



My Grandma was a Medicine Woman; A Hundred Roots (2 Poems)

Tara Williamson

Fleming College (School of Law, Justice, and Community Services)

My Grandma Was a Medicine Woman

Lorraine Williamson (nee Swain) with Tara Williamson

She was a good medicine woman

People would come

From the States

Across Canada

They would bring her tobacco

Material

Blankets

A gift

And you had to accept those gifts

InTensions Journal

Copyright ©2012 by York University (Toronto, Canada)

Issue 5 (Fall/Winter 2012) ISSN# 1913-5874

Never no money exchanged for medicine

I remember

One year

Brandon Fair

In those days you put up tents

We were right next door to him

Camping

He had a brother

He had a sister

His parents had passed away

He came over

Grandma was making bannock over the fire

Because he was Cree

And she was Ojibwe

And the only two English words she knew was

Yes and No

He learnt the language

He started explaining

He had lost his parents

He said to her

Will you become my mom?

In a heartbeat

She said

Yes

She had just met him.

Five minutes.

That was the way she was.

She was a good medicine woman.

A Hundred Roots

Vina Eva Swain with Tara Williamson

My mother, Kaapiidashiik,
made a medicine,
holds a hundred things,
A hundred roots

Together.

A hundred roots.

For a good heart.

Even for TB.

My grandmother made that,
and my grandfather,
and my aunty,
and my mother

But it was lost when they died

People would come,

give material,
give what you have
(money was scarce)

Together.

A hundred roots.

For a good heart.

Even for TB.

Four, five, six ladies

Crush, pound, shred it -

Make that medicine!

Make that medicine in a big bundle

Make tea

Oh yeah, my mother used to make lots!

The one that made it got lots

But all these ladies fix it too

And pass it on to somebody that wants it

Just like a drugstore!

They had a big feast after they make that medicine.

Everything!

Rice puddin' and meat,

Bannock, hot bannock

In the summertime

They sit outside

Have a big feast for the medicine they made

To say thank you

To cure the people

To keep them strong

And pray the medicine to work on them

Together.

A hundred roots.

For a good heart.

Even for TB.