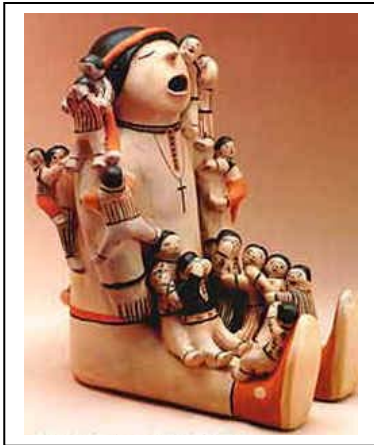


## Traditional Story Telling

Our newest Harmony Song program, Traditional Story Telling, features an Elder from the Aboriginal community who shares his/her knowledge of traditional teachings and knowledge. Story Telling is made possible by the generous contribution from the United Church Healing Fund.

Last Monday evening, October 25th, Elder Dr. Danny Musqua shared his knowledge of the teachings and practices of the Anishinabe people and many lively personal recollections. Dr. Musqua is an Instructor and Elder in residence at the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC) as well as an Elder in residence for the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, Canada)

*Anishinabe, in the language of the Ojibway, means "one of the people" or "original people" or "original man". (Turtle Island Productions) (The plural, Anishinabeg or Anishinaabeg, means "first people".) The Ojibwe language belongs to the Algonquian linguistic group. The Anishinabe were truly a superpower among the native peoples of the Great Lakes and possibly even out of all the tribes west of the Mississippi. In Canada, the Anishinabe are usually referred to as Saulteurs, Saulteaux or Mississaugas. Canada currently recognizes over 100 Anishinabe and part-Anishinabe bands, located in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. (wikipedia)*



Storytelling began with a smudge and a prayer. Dr. Musqua began by outlining the Anishinabe clan system of governance. The clan system consists of 7 autonomous clans, each with their own set of teachings and their own animal emblem symbolizing the clan's responsibilities. There are three chief clans, Eagle, Crane and Loon Clans charged with outgoing communications and internal communications, dealing with justice or laws and often said to be the most vocal. Dr. Musqua is a member of the Bear Clan, which watches over communities. Members of the weasel/otter clan serve as the soldiers or warriors gathering all the young men for combat. Fish and the Turtle clans looked after teaching and healing, medicines and healing practices,

The role of Anishinabe women or Clan mothers is very powerful; women ruled communities and made all laws pertaining to civilized behaviour in the community.

Women also had jurisdiction over herbology, and gathering medicines. They were the psychologists, studied the behaviour of children, pregnancy and giving birth. During pregnancy women were taken care of by the community. Men were not excluded from teachings; they also had to be aware of the stages of life.

The seven stages of life is also an important part of the teachings. Dr. Musqua described each stage including the first stage in the womb to the final one of Old Age. The first stage of life is in the womb, a state of tranquility followed by the second stage of birth and a state of dependency. Once the child enters the world, he or she will be taught by the entire family; each

family member will contribute to the well being of the child. **Dr. Musqua emphasized that in the culture, it is very important for a child to know where it belongs, that he or she is a somebody.** A child had to be taught to be aware, to use multiple senses and guard against a dangerous world. The third stage marks a new freedom, the child begins to think. This is the most explosive stage; it takes the entire community to watch over the child. This is the time when they need to be taught that there are boundaries, rules and regulations, that you don't get something for nothing. **Children are taught to respect parents, grandparents and older siblings. Each child will learn through the role modeling of their older siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, other extended family members and the community.** The fourth stage and fifth stages move from child to young adult. They are very sensitive in these stages, should not be "talked down to", and are undergoing many physical and emotional changes. Showing a good example to the child as a parent or member of the community is repeatedly emphasized. **Above all Dr. Musqua stresses, a parent should show their children that they care, that their movements are important to you. "If you behave properly in front of your children, they will behave properly."**

A key to understanding youth is to acknowledge that their world is very different from the adult world; more advanced and technologically complex. Parents have to help youth prepare for the future, know how to hear, how to listen, and talk to the young adults as equals. The sixth stage is parenting; helping to generate a good community, helping and volunteering. It is important to spend time with your children; some of their greatest moments will knowing that their parents are watching them participate in activities. The final stage of life is old age. Dr. Musqua completed his explanation of the stages by describing the 3 types of Elders: Community Elders (you can become a Community Elder if you are finished rearing children) Ceremonial Elders and Earth Elders. Dr. Musqua added that the knowledge of Elders is vital; **it is only through Elders that cultural knowledge and teachings can be preserved and passed down to the next generations.**

**Traditional Story Telling takes place Monday evenings at CUMFI, 315 Avenue M South from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. This program is open to the public.**