

Friday, December 22

### **The Gift of Belonging and Welcoming**

*On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paying him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts. Matthew 2: 11 (NRSV)*

I have a well-worn and treasured pair of deer hide beaded gloves in my basket of winter wear. They sit alongside my other mitts, scarves and toques. Those gloves tell the story of a friendship between this settler woman and a First Nations woman. An unlikely friendship at first glance. We have very different backgrounds and history here in Canada.

These gloves keep me warm on the coldest days of winter. Whenever I look at them I say a quick prayer for my friend and thank God for her presence in my life.

My friend grew up in an isolated, fly-in only community in the northwestern part of Ontario. Her first language is Oji-Cree, she comes from a family of spiritual leaders. I grew up in southern Ontario and have only ever spoken English (much to my dismay). We became friends when I moved to Kenora, Ontario and took a position with the Anglican Church there.

I worked with the church communities that wanted to deepen their skills for teaching children about our faith. My friend asked me to come north and do a weekend workshop on Christian Education with them. We all gathered in the big room of the Mission House and sat around the tables. My friend introduced me and said in my honour they would only speak English so that I wouldn't feel left out of the conversation.

This was her second gift to me – a gift of belonging and welcoming.

**Loving God, may we be open to receiving the gift of love that comes with your son Jesus. Amen.**

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