

yearning I have not always understood. I have fallen many times but I have always stood up on my feet and felt urged to continue on the path. That has been my blessing because I have been fortunate to have been guided by genuine, spiritual people who gave freely of what they carried and asked only that I share it when the time was right. That time is now.

This book offers simple ceremonies that anyone anywhere can do, alone or in a group, to create harmony, re-energize the planet and bring individual energies into the great nurturing and creative circle of energy that surrounds us. There is a shaman in each of us and we are all teachers. This is what my people say. In the world of the spirit there is no right way or wrong way. These simple rituals are meant to honour the one song that we are and the one drum that guides us. When they are performed from the place of yearning we share, they are a blessing to our home, this Earth, who in our Ojibway language we call Aki.

These ceremonies are meant to function as one song. An honouring song. In our teaching way, an honour song is sung in recognition of the spirit. The more voices raised, the stronger the song reverberates, allowing it to resonate from our physical plane outward into the spiritual plane, where all the ancestors join the celebration. Such a song can bring all of our energies into line with the eternal energy. When that happens, we truly become one song and one drum beating together in a common purpose—and we are healed.

beginnings



It begins, as all things do, with stories. When our ancestors gathered around their tribal fires, stories were told. As a human family we have this tradition in common. Many have forgotten their beginnings, but next time you are out with people and it is a summer night and a campfire is lit, watch how everyone responds to it. As night falls and the flames climb higher, people, regardless of their cultural background, will lean in toward the flame. Some will cup their chin in their hands. Others will lean forward with their elbows on their knees. Still others might lean back in their chair and idle there, never taking their eyes off the fire. A pervasive quiet descends and soon there is only the crackle of the fire, the snap of the logs. Everyone breathes more deeply. Everyone relaxes. This scenario happens everywhere around the world when people gather in a circle around a fire in the night. I believe it is because we all carry a specific cellular memory based on the spiritual feeling of togetherness, safety and belonging. It is the basis of our human identity—community—and it formed in all of us a long, long time ago. There is a particular magic that exists when the world is reduced to a flame and the sound of a human voice talking. We all respond to that setting like children, rapt with wonder and entranced by the possibility of story.

The teachers of our cultures recognized this. They could see wonder on the faces. And so storytelling became a central tradition of the human family everywhere. What begins in

wonder is learned in earnest. This is the truth those teachers gleaned from the ambience of fireside. So the truth of our interrelationship with each other, our connectedness, our family tie, is that story is our most powerful commonality—and so it begins with one.

In the Long Ago Time the world was new and fresh. The Anishinabeg (the name Ojibway people refer to themselves by) were given the Earth as their home. It was given as a place where they could learn to live a good life, known in their language as *mino-bimadiziwin*. Their original instruction, as they went out into this reality, was to walk gently upon the Earth and do each other no harm. For many generations the people walked their new home in a state of wonder at its perfection, its beauty and its abundance.

But prior to their arrival, Creator had called the Animal People together in a great circle. Creator told them about the strange new creature that was coming to live among them. At that time there were only Animal People and they could speak to each other with one mind, with one language. They shared the planet and accepted each other and respected their differences and the attributes each of them carried, so the Earth was a place of harmony. Creator asked the Animal People to assume the responsibility of becoming the Teachers of the new beings.

“No one knows the Earth as well as you. There are no other beings who respect it so greatly or who have the vision to see it as it is—as alive and as a spiritual being. This makes

