**Betty Kegg What My Mother Taught Me**

My mother, Maude Kegg, is who I learned from. She was a strong woman. Everything I know from the past, or what to do, comes from her.  She taught me my values, traditions and cultural crafts. My mom taught me to share and to do right for everybody.  She taught me to not talk about people. She said don’t ever do anything that you will regret, or that will hurt people.  I’ve always thought about that.

People said we were poor, but we didn’t know we were poor.  I remember growing up, if somebody had more than what they needed, they’d go along and give it to other people. We had enough to eat. We didn’t have money or brand new clothes, but we were happy.  I never knew of Indians existing who didn’t struggle day to day.  Thank goodness this is starting to change for some of us.

My mother just loved people.  She used to take young people in and raise them as her children. There were already 11 of us, and then she took in many more. One of them was my brother John Nichols.  He became a linguistics professor at the University of Minnesota.

My daughter says I’m the same way as my mom when it comes to taking people in.  One of my adopted daughters lives in Michigan; her name is Judy.  My other daughter who lives here by me is my daughter Mary.

My mother taught me how to make crafts just like hers. For example, she taught me how to make basswood dolls and birch bark baskets.  I used to go out and pick the basswood and bark when I was younger.  Now the kids, my grandson, and other relatives do it. Making basswood dolls and baskets is not easy to do. My mom always knew the right way to do things, and she would tell me what to.  She wouldn’t do it for me, but she’d always tell me what to do.  When I make baskets now, people look at what I’ve made and wonder if it’s my mothers work.  It looks a lot like hers, but I could never fill her shoes, but at least I can do work that is like her work.

About two years ago, I made some really beautiful baskets with a new design.  They were really challenging.  They were just beautiful.  The Mille Lacs Band needed some gifts to present to people on official occasions.  One of my baskets was presented to Governor Ventura and the other one was recently given to Governor Pawlenty.  It is nice to pass on our traditional gifts to others.

These days, I teach our traditions to my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.  I teach them how to make fry bread.  I taught my grandson, and he’s really good at it, even though he’s only eight years old.  He’s so good at everything.  He even makes baskets with me, and little canoes.  They are all so eager to learn.  My kids and my grandkids are what keep me going.  I feel blessed.

My mother taught me to be thankful for everything that the Great Spirit has given us.