**Isabelle Eubanks Grandma and Aunt Rose**

I grew up in Isle, where I was raised by my grandmother and my aunt Rose.  My father moved us here from Fond du Lac just after my mother passed away.  I was only a baby, the youngest of six children.

I stayed here year-round until I was in the fifth grade.  My sisters and brothers were away at Indian boarding school, so I asked my aunt if I could go too.  Every year we would go away to school from September to May.  We got to come home in the summer, except for one year.  We would look on a list and if your name was on it, you would go home.  That year, our names weren’t on the list, so me and my sister stayed at school.  While we were there, we husked corn, broke the ends off green beans, and went swimming.  Indian kids came from all over the United States, and we got to meet them.  It was fun, but we forgot our language because we never spoke it – the school didn’t let the students talk Indian.

By the time we got home in the summers, we would be speaking only English.  Before I left Isle, I could talk to my grandmother, but when I came back from school, I would forget a lot of the words.  I would try to talk in our language, but I would forget what I was going to say, so it would get real frustrating.  I can understand the language now better than I can speak it, but there’s still quite a bit I don’t understand.

When I would come home in the summer, my grandma and the others used to camp out by the highway and make birch bark baskets.  They would put them out every day and sell them.  If I wanted any money, I would have to make them too, but I only made the small baskets and little miniature canoes.  They would sell, and I would get a little money.  We didn’t have much, but we were happy.

My grandma didn’t believe in anybody being idle.  She always wanted me to be doing something and be productive.  When I would get up in the morning, I would take my time doing everything – making my bed, getting dressed, eating breakfast, doing the dishes – because when I was done, I knew I had to start sewing.

When she made birch bark baskets, grandma would get the basket fiber from big rolls of basswood bark.  She would take the rolls and pound them against a tree to flatten them out and make the fiber.  Then we would make the designs on the birch bark.  Then the fiber would have to be dyed to make the color you wanted, and we would stitch the designs on the birch bark with the fiber.  When I think back, that was a lot of work.  But they turned out nice.

My grandma also used to teach me how to make fry bread.  When I was grown up, I would make it once in a while and my kids liked it, but it wasn’t like my aunt Rose’s bread.  I can only make small ones, but I think I will start trying again.

I moved down to the cities in 1952, right after school was over.  I had a family, raised my children, and worked at the American Indian Center.  I just moved back up here to Isle in 2000.  While raising my children, I didn’t have much time, so it is just now that I’m starting to get back in the cultural aspect of things.