**Beatrice Taylor Sharing**

In the Anishinaabe culture, it is our custom to help one another.  This is true not just of relations, but of anyone, maybe somebody you don’t even know.  Because we believe that when you do good for someone who needs help, some day you will be helped.

As a child, I remember that all Indian women used to call each other

"Ni-dong-gwaesh," which means “my friend” or “my cousin.”  These women were always helping each other.  Maybe someone didn’t have any maple syrup.  As hard as it was to come by, they were very generous with each other.  If one didn’t have syrup, the other would give it.  If somebody had fish, she would share it.  They would know what each other needed, and they would give it if they had it.

I’m this way with my sisters today.  We’re always helping each other.  I’ve tried to pass this on to my children.  My son does the fishing and hunting in the family and we get enough for ourselves.  But I have sisters who don’t have husbands, so when my son gets meat or fish, he gives them some of what we have.

We also teach our children that they must never be afraid to ask a fellow Indian for help.  Because if he’s a good Indian, he will help you to the best of his ability.  And some day you will be able to do something for him.

That is our custom.  If you give to someone who needs something, one way or another you will be rewarded.  I think non-Indians have a custom just like ours, because they say “share and share alike” and “in giving you will receive.”

If there is a difference in how Indians and non-Indians view sharing, I think it might be in the expectation of being paid back.  In our culture, we are not supposed to give because we expect something back.  We should give out of the goodness of our heart, because we want to do it.  I was taught that if I can help someone, I must never ask if they can pay me back.  I just say, “Okay, I’ll give it to you.  Make good use of it.  I’ll help you as long as I know you’re trying to help yourself, or help your family.”

I had a dream once.  One of the elders that had passed on came into my locked house, right into my room, and there was a glow around him.  I was thinking to myself that this must be my time to pass.  I held my hand out, and he touched my hand with both of his and told me in Ojibwe, “This is what you should do.  Never argue with your fellow Indian, don’t take anything of his, respect his feelings, and help those you can.  And in this way, you will live a good life.”  That is what I’ve tried to do, and I’ve seen the results.  That’s why I’m in the position I’m in now.  I’m a very satisfied person.  I believe I’m fulfilling my destiny.