**Amik Respecting All People’s Ways**

I always say that when we were born into this world, we were born belonging to some ethnic group and we should practice those ways.  If we’re born Anishinaabe (Indian), then we should practice those ways.

We Anishinaabe have basically the same beliefs that other races do.  We believe in a Creator.  We believe the Creator made everything.  We believe every one of us has an assignment when we’re born.

And we have our language, which we use to pray and communicate with the Creator. We have to do this out of respect for who we are, because the Creator made us this way.

Chimokomaan (the white man) was given the church and things like holy water and rosary beads to communicate his beliefs.  We were given things from the natural environment such as tobacco, sage, drums and sweetgrass.

The people who raised me were the ones who taught me to always respect another person’s beliefs and not try to impose my beliefs on others.  The mother of my children went to church, and my mom told me, “Respect the way she believes – go sit with her in that church, but remember you have your way as an Anishinaabe.”

Like I said, Anishinaabe people basically have the same rules as other people.  But we’re Anishinaabe people, so we also need to practice our own individual ways.  It’s easy for me to be traditional and practice the Anishinaabe ways.  I put my tobacco out in the morning and pray for everybody – my children, my grandchildren, and other people.  You can find tobacco lots of places; up here, there’s tobacco growing all over the place.  Or a lot of people will use store-bought tobacco.  You can be traditional Anishinaabe and live in the middle of New York City or anywhere in the world.

It’s not hard being an Anishinaabe person.  Pray.  Put your tobacco out.  Thank the Creator.