



*Excerpt*

# The Making of a Healer

*Teachings of my Oneida Grandmother*

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## Taken from Chapter 1: A VILLAGE TEACHES [unedited]



Another day as we harvested red clover blossoms in the field behind Gram's I, as usual, was listening to stories that Gram would tell. This was one of the times when my grandmother told me of the things she and her grandmother talked about. She would say, "In the village, no one went without. If a woman's man got killed, someone in the village would usually marry her. If there was no one available, usually a brother of the deceased would marry her, even if he was already married. The women would then become sister's and sister wives. That way all the people of the village were taken care of and no one was left behind."

When it came time to start teaching young ones, the parents didn't teach them. Instead, the aunts, uncles, grandmas, and grandpas taught them and did the disciplining.

The parent's job was just to love their kids. And things were much better in those days. The kids would run to their parents if they got in trouble, rather than away from them as they do today. It is simply a reaction to making parents the disciplinarians and not having any contact, or as much as they should with the grandparents, aunts and uncles.

I thought I may have been a bit young to understand all this, seeing how it was 1955 or 1956, when Gram was telling me. But she continued on, "Now there are kids who call themselves *beatniks*. You wouldn't have found that in my great grandmother's day. Ever since we began this new system of teaching kids outside the home, society has been going downhill; people don't have much respect for elders." Grandma went on to say, "Be sure you always honor the elders, because if it weren't for them, you wouldn't be here. We give freely to the young people; all you have to do is listen."

I couldn't even imagine the response Gram would have had today about something I recently saw on the news. A poll was done on some high school kids, from a big city, out west. They were asked "Where does the food come from?" To my disbelief, About 30 to 40 percent of them answered "the store". That is pathetic, to say the least, in this day and age.

I realize that not every grandma was exactly like my Gram, but where have our values gone? How is it possible that so many of our children are not taught about the real things anymore? Eating is a necessity that links us directly to survival. These high school kids knew nothing of where their food came from.

I wonder sometimes, who is actually teaching our children? It seems to me that parents are looking to the schools and the schools are looking to the parents. Sadly enough, the kids are not looking anywhere.

At least back in Gram's day, the family was the teacher. I know for a fact that I would never have starved if something horrific would have happened. And the last place I'd have looked for food would have been the store. If in fact, if 2012 does play out, as many of the experts predict, do people actually believe they will be able to send their children off to a store or a fast food restaurant for nutrition? I think not. The sad part of all this is that we, as parents, are given the role of teachers and protectors of our children. We love them. Yet society as a whole, has taught us to *pass the buck*. We send the children to school or a babysitter, while we go make money. The parents are to work, in order to provide for their families. This in itself is acceptable. The problem is that most households now have both parents working since for most people; it takes two incomes to just survive.

Unfortunately, we start working more and more, wanting more and more things to store in the garage, so we can pull it out once a year for vacationing. We notice the fancy cars our neighbors drive, and all of a sudden, ours isn't good enough. "We must work harder," we tell ourselves, which usually means, we work more.

Our children become accustomed to the expensive clothes, computers and even cell phones, which occupy them fully. Children don't get out to the parks or woods anymore, which is sad. So again, we work more.

Meanwhile, life becomes so hectic, that we forget about our own parents and grandparents. Some find themselves sticking love and wisdom into nursing homes, left only to be

forgotten. Unfortunately, their wisdom, experiences, and presence is also forgotten. I guess Gram would be quite disappointed in how we honor our elders today.

And so, there is more time available to acquire money for our lives, but it is harmful to today's family. That in itself is such a pity, that after all this time, we still have trouble getting it. What we must remember, is what we've forgotten: it's all about the children. The children used to be the most important thing to the native nations. And they are the ones who are losing. They are losing out on the time that we, their grandparents or any other family member, could be giving to them. But we can't be available, for we are too busy working.

Society has taught us to buy the children things, because that's what they want. By the way, that's also what society wants. Simply stated, what they *need* are their families. Society wants to keep the corporate machine well-oiled and running smooth, and of course, that's what the corporations want- so let's make a new holiday so we can sell, sell, sell and buy, buy, buy.

I truly believe there are very few parents or grandparents who would turn their back if their child had a question or a problem to solve, but we are not available, for we are out working. The family unit has transformed itself into nothing more than strangers living under the same roof.

But it doesn't matter, since we are doing what we were trained to do. We are doing what society expects us to do. Working is pretty much unavoidable in today's society, in order to survive. But balance is what we need to strive for, and priorities are what we need to perfect. It isn't easy, but we have to try.

Sadly enough, we are not doing what Gram did for me. But personally, I am glad that I was raised up with her beliefs. For a day doesn't go by without a memory, a lesson or the pure love from Gram, present in my mind or heart. This is why I am able to pass this to my clients.

And yet I wonder, if we are supposed to not only worry about our grandchildren but seven generations to come, as my gram told me, and the children of today are already losing, what does that say for the next seven generations?