

A Story for Springtime

By Elder Marjorie Muise

Kwe' my name is Marjorie Muise and my spirit name is running deer. I'm going to talk a little bit about springtime growing up in the 60s and 70s. The first signs of spring are showing up everywhere. The red witch hazel at Bowring Park has opened their lower flowers. The yellows are not quite there yet. They pop flowers out before leaves, while snow is still blanketing the ground. The ice in the ponds, lakes and oceans are breaking apart. The spring thaw is evident while the ice claspers clash in unison with the low and high tides along the Atlantic ocean.

Strolling along the path with the sun's rays on my face and sharp nor'easter winds to my back, putting a little chill through my bones, takes me back to a place, not that long ago it seems, a place embedded in my memory, instilling in me a desire to reminisce about the past.....

Growing up in a small community of St. George's in Bay St George on the western portion of the island of Newfoundland in a large family of eighteen siblings - Spring for me meant **freedom**.

Seeing the first signs of spring was always exciting. It meant stepping outside again. It was longer days and longer nights when you welcomed more daylight hours. The arrival of spring for me meant awakening my spirit and reminding me that any time during the winter, when I felt like giving up, despite the cold winter months - I survived.

I was in tune with nature and every opportunity I would get to welcome a new day I did just that by being creative.

In spring, it seemed like all the world was alive again. Even the animals were in harmony with the egg-laying moon. The trees with the arrival of spring signals the beginning of the growing season. They stay without leaves in winter, but when it becomes warmer, the trees are reminded to bud again. Nature in all its power signals to trees to grow more leaves. Deciduous trees and evergreens experience more growth during the spring.

As a young girl growing up in nature and on the land, I would see the willow produce leaves. They were always first to bud their distinctive features which felt so soft to the touch. I always looked for the caterpillar on the willow tree. My favorite trees are the spruce tree, birch trees, silver maple, and poplar. The oak species leaf out later in spring and are the prettiest in the fall.

I love to sing and growing up in a two bedroom house with 18 siblings meant that being vocal whether through singing or speaking wasn't always received well with mom. And even though she would love the lyrics I would muster up and articulate - mom would signal me to take the music outside.

While outside nature was my playground. In the spring air I would peep through our dining room window and watch mom sew. She was a master of her sewing machine. I felt lucky to have a mom who was so talented. I also felt fortunate because I knew that spring meant new dresses and petticoats, made by the loving hands of my mother

I turn my attention now while outside in spring to the true robin song, hearing a male robin as he sings and declares his personal nesting territory. The song is cheerful, and I mimic it, and a red breast robin echoes back a beautiful melody. As I wait on the blue jay to give me spiritual direction and like the blue jay, I am a social bug with tight family bonds.

I continue on my journey past the field to wander down to visit my Gram, whom I know will have the smells of morning buns cooling in her pantry. I help Gram with her chores in return for a biscuit and a hug, then I wander down Steel Mountain Road overlooking Bay St George, past a fisherman getting his pots and nets ready for herring and lobster fishing season.

Going down memory lane, I recall spring awakening my senses with a renewed energy and a chance to refocus with the water splashing up against my rubber boots that were purchased in Cutler's Store and a rain bonnet on my head. I would set out to explore, once again, St. George's Bay.

St. George's Bay was full of the smells of herring, ready to spawn, and if you were lucky enough to be on the St. George's wharf, the fisherman on the wharf getting into shore, where their boats were full of herring to use as bait for their lobster pots. They would see me and beckon me to come over to fill a pail full of herring to bring home to my family.

Once home, I was reminded by my mom that I should always dress in layers. Mom would motion for me to go to the stove. She would get woolen socks to put on my feet, open the oven door, and let me lay my feet to warm. She would remind me that without warning the harsh winds and snowstorms can cause uncertainty in spring. We would talk about how the groundhog decided if spring was going to be longer or shorter. It depended on if the groundhog sees their shadow or not. After a little pep talk, mom would fry herring spawn and if by chance of luck the fisherman missed a few female herring then we would get a chance to have a feed. I acquired a taste and a love for herring spawn to be eaten with a nice slice of homemade bread with a cup of tea to warm my insides.

Spring is the season of new beginnings, renewal and growth. As the days get longer and warmer, it seems like everything comes back to life with blooming flowers, chirping birds, and buzzing bees. Spring brings many different feelings, bringing the four seasons alive on our journey.

Spring is a new beginning, the energy of growth and the power of change. Spring time could be a reminder that change is a natural part of life. Spring is an awakening of our senses. **Spring into spring and capture your adventure.** I welcome spring with an open heart!