

Preface

The stories of our lives come from many places . . . memory, hopes and dreams, loss and fear, visions . . . teachings from times and experiences uncountable.

These stories of a young girl were told to us by an old woman, who lived through perhaps the most dramatic changes that our nation has seen. She grew up with canoe and horse and buggy and ended up flying around the world.

Keewaydinoquay is the author of this book. Kee spoke these words; she wrote them; she sang them and danced them and drew them and prayed them. The work of the committee has been but the collecting, minor editing, and arranging of her works.

Please take these stories as they are intended . . . to teach and entertain and enlighten and enrich the lives of those who wish to read them.

The Holy Hill Center, Incorporated

Introduction

Welcome to a brief glimpse of just one human being. What is offered here represents only a small part of who and what Keewaydinoquay Margaret Peschel was. Our goal is simply to share with others the stories that our Nokomis (Grandmother) Keewaydinoquay shared with us.

The decades in which these stories are set were ones of great turmoil and change for Native people. In order to survive, literally, many families and individuals were forced to make the choice to be as “non-Indian” as possible. Decisions such as these continued to affect the generations that followed. The rights for Native Americans to work, live, and practice spiritual beliefs were rigidly controlled by the American government. It was not until 1978 that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was signed into law. Now that many Native people have begun the laborious process of researching and reclaiming scattered heritage, there is even greater hunger to learn and preserve ancient knowledge.

Keewaydinoquay Margaret Peschel, born in 1918, is the only person of her time who we know studied both traditional Ojibway and Western medicines. As a young girl she studied with Native herbalists. She graduated from high school at the age of 17 in 1935. In 1944 she was granted a bachelor of science by Central Michigan University. In 1953 she was awarded a master of science with an emphasis in education in counseling and guidance. Her thesis for this degree was titled “The Science Excursion as a Guidance Technique.” In 1977 she was awarded a master of science at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant. Her thesis was titled “Reliving Algonkian Ethnobotany.” From 1976 to 1978 she studied at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor as a Ph.D. candidate in eth-

nobotany. These facts we do know, but many others have been lost in the mists of time and memory and perception.

From looking over the papers we do have, it is clear that Keewaydinoquay took classes and courses and workshops and asked a million questions from everyone she met throughout her lifetime. Keewaydinoquay loved learning, and the “bump of curiosity” she seemed to have been born with sent her far and wide. She was able to share this love with students from all over the globe. She appears to have come by this all very naturally. Her parents had met and were married in the Thumb area of Michigan but managed, between the two of them, to have more experiences than many of their generation, thanks in part to her father’s service in the United States Marine Corps and to the colleges that both her parents attended.

The teachings of Keewaydinoquay, both written and oral, have contributed to the knowledge, and love, of plants for many people. They are read by scholars and children and families throughout the world.

Her formal teaching career in public schools began as a teenager and spanned more than three decades. In the last twenty years of her life, she taught in the Native American Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and also shared her knowledge at numerous workshops and in summer-long woodland encampments.

In addition to her skills as an ethnobotanist, with special knowledge of mycology, Keewaydinoquay was also a wife, mother, grandmother, writer, poet, rock hound, student, teacher, artist, and musician, as well as an extremely gifted storyteller. Perhaps the most important part of her life, though, was sharing the understanding that in all healthy relationships reciprocity is involved. This includes the relationship between humans and the plant kingdoms, as well as all others.

You will find that the spelling of Native words vary. This is because Anishinaabemowin (the language of the Anishinaabeg) was until recently primarily an oral language. How language is used also may be different than some have experienced before. Language usage changes over time, as does how language is expressed.

Everything written here took place before 1945 . . . before television and rocket ships . . . even before many people in rural areas had electricity in their homes.

This book is our attempt to take Kee's manuscripts—some edited by her and some not—plus her journals and papers for college classes, and combine them with the stories and teachings that she passed on to us orally. She tried valiantly to complete this project in her lifetime, and we wish she had been able to do so.

We have inserted material to help explain or clarify the texts. Brackets [] enclose the words we have added. We have tried to keep this to a minimum and hope they help. Material in parentheses () was inserted by Keewaydinoquay herself, mostly in the texts she wrote.

The symbol ✧ separates the elements in some of the stories. It represents some of the symbols for stars that are used by many Native nations living on Turtle Island (America).

Many specific facts about Keewaydinoquay's life we do not know. What we can be sure of are these stories . . . full of excitement and wonder and a sense of timelessness that spans cultures and generations.

Many of the elders from these Before-Times are gone now. Too many of them have left us with their stories untold or unremembered. So let us treasure what, through the foresight and persistence of Keewaydinoquay, is shared here. Let these stories speak to us all . . . of the love of family and friends and Blessed Spirits uncountable . . . the true wealth and magic of Anishinaabeg People.

Blessings and Balance

Balance and Blessings

For from Balance

Comes All Blessings

Ahau!

*The Circle of Trustees for the Holy Hill Center, Incorporated
of Leland, Michigan*