

A Celebration of Culture

August: The Blueberry Moon Month or Miinike-Giizis

by Lorie Roy

Asix-month campaign and 12 months as your president-elect has brought me to service as your new ALA president. I am working with members to continue many of the efforts of past presidents and to focus energies on three new task-force areas and several new projects.

The Supporting Library and Information Science Education Through Practice Task Force is developing a national database of fieldwork experience options for LIS students and is collaborating with the Association's Committee on Education on two upcoming education forums that will focus on student experiences.

The Circle of Literacy Task Force is gathering examples of library services for underserved communities, including immigrants and those incarcerated. It is also planning an April 2008 "Gathering of Readers" online celebration event that will involve 50 to 100 schools around the world that serve indigenous children. A subcommittee is assisting ALA Literacy Officer Dale Lipschultz in managing a grant program that will award monies to libraries for English-language services.

The Workplace Wellness Task Force is in the midst of planning a Wellness Fair and other events for the 2008 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California.

An Emerging Leaders group is wrapping up a feasibility study on a youth national library camp. We are also working with the Association of College and Research Libraries'

Education and Behavioral Sciences Section to develop tools related to meeting effectiveness, including parliamentary procedure. Additionally, a national oral history project designed to gather the experiences of retiring and retired librarians is also in the planning stages.

This is what I call a circle-of-life interest, in keeping with my life as an Anishinabe person and a member of the Minnesota Chippewa tribe. The Anishinabe people are dreamers and predictors. Among our dreams and predictions are the Prophecies of the Seven Fires. Hundreds of years ago, the people moved east until they lived on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Over time, seven prophets arose, predicting that the Anishinabe would return, through a sequence of seven moves, to the west, and stop when they found food growing on water. Each move would guarantee the survival of the people.

In the Prophecy of the First Hearth Fire, the first prophet told them to follow the sign of the cowrie shell. Their second move was prompted by the prediction that a young boy would help them recover their traditional lifeways; they continued to follow the rivers during their third move toward the land where food grew on water. The fourth prophet predicted the arrival of Europeans as people



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whose faces of death would be mistaken as the faces of brotherhood. The fifth fire was the prediction of the loss of traditional religious expression. The

sixth prophet told of a time of great sadness and even greater loss of culture, including language erosion, disruption of traditional family life, economic strife, and health challenges.

Today, the Anishinabe are emerging from the sixth fire. The seventh prophet predicted that a new people would emerge in the seventh fire with the potential to help the Anishinabe recover lost elements of their culture if they make the right decisions. This right road of life would ignite a final fire of peace and brother/sisterhood. If they take the wrong road, then the result could be degradation of the natural resources and death to all peoples.

I expect that the librarian's role in this impending age of the seventh fire is a critical one. It may be up to us to help ensure that our communities have the information to choose the right path. The library can provide the social space for our community members to lead the lighting of the eighth fire. ■

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