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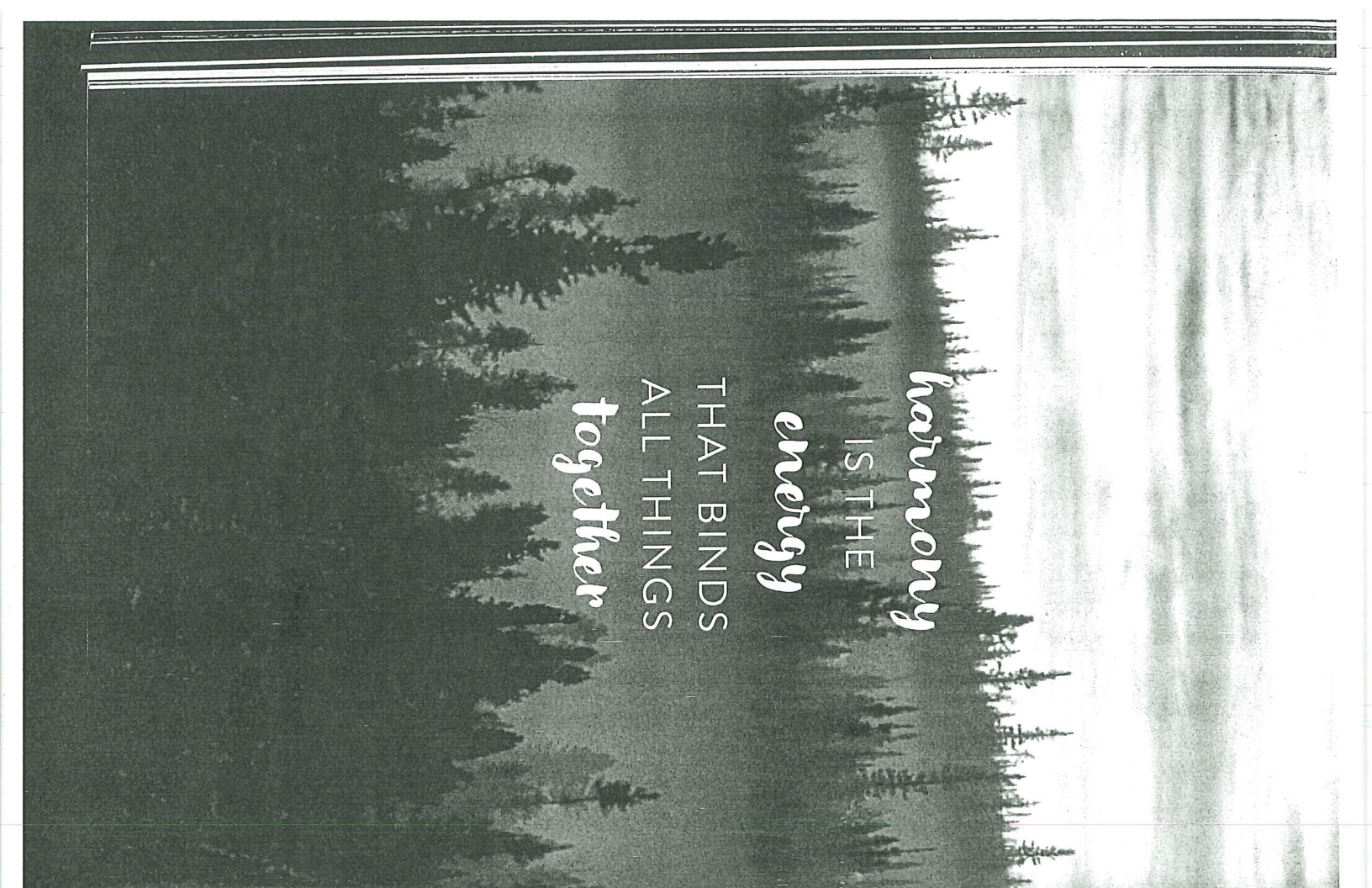
you the most natural of teachers. I want you to take the responsibility of teaching the New Ones how to live upon it, how to learn from it and how to use it to find their way to the highest possible expression of themselves.” This is what Creator told them.

Naturally, because they loved the Earth and because of the magnitude of Creator’s request, the Animal People accepted this great honour. When the first Anishinabeg emerged from the Earth and began to walk around, the Animal People introduced themselves and became the Anishinabeg’s guides and advisors according to Creator’s wishes. They allowed the new beings to become their family—and a relationship was born.

With such forthright guides the human beings flourished. Whenever there was doubt or hesitancy there was always a member of the Animal People to show the way. Sometimes, animals gave up their lives to allow the new beings to live and grow, and it was in this way that Sacrifice became a spiritual principle. At that time in their history the human beings recognized Sacrifice for what it was and learned to offer prayers and to be thankful for the mercy shown by their teachers. For a long time there was peace and an overwhelming feeling of community and family upon the Earth.

