**Beatrice Taylor The Migration Story**

Aaniin. I am Beatrice Taylor, a Mille Lacs Band Elder, and I am happy to be writing this column and sharing some stories about the Mille Lacs Anishinaabe.

I’d like to tell you the story of how the Mille Lacs Anishinaabe came to live in this part of the world. We’ve been here for a long time, so it’s an old, old story.

Many years ago, our ancestors lived on the East Coast. One day, one of our Elders had a vision that we were supposed to come west. We were supposed to travel until we came to the place where the food grows on the water. That was the mahnomen (wild rice).

So our ancestors migrated west. Some migrated up into Canada, some migrated over to Wisconsin and Michigan, some went to Iowa, and some came here.

The ancestors who went to Canada traded with the people there. In our Indian language, these ancestors were called the O-dow-wa. But I guess the English tongue couldn’t get that tongue twister, so the people there called these Indians the Ottawa. That’s the name that’s still used today.

In Wisconsin, there was a group of Indian people who said to some of the other Indians who were migrating, “We’re going to settle here, and we will keep the fire burning until you come back.” And those people were called Bu-da-wa-da-mi, or keepers of the fire.  But again, that’s a tongue twister, so they were called the Potawatomi.

Another group went a little further south and settled. These were called Mahnomen people – Menominee. Some other people who were migrating went west into Iowa and settled there. And their name was Mis-co-a-kee, but again that was shortened to Meskwaki, the red earth.

And some came to this part of Minnesota.  They came to be near the big lake where the food grows on the water.  And they stayed.  These people were the ancestors of today’s Mille Lacs Anishinaabe.

My family lived in Aazhoomog.  That’s our name for the area near Hinckley.  Other Mille Lacs Anishinaabe lived around Onamia, Isle, McGregor, and other places.

There has been much that has happened to us since then and many reasons why some of us have had to move away from our home. Sometimes Anishinaabe moved away to find work because they couldn’t find any here. Some were sent away to schools against their will. But still we hung onto our traditions, and our language, and our culture, and we kept on working together for the betterment of our children.

I moved away from Aazhoomog for a while, but I came back for ceremonial powwows. But that wasn’t enough for me. I missed my home, my language, my relatives, being with my people. Then I moved back to Aazhoomog. And I felt good about it – I was home.

Now I teach my grandchildren about our culture.  I talk the language with them. I use the words with them constantly. When we go to a sacred ceremony, we make our tobacco offering, and we ask the Great Spirit to take care of our children, our grandchildren, and their children coming up.

I  am glad to live in Aazhoomog, where my people have lived. My mother lived here. My four sisters are around here. When I moved back, I said this is the last move I’m ever going to make, and I still feel that way. I’m back home.