**Amik Gifts Received in Dreams and Visions**

In my last "Moccasin Telegraph" column, I wrote about how long ago, our boys used to fast when they reached puberty.  The purpose of the fast was to have a dream or vision that would reveal the boy’s gift – his special way of helping his fellow Anishinabe people.

For example, the boy might have a vision or dream that revealed to him how to use plants as medicine, and he would become a medicine man.  Another boy might have a dream or vision about conducting our traditional Ojibwe ceremonies, and he would become a spiritual advisor.

Besides these serious gifts, there were fun gifts that boys could receive.  Hunting is a gift.  Boys who became excellent hunters and trackers would know what the animals were going to do. These hunters would help their fellow Anishinabe by sharing their food and feeding the Elders.

Then there were our athletes.  A long time ago, we had runners. They would run long distances to send and receive messages for our people.  They had to have the gift of being strong and fast.

Craftsmen – people who can make anything – have a gift.  If you wanted something, you would go to a craftsman and say, “This is what I need,” or “This is what I want to present to somebody,” and he would create it.  Craftsmen also made all kinds of goods for trading with other tribes and with non-Indians.

We had excellent moccasin game players a long time ago, too.  We Ojibwe are competitive people, and we had a lot of games – the stick game, the hand drum game, the moccasin game, and more.  There were always one or two guys who were really good at the moccasin game, and you couldn’t beat them.  They might let you win once or twice, just to set you up.  Being that good at a game is a gift, but people don’t always recognize it.

These are just some of the gifts that boys could receive as a result of fasting.  When the boy ended his fast, he might tell someone in his family what he dreamt about.  Or he might not say anything – instead, he might just start doing things, like making crafts, and people would recognize his gift.  Our people didn’t always go out and announce their gifts, because they are humble.  But if you possessed any of these gifts, you were found out.