

Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, June 2013

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Missing good friends; finding moose nose in T.O.

The thing about getting old, older is that good friends start leaving us. The circle that sustained and nourished our spirits and intellect for years starts to get smaller and the world feels lonely more often.

Yes I know it is all apart of the cycle of life but it still sucks! I am going to miss Terry Boyer and Elijah Harper. They were great storytellers, fun to be around and kind and gentle friends.

Good men who loved their land and people and who worked tirelessly for their common good. Much love goes to Susan and Kate Boyer and to Anita Harper. Kinannaskomitinowow.

Thank you for sharing your loved ones with us.

I am one of those busy kokums, chapans who multi-tasks all the time. Among my many projects, is producing a show and catering a 10-course dinner of wild food for an upcoming conference. In other words I am re-creating an "Aen ball Metif," or in English a "Halfbreed Ball."

The show, which will be woven between each course of food, is being performed by some of Saskatchewan and Canada's most talented artists. People like Gilbert Anderson who is both an opera and a folk singer, Yvonne Chartrand, a contemporary and traditional dancer, Rajan Dorner, a classical violinist and Michif fiddle player and there are many more.

The evening will end with three hours of old time dancing with music by Juno Award winner Donny Parenteau from Prince Albert. As our nokoms would have said "ah bah, kah moochikun."

I am not doing it alone, of course. There are 20 wonderful men and women coming from around Saskatchewan and across Canada to help me cook it and stage it.

Yummy food like Candy Coated Beaver Tail, Muskrat Pate, Rabbit in Chokeycherry Sauce, Moshom's Old Time Pemmican, Dandelion and Fireweed Salad, Steamed Burdock to name but a few.

Thanks to nearly every trapper and hunter in Saskatchewan, the call for food has been answered and my freezer is overflowing.

By the way, did you know this food is full of all those good things those health people keep telling us to eat. Vitamins, minerals, iron, protein, good carbs and it's organic too.

All the food those creatures eat is medicinal. On top of all that, this food is full of good stories.

Muskrat, for example, was one of several creatures that were saved along with Elder Brother when the world was destroyed by water.

When all the other bigger animals had tried and failed he was sent down to the bottom of the huge lake to find a handful of mud so they could try to rebuild the earth on Turtle's back.

He went down twice and the last time down they were sure he had died it took him so long to come back up.

But come up he did with a tiny handful of mud and Creator taking pity on them gave Elder Brother the power to recreate the earth that we know today.

An old, old, kiyas ago story. But, you know, often-new stories are also made.

For example, a young woman learning from an old lady to clean and cook a moose nose in modern times can be interesting. Imagine you are eaves dropping.

YW: Oh my god Nokom, this nose has snot in it!

OW: Most noses do, my girl, and don't turn yours up. That nose is clean, that old moose used it to dig up lily pads so he could eat the roots and those roots are full of medicine.

A handful of them and a handful of other things boiled up can cure diabetes.

YW: If that's the case how come so many of us have diabetes?

OW: 'Cause we're too lazy to go into the water to dig them up that's why!

YW: Nokom that's not a very nice thing to say.

OW: But it's true. Not just us, but everybody. All this talk about good health hah! We'd all be healthy if we just put some effort into helping ourselves. This food is good for us. These animals are clean. They are vegetarians, not full of goodness knows what kind of food and shot full of penicillin. No wonder we're always getting sick.

YW: Oh Nokom there you go getting all political and preachy again. There, the nose is clean I burned all the hair off, it's as smooth as ... Hey do you think anyone will eat it?

OW: Of course they will. I'm dressing it up. Didn't I tell you that Bing Crosby use to come north to fish and he always asked for moose nose and my mother, your great grandmother, always dressed it up for him.

YW: Who on earth is Bing Crosby?

One last funny story and it's about a moose nose, too. I could not find a single one in Saskatchewan.

So while I was doing a conference in Toronto I mentioned that I had everything for this dinner but Well guess what? A lady bank manager stood up and said, "I have one I can give you. It's all clean, I'll bring it in the morning."

Next morning as I watched her walk toward me I thought, "no one is going to believe this.

A lady banker in a business suit and high heels handing over a tightly wrapped moose nose on Bay Street in front of the Royal Bank of Canada."

I brought it home on the plane praying it wouldn't melt and drip down from the overhead onto anyone. Can you imagine having to explain that to an Air Canada Stewardess? LOL.

My friends Terry and Elijah would have loved that story. Have a good day.