Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Seneca Nation of Indians non-essential services, including all Seneca Language department in house services are suspended until further notice. Once it becomes feasible to reopen, we will do so in a manner that is both safe and following all current health guidelines.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free contact 716-532-4900.
RezTalk: The Pause

by Aëdza:’niyo Seneca

Before this historical lock down began, I had battled with Anxiety. So, you can imagine my state of mind after watching the endless news updates on the Covid-19, the novel Coronavirus. I was watching from a distance. As an empath, or a person who picks up on others’ energies, I felt the sadness and hopelessness of people on the television that I didn’t even know. I hadn’t even heard of any cases in our area yet.

It didn’t seem real. I remember joking as we prepared for the second half of our Maple ceremony that only 50 people can attend. I joked that I was counting, but really I was counting how many people were in the Longhouse. The fear was becoming real to me.

School closed indefinitely, and the Seneca Nation had sent their staff home in the next week. We were able to go into the school and turn in our work packets and pick up anything that we needed. But I remember walking into the school and teachers were carrying things out like it was the end of the school year, telling me to take care. I honestly didn’t think we would be out of school for this long. Every little memory began to be like a piece of a puzzle, a big picture, this is real.

Sitting home those few weeks, I didn’t watch the television or listen to the radio. I read Facebook every now and then. But I disconnected from the world. My folks announced that they weren’t taking visitors and I was devastated. I was used to visiting them every day, but I understood their concern.

Everyday that went by, there would be more information going around about the number of new cases, and the number of deaths, it seemed to be closer and closer in proximity. I noticed that I was sleeping more and didn’t have much of an appetite. It gave me comfort to read the supportive posts on a group page for the Sisterhood. I would feel better after talks with friends, but the fear still lingered.

On Easter morning, my mom needed to borrow something and asked if I could drop it off. I went over, wearing a mask, and she was waiting on the porch. She said “do you got a minute? Pa wants to talk to you.” I immediately started to cry. I have been calling, but to actually see and talk to him was a gift at this point.

He said “I wanted to talk to you. It makes me sad how scared you are. You have to believe, you have to have faith. We have done everything we could in our ways. We have cleansed our homes. He have put Thunders through to cleanse the Earth and Water. We have requested that Hi:no strike to keep the fierce things underground. We have to believe.”

He said “The Creator has always taken people young and old in different ways. We are all given a certain amount of days. Nobody knows how many days we have. Your grandpa Mutt use to sing a song about being ready to leave this Earth. It was an old song, his grandpa use to sing it.” He began to sing it, trying to remember the words. He said “It says in there (the song) that we should be always be ready to leave this Earth.” By then, the tears were running down my face uncontrollably.

We are fortunate to have a tight knit community. We seem to come together when times get tough. It’s like we are woven together. We help each other, and we experience losses as a whole. So, my fear has not been so much about myself as it is about the safety of my community.

But, I can’t lose faith. I mean, I’m a Faithkeeper right? My friend Luke goes live on FB periodically and told a similar story of his grandmother. I heard an elder talk about respecting the virus, ‘it must have been in the plan to heal the Earth.” And I have noticed that the elders don’t seem as concerned and fearful as the younger generation. At first, I thought it was because they have been fortunate to live long lives. But now I see that they never lose faith.

So, every morning I give thanks that I am able to open my eyes. I thank the Creator, the Four Protectors and our Ancestors. I pray that my family, my community, my Haudenosaunee brothers and sisters, all indigenous people, and all human beings are well. And that if they should become ill, please be gentle with them. When I shower, I ask that the Creator wash away my fear and worries. And before I go to sleep, and thank them again for getting me through this day.

I’ve learned to appreciate the small things, like a sunny day, a nice walk, digging my hands in my garden, etc. I have learned to let things go. I have learned the importance of self-care, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Life will not be the same. I know I will still be hesitant and still use precautions long after this is over. But, I gotta have Faith.
This particular Ojibway story was recorded in 1913 by Frank Speck, an American Anthropologist. For all you fisherman out there, remember this story the next time you head out to catch a few...

Long ago there were two people who got married and started a family. They had several daughters and sons. The children grew up and were soon married. One of the sons soon had two sons of his own. Unfortunately, the grandfather of these died. Then the father and mother died soon after. The children were left with their grandmother. At this time, the boys were old enough to shoot bows and arrows and they were also big enough to go in a canoe with their grandmother to set night lines for fish. Their grandmother was elderly and was only able to fish.

So the boys used to like to play around, shooting bows and arrows for fun, just as the Ojibway boys do now. They used to play near a certain lake. Their grandmother would always tell them, “Don’t swim in that lake. There is a big old pike in there and he might swallow you.”

The older boy believed his grandmother, but the younger boy did not. So one day, while they were playing, the younger boy shot one of his arrows into the lake by mistake. He could see it floating on the surface, so he took off his clothes to swim out and retrieve his lost arrow.

But his older brother, said, “You know what grandmother told you. We can’t go in the lake. The big pike might swallow you.”

But the younger boy started to swim nevertheless, saying “Koga’miko (swallowed in the water) with each stroke that his arms took. When he called this out, the Big pike heard him. He rose up and swallowed the younger boy.

His older brother began crying and ran back to his grandmother. He said, “My little (continued on page dekni:h) (continued from page Sga:d) brother is koga’miko, “swallowed in the water.”

Then his grandmother began crying and the two were crying together. Soon after this they again set their night lines.

