learned from her friend Shirley, a fluent Anishinaabe language speaker. She stepped out into the warm, morning sunshine and placed an offering of *asemaa* under a beautiful *mitig*. She then began her prayer:

Gzhe Minidoo!

Miigwech noongwa wabdaamaa miinwaa ngoding giizhigak.

Miigwech kina gego gaa-miizhiyaang,

kina kiig gaa-tooyin aw sa Nishnaabe wii-miigkadaawsod.

Miigwech newiing nekyaa mebimiseg,

Miigwech, newiing nekyaa mebiniseg,

Miigwech wesiinyag gii-miizhiyang wii-wiisiniyang,

Miigwech bineshiinyag noodoonogwaa nagamwaad,

Miigwech nbi biinaagkozigoyang,

Miigwech gii-miizhiyang nokiiwin!

Miinshinaag mina-de'ewin, wii-mina nokiitaadiyang,

naadimooshinaag wii-ni-mosaadimaang.


Miigwech Gzhe Minidoo! Miigwech! Miigwech! Miigwech!



Nokomis Annie always felt good after saying this prayer. It reminded her of a visit she made to the Haudenosaunee community of Tyendinega the week before. When she arrived at the school, Nokomis Annie heard two students reciting the Thanksgiving Address during the morning announcements, a morning prayer of thanks. Their voices sounded so wonderful! She closed her eyes and thought about how it must have been in times long ago, when all Haudenosaunee people

greeted the morning with the “The Words That Come Before All Else,” also called the Thanksgiving Address. That morning the students gave Nokomis Annie a copy of their prayer. On her way home that day, she thought about the similarities between the Anishinaabe Morning Prayer and the Thanksgiving Address.

As a little girl, Nokomis Annie was taught by her grandparents the importance of being grateful



and thankful for the many gifts which have been given by the Creator. She was told that, as the youngest members of Creation, humans depend upon everything else for daily life. This included a teaching from her *Okomisan* about the importance of *mitigook*. Her *Okomisan* said that with every breath taken in comes oxygen that the *mitig* gives as a gift. With every breath out, carbon dioxide returns to the *mitig* and becomes part of it. One of the responsibilities of *mitig* is to take up carbon and store it in its trunk so the air is clean and healthy. Her *Okomisan* said that people use carbon from the *mitig* to make fire. She also shared other responsibilities of *mitigook* which include making oxygen for the air and making shade for the earth so it will not get too hot. *Mitigook* provide food for bugs that munch on leaves and their branches become a home for birds. Nokomis Annie was taught that bark from *mitigook* can make good baskets, containers, homes, wigwams, and sweatlodges. In traditional times, Elders were wrapped in *wiigwaas* when they passed over into the Spirit world. She was also told about the medicines which come from *mitigook*.

Tea from the buds and the bark, as well as syrup and sap, all help people to stay healthy.

Nokomis Annie could remember hugging *mitigook* as a child and it always felt like the *mitigook* were hugging back. She would also place an offering of *asemaa* at the bottom of a *mitig* and say *miigwech*. It reminded her of how connected humankind is to everything else in Creation.

Now a grandmother, Nokomis Annie must think about the ways she can explain to her grandchildren the importance of First Nations Traditional Knowledge, respect, and gratitude for the gifts of Creation.