**Beatrice Taylor Growing Up among Nature**

We lived in a log house on the reservation.  We didn’t have electricity, but we couldn’t miss what we never had.  My dad cut wood to use in our house and we were always warm.  We never thought we were poor, either.

One of my earliest memories of growing up was visiting family.  Often my mom put my little brother on her back and walked with me and my sister to relatives’ houses.  We had family all over the place.

When we weren’t visiting family, my sister and I played together at home.  In the mornings, we dug in the bread box and found biscuits to break up into our tea.  During the day we climbed trees like boys and played in our make-believe house that we set up with boards and blankets.  We often walked by the river and found pretty rocks to bring back to my mom’s rock garden.  We had active imaginations and were carefree.  It was one of the happiest times of my life.

We also played in the woods.  If we were hungry, we ate what we found in nature – the little tender end of sumac, the tiny white part of grass blades, the tangy little clovers, and the cherry bark that turned our mouths red.

In the summer, we picked berries with my mom and ate them for dinner.  My sister and I knew where all the berries grew and would take our mom to those areas.  In the fall, we found gooseberries, blueberries, raspberries, choke cherries, and hazelnuts.  We also canned food so we could save it.  Nature fed us.

Often when we were in the woods, my sister and I heard our mom calling us to fetch water.  So we went home, walked down a steep hill, and hauled water from the well.  We had other chores to do, too, like washing the dishes, but still had a lot of time to play.

When my dad got home, he sang songs as my sister and I danced around the stove heater.  My sister and I used to dance around the house all the time.  We had all kinds of fancy steps.

When the sun went down, we had to go inside.  My parents wouldn’t let us play outside after dark, because they said there were invisible spirits that would grab us.  They told us an old lady with a knapsack went looking for kids playing in the dark.  We always believed the story; it was just part of growing up.

Long ago, people got along so well together and helped each other more often.  Everything we had we shared.  If one person had rice and the other had corn, they traded.

Now, I notice that nobody wants to help someone else unless they get something in return.  Before you could ask for help and people didn’t ask for anything.  They did it because it was part of their way of life.

But I still see traditions that we had years ago, such as powwows.  I attend powwows and love seeing the beautiful costumes and dances.  The women dancing are so light on their feet – it’s like there is nothing to it.  My grandson dances, too, and I am so happy to watch him.  I hope he continues dancing and sharing in the traditions.