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# Herbal medicine has power to calm and heal

**Jill Murray**  
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HAGERSVILLE — "Healing has to begin within before you can heal something or someone else."

Janice Longboat runs a holistic clinic outside of Ohsweken where she makes healing medicines to cure such ailments as the common cold.

Holistic healing is working with the mind both physically and spiritually. "People are becoming more aware of holistic healing," she said. "I haven't had any doctors discourage it."

She has taken all the formal training in herbal medicine and has graduated as a natural practitioner.

This has been her way of life since she was eight years old, learning about wildcraft herbs including colt's foot, burdock and mullen. "I lived in the time when you didn't run to the doctor every time you had an ailment."

She said, "a tea made of herbs and wild mint has the power to calm a person right down," she said. "It is even good for young children."

She said it takes a good month to dry the wild herbs and she stores the medicine from one natural growing cycle to the next.

The house she lives in now used to be her grandmother's home. "It seems her energy still guides me in my work," she said.

"I'm not a medical doctor," she said, "I can't diagnose people's problems. If a person has a real problem, I send them to their own doctor."

Ms. Longboat said she has discovered in the last few years how the mind can make a person sick. "It's through the negative things," she said, "like stress, pain, anger and guilt."

She said, "there seems to be an awakening of health, an awareness happening. Many people are going through the holistic healing process."

"Something has to happen," she said, "look around to see the destruction of our planet. People are now making a conscious effort these days to heal."



**Pictured are the wild herbs Ms. Longboat hangs on a rack for at least a month before she will put them in jars and use them in her remedies. (Staff photo).**

Ms. Longboat teaches a Native Community health care course about traditional medicine part-time at Mohawk College in Hagersville. Beginning on May 10, she will also give a six-session program on Herbology and its Medicinal Uses.

But that's not all she does. She also organizes her own herb walks, two during the summer and one in spring and in fall and one weekend retreat consisting of six to eight

people. She said she prefers the small group because it is too hard to interact with a larger group.

"This year we will do juice fasting, group therapy and a sweet grass tobacco burning ceremony during the retreat."

She said she is often invited to speak on the uses of natural herbs and healing practices.

She said the demand is growing for herbs, some people even want to know how to grow them.

Some of the wild fruit she collects she will usually make into jams. "I use hardly any sugar," she said, "so it's safe for diabetics." With the larger plants, she will make sweet grass ties and herbal wreaths.

On a normal basis, Ms. Longboat doesn't charge a set fee for her services or her products. "People usually just make a small donation of their choice creating a balance of giving and receiving." But now she finds that it's getting harder to do that, because people want to buy in bulk.

"There is even a lady who travels from Europe twice a year just to pick up herbs," she said.

She said she really enjoys her work and her long-range plan is to end up having a health farm. "I could take people who are actually not well, take them in and nurse them back to health.

"I call it my dream, it gives me energy to go forward and encourage people to make connection with themselves in order to create harmony, balance and peace within."



**Ms. Longboat shows some of the utensils she uses to boil down the wild herbs she uses in her remedies. (Staff photo).**



**Natural herb practitioner Janice Longboat holds up one of the jars containing burdock and marshmallow roots, from her herb shelves where they are dried for a month before she uses them. (Staff photo).**