But then a strange thing began to happen. Creator had told the Animal People that the new beings would differ from them in one striking way: they would come out upon the Earth not knowing who they were. Unlike the Animal People, who

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together

were born knowing this absolutely, the human beings would arrive with no understanding of their identity. Their spiritual mission would be to come to that understanding. To help them, Creator would send them out onto the Earth bearing strange gifts that would help them discover themselves, and fulfill their destiny and their purpose.

One of these gifts was the ability to dream. With this gift the human beings would create amazing works of art, invent awesome tools and eventually come to inhabit all corners of the Earth. But each new invention would take them further and further away from their teachers. It would be hard but Creator asked the Animal People to be strong through those times and remain true to the New Ones. Because they were spiritual beings, the Animal People swore to uphold their role.

The second of these gifts was reason. Because the Animal People were born knowing exactly who and what they were, they had no use for reason; they reacted to the world spiritually. But the New Ones needed a tool to discover the importance of a spiritual way, and reason was that tool. They just did not recognize it as such. Instead, the newcomers would begin to trust the power of their minds over the power of their spirits and they would become lost and lose touch with the Earth. Again, Creator asked the Animal People to remain steadfast in their role and not abandon them. Again, they swore to remain true to their new brothers and sisters.

Many moons passed. As dreams came to them the human beings began to change. They moved away from the One

Mind the Animal People had shown them, and created their own language. With this new way of talking, the Animal People could not share their knowledge with them. The newcomers began to reason that there were ways of getting more of the bounty the Earth provided, and it was then that greed and envy were born, and the fear of lack, of not having enough. With this new development, true community was fractured and the human beings split up into separate bands.

The people began to live in the opposite of a spiritual way. They followed the lead of reason, and their ability to use the spiritual power of dreams shrank and withered. Jealousy, fear, suspicion and mistrust began to grow among the separate bands and the Animal People could not reach out to them anymore. The spiritual ones among the newcomers tried to remind them of their original instructions—to walk gently upon the Earth and to do each other no harm. But fear is the companion of reason and even though their animal guides offered their guidance, the people were too busy plotting against each other and refused to listen. They had come to reason that those who owned more held more power. Power became more vital than anything. Harmony was lost.

It was then that Creator determined to flood the Earth and begin again. But Eagle flew to Creator and asked for a favour.

“We have sworn to be their teachers and their guides,” Eagle said. “There is not a one of us who does not respect that oath and seek to continue in our role. So allow me to fly around the world and find one spiritual human being to bring to you

for instruction. If I cannot find such a one, then continue on this path.”

Creator respected Eagle’s courage and loyalty. Creator granted the favour and Eagle flew off in search of a pure heart and a pure spirit. She flew for many days. She travelled enormous distances to every place the human beings had come to reside and everywhere she saw evidence of their straying from the spiritual way. It was disheartening. But Eagle believed that there were human beings who lived according to the original instructions and even though she wearied, she continued to fly. Finally, on the shore of a sparkling blue lake, she saw a small band of Anishinabeg. As she soared over them she saw that they were still living in a spiritual manner and her heart was gladdened.

There was a young couple living there. They had a small baby boy. The young one was tucked in a cradleboard and set under the boughs of a tall pine tree. Eagle flapped down and sat in the topmost branches and watched over him. The young couple lived simply and showed great respect for the Earth and offered prayers for everything they gathered. They treated those around them gently. They shared what they had and they showered their child with spontaneous and open love. Eagle knew she had found the true spirit she had come to find.

She flew off and gathered gifts of tobacco and red cloth. When she returned she left these gifts under the pine tree so that the young couple would know that the coming event was a spiritual one and they should not fear. Then she took

the cradleboard in her talons and flew back to where Creator sat with seven spiritual beings. In Ojibway they are called *Nizhuwaswi Mishomis*. Seven Grandfathers.

"I have found the one I sought," Eagle said and laid the cradleboard down at the feet of the Grandfathers.

They peered into the cradleboard where the young one slept. He was innocent and peaceful. Finally, one of the Grandfathers spoke.

"This is the one. Take him now and travel all over the Earth and teach him carefully the way the Anishinabeg should live their lives. Instruct him well and then bring him back to us."

