

# Greatest strength our capacity to love



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Aaniin Anishinaabek, month after month, our tribal newspaper, various social media sites and hundreds of emails are filled with conflict, misinformation and flat out lies. So much anger and hurt, that only serves to keep us divided. How about putting it all on pause and, for this one month, let us focus on the good and the positive?

For just one month, let us not forget the sacredness of this season and pause to remember who we are — we are Anishinaabe people!

Our greatest strength has always been our capacity to love each other. As Anishinaabe, we extend our family connections to those who may not be related to us by blood, but ARE related to us by “heart” and spirit.

Over this past year, some of my greatest blessings have come through our “Anishinaabe family” connection. Being connected by heart and spirit, I now have more young people (to whom I am not “blood related”) calling me auntie or grandma. I have new sisters, brothers and lots of cousins. My family has grown, OUR family has grown. Together, we have shared so much.

We shared tears of joy as we welcomed new babies into this world, and held each other through tears of sorrow as we said “bamapii” to loved ones. We worked together to provide for each other, physically, emotionally and spiritually. We kept each other fed, clothed and in safe places to live. We smudged, we prayed, we smiled and we laughed. By the time you read these words, the elders’ and children’s Christmas parties will be over, our children will be anxiously awaiting, and the new year celebration will not be far behind.

Let us also remember, that although this can be a time of great joy, for many it will be a time of great sorrow. It seems that this year we have had so many of our people walk on, young and old, leaving families to face holidays without them. If you know someone who has lost a loved one this year, please reach out so they know that their extended Anishinaabe family is thinking of them. Share the love. It is truly the one gift that is always needed, always fits and when returned just gets better.

From my heart to yours, my wish is that you know the peace that the Creator intended for us all. May healing come to our hearts, and may pain be replaced with joy. May our people, our tribe, grow in goodness in our good Anishinaabe way.

Even if just for this one month, let us set aside all that seeks to divide us, and may we all know that we belong.

Shawindekaa (Many blessings), Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Anishinaabe gagige.

(Anishinaabe for always.)

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