

ASÍ ES NUEVO MÉXICO

THE ROOT TO HEALTH

The air is layered with puffs of heavy cedar smoke and smoldering, sweet sage aglow in a ceremonial clay vessel. Dim lights cannot dull the image of the woman before us, her voice commanding our attention. She is Tieraona Makawin Klar of Las Cruces, an herbalist and native of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

"The Lakota [Sioux] people kept herbs and knew how to use them for medicine," Klar says. "They used many disciplines in their medicine. They worked to establish harmony—balance of emotions, spirit and physical self."

Klar teaches at New Mexico State University and also offers seminars through her New Mexico Herb Institute, based on South Solano Street

in Las Cruces. She is writing a book on Lakota traditions and has a handbook on herbal remedies.

Through her life on the reservation and in huge cities, she has learned that the key to peace "is keeping clarity amidst confusion and differences." And she adds, "Peace and balance come through patience and humility."

Each individual, she says, must take responsibility for his or her own health. She teaches preventative medicine through herbs, exercise, nutrition and attitude. By hand, she produces a variety of teas, salves and tinctures that she distributes throughout the world under the product line Tieraona's Herbals.

Klar says flatly she will not diagnose or treat diseases. "If you crash through a wind-



Bert Gammill

Tieraona Makawin Klar performs a sacred ceremony before gathering herbs.

shield," she says, "you need a surgeon."

But she recommends herbs as a boon to health, pointing out that all medicines came from herbs until modern times.

She urges people to use local herbs when possible, saying they contain the energy of the place where you live.

Roots, bark, leaves and flowers all have healing powers that may vary widely from one individual to another.

"Health is a process, not a destination," she says. "There are no specific answers. The search itself is important. You must find what is truth for you."

—Katharine Lark