When they looked toward the lake, three days later, they saw the float sticks from their night lines, floating together. The boy said, “We have a fish!” But the grandmother cried and would not look toward the lake where her grandson had died. But soon she went along the canoe, crying and started pulling in the line. At the end was a very large fish. They could see that his stomach was full of something. He was so large that they could scarcely pull it into the canoe. However, they managed to get the fish in. They paddled to the shore and dragged the big fish to a place where they could easily clean it. They cut the bell, which was distended and out jumped the younger brother.

“I’m scalded with the intestines!” he cried. “I’m scalded. I’ve been in here for three days!” He was already beginning to be digested. However he came, the grandmother was very glad to get her grandson back.

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By Gayawëö:wi’

Folks have had their much anticipated events and programs outright cancelled or postponed with dates TBA. Many performers, singers, artists & dancers have had to come up with creative ways to come together, creating virtual connections. There’s been everything from virtual round dances & pow wows, to online smoke dance contests and virtual art markets.

Many of these forums have popped up on various social media platforms. Our social ties have helped create the needed space and network to make these virtual events thrive. A virtual smoke dance was even hosted by Cattaragus’s own Frank Wesaw. It’s not just a local concept but has spanned all of “Indian Country.” The well known round dance singer, Fawn Wood has hosted with her husband Dallas, over 24 nights of singing and performing by some of top and well known acts in Indian country. She even put the spot light on our local communities by featuring both Sheldon Sundown and the Parker family from Tonawanda. Way to represent guys!

If you get a chance, check out all the cultural sharing happening now. It’s a great way to be inspired and to make this time of Pause go by a little faster.
Directions:
1 cup canola oil
1/2 cup chopped dill
Optional dill oil:
Celery leaves and chives, for garnish
Meat from pike, cut into bite sized pieces
1 cup wild rice
1 golden beet or small rutabaga, peeled and diced
1 cup diced celery root
Soup:
5 cups water
1 cup chicken broth
10 trimmings from the roots
1 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. dried thyme
1 tbsp. juniper berries, smashed (optional)
1 small onion, chopped
Salt
Sunflower or canola oil
Carcass of 5 lb pike, gills and guts removed
Bloodroot, Onëhdowanëhs
Cowslip, Gajihsö'dökta'
Burdock, Osgwai
Garden Rock Art Activity
Gather some hand sized rocks with a flattish surface. You will need some paint, paint brushes, paper towels, cups and a clear sealer. Clean the rocks to remove any dirt and debris. Pat dry or lay them out in the sun until dry.

Once the paint is dry, clear coat each rock and place at the right spot in the garden!

Onëö' - Corn
Onyöhsa' - Squash
Onööenda' - Potatoes
Awëdo'ge:a' - Peas
O:nyöhsowa:nëh - Pumpkins
O:nyösgwä:e' - Cucumber
Okde'a' - Carrots, beets, turnips (roots)

Ingredients:
Broth:
Carcass of 5-7 lb pike, gills and guts removed
Sunflower or canola oil
Salt
1 small onion, chopped
1 tbsp. juniper berries, smashed (optional)
1 tsp. dried thyme
1 tsp. black pepper
Trimmings from the roots
2 - 3 dried morels or other dried mushrooms, crushed
1 cup chicken broth
5 cups water
Soup:
1 cup diced celery root
1 golden beet or small rutabaga, peeled and diced
1 cup wild rice
Meat from pike, cut into bite sized pieces
Celery leaves and chives, for garnish
Optional dill oil:
1/2 cup chopped dill
1 cup canola oil
Directions:
1. Make the broth first. Pat the pike carcass dry with paper towels and coat with a little veg. oil. Salt it well and grill it, bake it or smoke it until it's nicely browned. While that's cooking, caramelize the onion in the stockpot. Cook the onion over medium-low heat in about 2 tablespoons of the same oil you used for the fish carcass.
2. NOTE: if you are making the dill oil, do this while the fish is roasting and the onions are caramelizing. Put the dill and oil into the blender and puree for a solid minute to 90 seconds - you want the mixture to heat up a little. Set a fine meshed strainer over a bowl and pour the puree into the strainer. Let this drain untouched while you make everything else. If you find that too many solids are passing through the mesh, restrain with a paper towel inside the mesh.
3. Once the carcass and onions are browned, add the remaining broth ingredients and bring to a bare simmer. Simmer for 40 minutes to 1 hour — no longer. Strain through a fine mesh strainer with a paper towel set inside. You want as clear a broth as you can get. Salt the broth to taste, keep it hot on low heat.
4. Cook wild rice in 2 cups of broth. Cook until tender, drain rice but keep the cooking liquid.
5. Use this liquid to simmer your diced root veggies until tender, about 8-15 minutes. Drain the veggies and set aside, keep the liquid.
6. Use the cooking liquid to poach the pike. Add a little more broth or water if you need to. To do this, bring the liquid to a boil, drop the pike pieces in and turn off the heat. Let them poach for 5 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon.
7. Finish the soup, divide the rice, root veggies and fish among your soup bowls and pour over the hot broth. Garnish with chopped celery leaves & dill oil & serve!

*Recipe by Hank Shaw, https://Honest-food.net/pike-soup-recipe/

Gakö:ni:h Ganö 'ja' - Sgëdze:s onegagi' - Pike soup

Onëkwa' - Bloodroot, Onëhdowanëhs - Burdock, Osgwai da' - Colt's Foot, Ga:nöwö:s - Cowslip, Gajihsö dö:ta' - Dandelion