**Marene Hedstrom Traditional Ceremonies When I Was a Child**

From the earliest time I can remember, the one thing that sticks out in my mind is going to our Ojibwe drum ceremonies.  When I heard the drum, I was happy.  I don’t think I’ve had so much fun anywhere since.

I remember how people would come early for the ceremonies, like on a Thursday.  They would stay over and then all go home on Sunday morning or Sunday around noon.  They brought their children and all their family.  We would all eat together and talk – learn who’s married, who isn’t, who has children.  There were so many of us kids, and sometimes there were people sleeping on our floors or we were sleeping on the floors.

The traditional drum ceremonies start in the fall, either after the ricing season is over or during the ricing season.  That was the happiest time.  And then in spring when we had the ceremonies again – seeing your friends and relatives all over again, and knowing that they were healthy and had a good winter.

Everyone needs another person to be a special friend.  I have a special friend; her name is Rose.  We tell each other everything – about our gardens, our grandchildren, things that worry us.

The ceremonies and gatherings were a time that people could go to share their ideas and thoughts with their special friends.  In fact, what I remember most about the traditional ceremonies is seeing my friends and being happy.

People don’t attend ceremonies like they used to, and there are times when I can’t make it, too.  But it’s not because I don’t want to go – it’s either because something comes up or I can’t get out of bed.  It’s really hard with arthritis.  But I feel really bad when I don’t go to the ceremonies.  It’s for our well-being that we attend them.  It makes me feel good on the inside, and it makes me happy to hear the Elders speak.

When I was young, I looked forward to being at the ceremonies.  It’s not always like that anymore.  People aren’t as interested.  I don’t think that parents insist on their children going.  And kids don’t know how to sit still when it’s time for the Elders to speak.  My granddaughter is at the age when she fights to be put down, and I tell my daughter, “If it doesn’t make her happy, take her outside.”

When I first started taking my children to ceremonies, they wanted to do something else.  I don’t know if your parents or grandparents gave you “the look,” but that’s what I did, and my children would sit down!