**Amik The Jingle Dress As Dreamed**

If you’ve ever been to an Indian powwow, you’ve probably noticed the dancers’ regalia – the beautiful and colorful clothing, jewelry, headdresses and moccasins they wear.  One of the most well-known kinds of powwow regalia is the women’s jingle dress, and the story is that this kind of dress was first seen here in Minnesota at Mille Lacs.

The story I was told about the jingle dress came from one of our Elders, who said that about 100 years ago, there was a man living in Mille Lacs whose daughter was ill.

The Mille Lacs people were getting ready for one of our big drum ceremonies, and before the ceremony, the man began having a recurring dream.  In his dream, four women were wearing dresses decorated in a way he had never seen before.  One dress was black, one was blue, one was red, and one was either yellow or green.  All of the dresses were adorned with small, round pieces of metal that had been rolled up at one end so they looked sort of like little cones.  In the man’s dream, the women were dancing in these dresses.

The man told his wife about the dream, and together they made the four dresses.  Then he showed his wife how to dance in the dress, and she showed the four women he had dreamed about.

When it came time for the drum ceremony, the man and his wife brought their little girl.  They sat at the ceremony, and the girl laid on the floor because she was so sick.

After the ceremony was over, the man got up and told the people about his dream.  Then he brought out the four women and said they were going to dance in the style he had dreamed about.  The drum started, the people began to sing, and the women danced.

And the little girl perked up.  She lifted her head and watched the women dance.  As the evening went on, pretty soon she was sitting up and watching.  And before the night was over, the little girl was so moved by those jingles, she was following the women and dancing around.

If you’ve ever seen a jingle dress, you can imagine why. Jingle dress dancers carry themselves in a very ladylike manner, both in and out of the dance circle.  Their dance steps cause the metal cones to chime together like tiny bells.  Some people have said the sound is like rain falling on a tin roof.

The jingles were originally made from the lids of snuff cans people had collected.  Nowadays, you can order the lids from the snuff companies.  And the dresses, which were once all solid colors, are sometimes multicolored.  Also, the dance can be fancier, whereas originally the women just danced in a forward, side-to-side motion.  These changes are because the jingle dress has traveled, and there are many variations of the dress as well as the story.

In fact, another story goes that a woman in Canada had the same dream as the man at Mille Lacs at about the same time.

Most people associate the jingle dress with Mille Lacs, though.  And because of the story of the little girl, some people adopted the jingle dress as a healing dress.