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somebody told me something interesting, I would keep it in my mind and jot it down as soon as I could and store it away. Then, when it was time to write, I would sit down and scribble a page or two. I wrote in pen • I didn't have a typewriter • but I would write as clearly as I could so that the editor could read it. We named the column "Here and There in Eskasoni." My children knew about my writing and were interested; I greatly appreciated their efforts. I remember Junior, when he was about fifteen, trying to help me in my early snatches of writing. He would tell me about the traditional stories he had learnt; the traditional part of his life has always been important to him. A lot of the stories were about traditional ways and medicine. I would talk to the elderly people and they would tell me what they knew. Mrs. Annie Cremo was one elder I would often go to for stories and advice, along with her sisters Harriet Denny and Helen Cabot. They would tell me their stories in Mi'kmaq and, because of them, I started to use Native words in my little column every month. Jikte All is still. Silence reigns. Tepknuset The moon A month Nemi'k I see. So long ago. Nmis My sister. Maja'sit She go. NmiSy my sistCT Nutaq, I hear Wena, who? Nkm, her, him, them. So long ago. Api, a bow Teken, which? Ji'nm nemi'k Man I see. Kwitn, a canoe App kinu 'tmui, teach me again Lnui'simk, Indian talk. So long ago. I remember one story I wrote was about a Native medicine called "kikwesu 'sk (muskrat root)." I had heard it was good for colds. I fermented it and used it on myself, and it cured my cold, so I felt like I was an expert on the medicine. I set myself to finding out more about it, but I didn't know its English name. I asked different people • many elderly people • if they knew the name in English, but nobody did. I remember that Lee Cremo, the champion fiddler, came into the room when I was asking people about this, and he told me to just use Mi'kmaq names. So I wrote my column about the medicine and spelled the word the way it sounds in Mi'kmaq. The medicine works like this: You gather it during the summer and string it up to dry, and when it dries, you grind it and put it in a glass of water with a little honey. Then you drink it, and you sweat out your cold. When I took the medicine myself during a bad cold, I swallowed it just before going to bed. In the night I would wake up and my nightgown would be wet with the sweat. Sometimes I'd have to get up and change into another nightgown. I explained all this in my column and went on to say that I didn't know the English name of the medicine, but that it sounded like "kikwesu 'sk." Since "kikwesu" means "muskrat," I concluded the medicine must be muskrat root. I got a lot of mail about that column, from Alberta, from PEI, from all across the country. Even non-Natives wrote in, because they were interested in the name of the medicine. It turned out that it was flagroot in English, and a lot of people wrote to tell me that I had mispronounced the Mi'kmaq name. When my husband saw the feedback, he said, "You'd better make sure you know your facts when you're writing about something." "Well," I said, "at least I got a lot of feedback." This is what I tried to do with the column • everything that I learned, I would write down and discuss. Many people wrote back to me. It made me feel like I was accomplishing something.... featuring



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