**Amik Respecting the Creator’s Creation**

When the Europeans first came over to this land, they saw native people and they stereotyped us as savages.  They thought we were a lost people with no sense of direction, no kind of organization, no beliefs.

That’s not so.  Indians had a form of government, and we also had our beliefs.

We believe in the Creator.  Some people call him God.  We knew there was such a being.  And we knew he created this world we live in and everything on it – the vegetation, the animals, the two-legged, four-legged, flying, crawling, swimming.  He created all those.

We believe that the last species he created was the human being.

The Creator knew human beings needed direction, so he sent down a messenger to each color of man – the yellow people, the black people, the white people, and the red people.  He sent these messengers to show the people how to live.

The messenger to the Ojibwe people walked around the Great Lakes region, teaching us as he went.  He lived by example.  He showed our people the medicines.  He showed us the way of communicating with the Creator.

Our messenger was funny.  He was also serious.  He was all things a human could possibly be, even though he was spiritual.  He showed the people things that would happen if you do wrong, what would happen if you do good, what would happen if you are foolish.  He lived a lifetime doing these things to show the people.

And he told the people about the Creator.  He also told them to treat all things with respect because they are the Creator’s creation.

When we go out to use a tree or a plant or anything that grows out of the ground, we have to make a tobacco offering to the Creator.  We’re going to pull that plant out, or we’re going to take the life of that tree.  So we ask for forgiveness.  We explain to the Creator why we need that tree or plant.  We don’t disrespect it and just start cutting it down or pulling it out of the ground.

When we go hunting or fishing, we offer the traditional tobacco because we’re going to take the life of one of the Creator’s creations so we can eat.  When we go ricing in the fall, we put tobacco in the lake because we’re going to take some of the food the Creator has provided for us.  We do this because we were taught to put tobacco down when we pray.  There are tobacco plants that grow in the woods that we can use.  Some people mix traditional and contemporary tobacco.

Some people say Indians worship the trees, the waters, and the animals.  We don’t worship them – we respect them because of where they came from.

We have to respect everything because, if you don’t, you’re disrespecting what the Creator created.  And the day is coming when you will have to answer for that.

If I disrespect another person because he is a different color, I’m disrespecting what the Creator created.  Some people say you have to earn respect.  I say no.  When I meet someone, they have all my respect because they’re from the Creator.