**Jim Clark As Long As We Hear Those Drums**

When people think of Indians, one of the first things that comes to mind is often drums, and Indians singing and dancing to drum music.

Our ceremonial drums were given to the Anishinaabe people for our protection. How did that come about? The story goes that the drums came into being when the Plains Indians out West were being harassed by white soldiers. The cavalry was trying to drive the Indians off the land and chase them onto reservations.

An Indian woman had a vision that the Anishinaabe people should build a drum. In her vision, a spirit told her that the Anishinaabe would never hear any more guns against them as long as the drum was around.

So the drum was given to those Anishinaabe. They were shown how to build it, how to use it, and what they should do.

The day they started using the drum, the soldiers were supposed to go in and chase some people, either to kill them or get rid of them some other way. The soldiers went to where the Anishinaabe were, and they saw this drumming and dancing and all these people having a good time. And the soldiers dropped their guns and went over there and joined the people.

That’s the way the story goes. We were told we are supposed to tell this story at least once a year – that as long as we can hear the drum, as long as the Great Spirit can hear that drum here among the Anishinaabe people, there won’t be any aggression against our people with guns. You’ll never hear guns being fired at the Anishinaabe people as long as we keep our drums.

The first drums were given to the people out West. They brought the drums east, and then the Dakota people had drums.

At that time, the Ojibwe and Dakota people were warring against each other. That’s because we were crowded from the encroachment of non-Indians. Eventually the Dakota moved further south and the Ojibwe stayed up north.

But when the Dakota found the drum, they brought it back and gave it to the Ojibwe people to use. And they’re still giving us messages of some kind for our protection.

So that’s why we use the drums. As long as we hear those drums, we say, we will be protected.

Incidentally, the cavalry soldiers from back then were the reason for our word for white people. When the soldiers first came to our land, they had big swords called sabers. In Ojibwe, a knife is called mokomaan. The word for big is “chi.” So when the Indians saw those soldiers with those big sabers, they called them chimokomaan – “big knife.” chimokomaan is still what we call white people today when we speak in our language.