

North American Transition

(Text of an address prepared for a student assembly at Yorkdale Vocational School, North York, by Mrs. L. Ayres, member of the National Tillicum Committee, Canadian Home and School, and Board Member of the Canadian Indian Centre of Toronto).

In the beginning, there were forests filled with game; lakes and rivers were host to large numbers of fish, and the air was beaten by the wings of many feathered friends. The people found that life was measured by the rising of the sun, the waning of the moon, and the changing of the seasons.

A man was a fool if he argued with the wind or tried to order the changing of the seasons in a different pattern. Life came and went as Nature planned, and man - to live happily - knew that he must listen to her and obey. His survival depended upon him being in tune with his surroundings, and his happiness - upon this attunement and his relationship with other people.

Men and women had clear-cut roles; man was the taker of life, hence the hunter and one who might clear trees for farming; woman was the giver of life, the one who sewed and reaped in the field and cared for the children.

Under careful experimentation over the centuries, food strains were developed that provide over half of the foods that come to the tables of the world today. Medicines from herbs, and dyes for ceremonial and decorative purposes were developed. Skills of the hunt and the fireside reached a degree of excellence that made life good. Most of our modern cooking methods were used to stew, boil, bake, roast, fry, smoke or otherwise preserve foods. The first barbecues were held - without benefit of motorized grill and coolers - but with the advantage of being able to continue as long as the food and stories held out.

The times of friendship over the fire were the times for creation of the threads of legends, history, politics, and other current happenings, that made up the fabric of living for centuries. Advanced, "pure" forms of socialism developed within various tribal alliances. Probably the most famous of these was the Pax Iroquois or Five Nations, later to become the Six Nations, an alliance that lasted Six Centuries to the present day and formerly occupied the Eastern part of this continent.

Within each tribe was developed the practical inter-dependence needed to care for every one. Each tribal member became insurance for the rest of the band, for the man with luck in the hunt shared with those less fortunate. It was the responsibility of the strong to care for the old, the sick, and the orphaned. Each person had a deep feeling of respect for others and himself - for each was honored for his practical skills or his knowledge used in service to others. Tribute given to leaders was expressed by requests for help, - but all had the right and duty to share with each other.

Underlying these principles of respect for people was a deeper sense of respect for the world around them, and a thankful acknowledgement of a Great Spirit present within all creatures. If an animal needed to die to fill hungry stomachs, then the Spirit within it was honoured by using all parts of it - not only for food, but shelter and clothing. Man felt his spirit mingle with those around him, and when he had no more words to express his feelings, he danced ceremonial dances in communion with the Great Spirit.

THE GRAND RIVER (Folk Ballad)

Dedicated to: The Six Nations Indians of the Grand River.

Words by C. Froman; Music by J. Froman. Arranged for voice and guitar.

Six miles either side of the Grand	Rewarded for the loss, of their braves,
They said was Indian Land	That lie - in Indian graves,
In battles that were won	They have, eternal pride,
Died many an Indian son	For land six miles each side
Oh..... The Ri-ver Grand.	OhThe Ri-ver Grand.

As long as the Grand River flows	So part, of our story has told,
As long as the Green Grass grows	The loss, - of warriors bold,
This is to be the land	But happy they will be,
Of the great Six Nations Band	As long as they can see, -
OhThe Ri-ver Grand.	OhThe Ri-ver Grand.

Finale - But happy they will be
As long as they can see
OhThe Ri-ver Grand.

This impressive folk song was sent in by our good friend Carl Froman. His only request is that it be performed only by our own people. Thank you, Carl, for this great folk song. We hope to hear it soon by one of our guitarists. There are a few extra copies. Ed.