**Jim Clark Looking beyond Race to Individuals**

Up until World War II, my family always had non-Indian neighbors.  Our children played together and cared about each other.

Young kids don’t know anything about race until they learn it, which is usually when they start going to school.  I remember my youngest went to school one day, and when she came home she said to her mom, “Mom, did you know that I’m an Indian!?”

My kids played with non-Indians at school until about the fourth or fifth grade, and then the non-Indian kids started to shy away from them.  Why did they do that?

When my daughter was older, she had friends of different races.  One day she had them over and they were all in her room, and we had to tell them to turn the music down.  This was in high school, and I remember she had a Japanese friend, a Chinese friend, and a black friend.  And she keeps in contact with them regularly to this day.

I wish more Indians and non-Indians would get to know each other like that, as individual people instead of as “Indians and non-Indians.”  There are opportunities here on the reservation to do that.  For example, our powwows are open to the public.  Everyone is welcome to come and watch, and it’s all free.

We also have free classes.  We sit around and talk about traditions, about the Ojibwe language, and other things.  It’s what we call a mini-immersion.  And it’s not just for Band members – we’re trying to get other people to come in and be with us.  If you’d like to join us, we meet every Wednesday from 6-8 p.m. at the District I Assisted Living Unit on the Mille Lacs Reservation.  We hope to see more faces soon.