

## **The Medicine that Hid**

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This person I would like to talk about is my late father, he told the story about this person. This father of ours, he knew medicine for migraine headache, but before he knew it [this is what happened].

She was very small (tiny) this old lady, she was about this high. She was so short in (height) but she was a good spirit, she was so knowledgeable with medicine. And that is it. She lived near us, where we were raised. And so, she was getting much older, the little old lady. And our father, it was way later when he started to learn how to drive. That's when he had got one [vehicle] himself, he was always with this Frederick whom they called Anishnaabe - Frederick Piitwaakwatba. He was always hanging out with him, and that's who taught him how to drive, so he did it. So, he got a very old vehicle, well he too, he was able to drive around too.

And so this one time he would take Anishnaabeg to South Bay and he would go get them on Sunday, he took these Anishinaabeg. Friday again he would go pick them up. I am saying that wrong. He picked them up on Friday and Sunday again he took them back to work. They were lumberjacks, those Anishinaabeg. And this person, she was already sick, this Veronica. And so, there was still quite a few people at that time, those elderly people that were truly much older. And so, my father was thinking. "I should get water for them." He was thinking. "They are going to be thirsty. They will be making tea, and they will be washing their faces." And so, I guess he went to pick up water pails. Then he went out to the big prairie. There was tall grass, these weeds were swaying this way. There were also very colourful flowers. I don't know how to explain their colours. They were kind of darker than this colour. They were so pretty. They were everywhere as far as they could be seen. He just fell for them, so after he went and got the water. "I will go pick a little bit, I will take them home," he was thinking. He wanted to bring them home to my mother. He didn't know what their purpose were.

So then, he then just set the flowers on the table, that was it. Not long after he then just ran out, no one knows where. Not long after that old lady came in. This is a different old lady. "What are those flowers?" She said to my mother, she was giving her heck. "Did William bring those?"

"Yes," she (mother) answered. "They are just flowers," she answered her.

"No, there is something about these." she said, this old lady, "Would this be Veronica's medicine?" she was saying. I guess this old lady heard about Veronica, about leaving that medicine eh! She really wants to know what it is. She wasn't told on purpose. "I will be back again," she was saying "I will come and look for him," she said.

So she was just watching. Sometime after my father came home. So then he has to go back again on Sunday to take those men back to work. So then, "Where did you get those flowers?" she was saying again to my father. "Over there in South Bay," he said to her. "They are all over," he said. "They are all over the prairie, they are all over."

"Why? Isn't this Veronica's medicine," she was saying. She was so assertive eh. She was desperate to know.

"I don't know," my father said to her, "I was just admiring them. Those flowers are so pretty," he said to her.

"Okay, now when you go there again, I will go with you," said the old lady.

So on Sunday the old man [Wiiyam] was ready to take them, she too embarked, she's going. When they got there. They went right over to the prairie. There was not one flower out there, she walked all over, my father went to the other side, there was just nothing. There was none of those flowers. Then my father started to think, "She must think that I'm not truthful, she must think that I'm deceiving her," he was thinking. "I'm sure this is the way I went," he was thinking.

So then, when they were heading back, they were just bouncing about. "We were just bouncing about," my father was saying. This was an old truck. The old lady was like this, she was just sitting there, then she said, "Don't let it bother you Wiiyam," she said, "If it meant that it's real medicine, then it's not meant for me to know," said the old lady. "It was over there," he said to her. My father was very astonished. "That is where I went," he said. "When I went to fetch water."

So then, and then this woman [Ben'niik] she was barely making it, she was near death. This little old lady I'm talking about, a very small lady doctor [Ben'niik]. So, she called for my father, then she told him, that was it, that was for migraines. That's it. Holy smokes. "Oh, so then, is that why that happened? I was thinking later on, thinking it over. Oh, that is why Veronica didn't leave it with her," he was thinking. She would've abused it, because she knew how to use black magic on people, to hurt them, and this is for headaches, this medicine is for migraine headaches. The way she would've used it would've been to drive someone crazy. That's why she wasn't meant to know it. That's what the old man talked about. And so this, he told it in vain, they didn't believe him. 'Aah, he's just kidding,' they wonder if he's telling the truth. That is what they said about him.

When I worked here [Ojibwe Cultural Foundation], the things I worked on here were what the Anishinaabeg talked about. That is where I heard even more Anishinaabeg [say] that it happened to them, similar to that. That the medicine was hiding from them. So maybe, if they get too greedy, they just want to pick as much as they can. Not just enough to last them. That's it. So it would just disappear right there.

ER. Medicine is very sacred

MM. It's upsetting.

ER. Yes. That's what happened.

MT. Would you recognize it anywhere?

ER. I really don't bother with medicine. But I go and see someone for medicine to give me. No, I don't know (medicine) what it looked like this medicine. Not flowers, I don't know. The one that knew was Jerome. My father took him out there, Jerome knew about it, I don't know about it. I never went with my father, he tried to take me, to show us that medicine. That is what happened a long time ago, what I'm talking about. Not only one Anishinaabe knew all medicine. One may have known six herbs, maybe Marion would know six herbs. And over there somewhere else knows six herbs. That is who you go and see. That is who will heal you. Not this one, not you, not me. You go way over there, maybe Wanapitae, that is who has mashkiki (herb) or maybe Sagamok. That's what used to happen long ago. That is what my father used to talk about to me.

ER – Evelyn Roy

MM – Marion McGregor

MT – Martha Toulouse