

MollyOckett Essay Contest 2013, Bethel, Maine

Alison Corey, Gould Academy, Grade 11

Dawn rose over the lightly snow covered mountain as I gazed into the face of my newborn daughter. I would name her after the powerful and independent river running near our camp. Along the banks of the Saco River my daughter would learn to fish, plant, make baskets, and use herbs for healing. I looked down into her tiny new face and wondered what the future would hold for her. The times were changing for our Pigwacket tribe of the Abenaki. Our culture holds true the shared values in the land and resources, yet new English populations are coming into our area and trying to hold claim to sections of land. Abenaki tribes value and protect the land, culture, and history.

One day I would hope that my small princess would make a difference in the world. I wish for her to be able to bring the passion and beliefs of our native people to her children and to the world around her. Our culture is vested in earth connections. We take only from the land what is needed to preserve balance and harmony with our natural world. Our pride and values are strong, we share our knowledge and skills freely when respected.

Community and tradition is at the core of our life. Together we share our knowledge and skills. We need each other to hunt, fish, garden, harvest, prepare and preserve our food. Our village members raise and teach our children together. We share our traditions, our celebrations and mourn our losses as a community. Our skills making tools, crafts, clothing, and jewelry all tell the history of our native people.

The earth holds great mystical strengths shared with our people. For generations the Abenaki explored earth connections to heal the wounded and ill. Our knowledge is bestowed on our children and for those gifted in natural medicine there is a full and rewarding life. I hope to look back on my daughter and see a

valuable and contributing person. In my own lifetime I was given the name Molly Ockett as I connected the English and French with our Abenaki history.

Some people might have even called me a “healer.” I enjoy using herbal methods to help the wounded. I used my healing methods to save both the Indian people and the English new settlers. Even though some people may think I work magic, calling me names such as “the great Indian doctress,” I think the fact that many people were ignorant to medicine in general, made my work even more important. I have helped many people with my herbal medicine, the most famous was Hannibal Hamlin. My life is definitely more valuable when I make a difference and contribute to my community.

I lived my life in balance. I was accepting of differences. I live my life through the value and help I gave to others. I did not run from those who were different, even though at times the Abenaki had great reason to fear the English and the French. There were extensive battles over land and possessions. I tried to bring balance and awareness to all. I wish this same balance in the future for my daughter, Molly Susop.

Stories are my way of sharing history and teaching to my daughter and others. I enjoy telling stories and tales from the past as if I was there for the actual events. Based on the way I tell my stories many people believe that I was alive in the time of these ancient tales, while actually I just retell stories that I have heard from my elders. I have lived to see many of these stories, however many stories are a result of a strong culture shared with my elders.

I didn't see myself as unique or special, I saw myself as a person adapting and accepting the world as it changed. It did make me sad to understand that so many Abenaki people left for Canada and felt threatened in their homeland. The battles between the French and the English over land forever changed our way of life. As a mother I wish for my daughter to have every opportunity in life and for her to value

and accept her roots. And not to live her life in fear, but be proud of her cultural background.

Above all, I have lived my life with a code of honor and respect. I gain my strength from living in balance with nature. I understand the life style of the English and the French, however given the choice I would much rather live in the woods connected to the trees, the wildlife, and the river. I wish for my daughter the same life of strength, value, tradition, and independence.

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