

**Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, October 2015**

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### **We're surrounded by role models every day**

When we think of role models we usually think about those people who have reached some kind of greatness in their lives be it in sports, the arts or in politics.

But seldom do we think of the ordinary people we may or may not know who every day do us some small kindness. Like stopping to help us fix a flat tire on a stormy day. The neighbor who cut our grass while we were gone, the person who left a bag of fresh vegetables at our back door, or like my friend Ovide, who heard some people needed financial help to attend an important meeting in the city and gave them \$500.

Or the woman who, one hot afternoon a few weeks ago, stopped to help a mom and her two little kids who were struggling to carry several bags of groceries. Or the landlord who not only waived a month's rent but also purchased a return ticket for a single mom whose mother was dying in another province. Or the cop who gave some rowdy teenagers a good talking to and bus tickets to go home.

These are just some of the kindnesses I saw and heard about this past year and I know there are many more people out there who could give more examples.

Sometimes it's hard for some of our people to feel visible or that they matter in a world that is often difficult and dehumanizing. But a kindness or in Cree, miyotahwin or kisiwatisiwin can change all of that in a matter of seconds. In our old way, kindness is one of the seven teachings and one of the main ingredients in not only making medicine and in healing but also in changing attitudes and lives.

So, this year let's honor those people who with their gifts of kindness given every day, role model for us how we should live together in family and community and remind us how to be good human beings.

The other topic this month is, of course, the coming election. My, my, we are going to have to dig very deep to find kindness for Indian country in the big bundles of promises being carted around by those men who are promising everything, to everybody but us.

But it is important for us to vote. Voting in huge numbers lets them know that we got it and even if we don't get the party we voted for, our numbers will make them pay attention.

Your vote is power and that's what they understand, so give them lots of votes and take all your relatives to vote as well. And here are some questions to reflect on as you go about your business of preparing yourself for this big day.

- Which government made war on us in 1885 and hanged Riel, nine First Nations warriors and a War Chief?
- Which government introduced the Indian Act?
- Which government introduced the Pass System?
- Which government tried to impose the White Paper in 1969?
- Which government invited the Multinationals (Uranium mining companies, Forestry) into our province?
- Which government turned us out and burned our homes to the ground?

- Which government introduced and passed Bill C51 and which party supported them?

All very important markers in our history and useful to know so that you are very clear about where these parties are coming from. I can't tell you who to vote for but I can tell you, whom I am voting for and why.

It's Elizabeth May and the Green Party.

Why? Because I think she is very smart, she has a great sense of humor, and a genuine love and concern for the land. Too bad she won't win but I am voting for her anyway.

I was seriously thinking of Trudeau when he first announced he was running for leadership. Not because I am a Liberal but because he is young and I thought maybe. I changed my mind when he voted for Bill C51 and if I was a bit hesitant I really changed my mind when he did not stand in support of Elizabeth May to take part in a national debate.

If he and Mulcair won't support another party leader to take part in something as basic as a debate, which is what is supposed to happen in a democracy, then how tall are they going to stand for us.

And changing the subject, there is a great new book in the bookstores, *The Reason You Walk* by Wab Kinew. I am almost finished reading it and its great. Be sure to go out and buy it.

Happy Election Day and I hope your candidate wins