Eagle was heartened. Gathering the cradleboard in her talons she flew off on her great mission. They travelled for seven years and the boy was introduced to the Earth in a sublime and spiritual way. Eagle took the boy to Wise Ones who taught him carefully about the use of ceremony. Through these teachings he came to understand the relationship between all things. He came to understand that ceremony is the way to direct spirituality and that spirituality is the path to harmony. He came to understand that harmony is the energy that binds all things together.

When the seven years were up, Eagle took the boy back to the Grandfathers. He was already a young man because spiritual time and Earth time move in different rhythms. The Grandfathers sat and talked with the boy for a long time. They could see that he was very honest and that he had taken all the teachings he had received to heart. One of the



HUMILITY
IS THE FOUNDATION
of everything

Grandfathers took a drum and began to sing. Then he took a cloth that was woven of every colour.

"This cloth represents all of the Teachings. It is yours to carry," the Grandfather said, holding it out to the young man.

"But I am not finished yet," said Eagle. "There is more for him to learn."

The Grandfathers respected Eagle's commitment and she and the boy flew off again. They travelled widely and the boy learned even more from all the Wise Ones from every band. When Eagle determined that the boy understood enough about spiritual ways to sit with the Grandfathers, they returned.

As they sat and talked with the boy, who was now a grown man, the Grandfathers were touched by his earnest respect for everything he had learned. He held the Teachings in his heart and he allowed the Great Mystery of things to remain a mystery, merely offering tremendous respect for it and not allowing himself to reason it away, alter it or reshape it to his thinking. The Grandfathers knew he was ready to carry the Teachings they wanted to bring back to the Earth.

One by one the Grandfathers offered him the Teachings he would carry to the human beings—the Teachings that would guide them to a good life. "These are the ones you take with you," he was told.

The first Grandfather offered Humility. "Humility is the foundation of everything. To know yourself as a sacred part of Creation is to know Humility."

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The second Grandfather gave him Courage. "Courage is the foundation of faith. To face a foe with integrity is to have Courage."

The third Grandfather spoke of Respect. "Humility in action is Respect. To honour all of Creation is to have Respect."

The fourth Grandfather offered Love. "The energy that heals all things is Love. To know Love is to know Peace. To extend Love is to create Peace."

The fifth Grandfather spoke of Honesty. "To carry Honesty is to recognize Equality. There is none lesser or greater. To treat all as your brother or your sister is to carry Honesty."

The sixth Grandfather held out Truth. "To know all of these things is to know Truth."

The seventh Grandfather offered Wisdom. "Every earnest search arrives here. To cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom."

The boy who was now a man stood and gathered these Teachings together in a bundle. Then he and Eagle returned to the reality of the human beings. When he was back, he introduced his people to ceremonies that would lead them to each of the sacred teachings. Every ceremony and every ritual he brought gave the people the opportunity to bring their energy into the flow of nurturing, healing and creative energy that is Creation. Sometimes the people flourished and sometimes they struggled, for this is the way of a spiritual search, but with the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers a

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path was cleared through the shadows of unknowing, and they began the eternal walk toward their destiny and the highest possible expression of themselves.

THIS IS THE story the way that I was given it. My people say that every Anishinabe speaks of these teachings differently. While that is true, the essence of the story remains the same—that we are given specific teachings whose sole purpose is to show us how to follow the original instructions: to walk gently upon the Earth and do each other no harm. To live a good life. The further we separate ourselves from these teachings, the more we lose our way and create disharmony. When disharmony appears, the flow of energy is disrupted, things become difficult and the path is hard to find again. Our human history shows this to be true and in these times—the times foretold—there is a desperate need for us to embrace the teachings that were meant for the whole human family.

See, *Anishinabeg* does not just mean the Ojibway. It is merely the way my people choose to refer to themselves. It translates to “the people.” The spiritual salutation “All My Relations” means everybody, everywhere, in all times. It also refers to everything present in Creation. The salutation is offered as recognition that we are all one energy, one soul, one song and one drum. So the Teachings apply to everyone who struggles to find a spiritual path for themselves and for everyone who comes to love the Earth and seeks to honour her as Mother

Earth—the place of all beginnings. The Teachings exist as brought into this reality through Ojibway culture, world view, philosophy and spirituality, but they were meant as guidelines, as a way of being, for the Anishinabeg—the people.

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