**Jim Clark Our Reservation Is Our Cultural Home**

I was born near the south shore of Shakopee Lake (where the Onamia Children’s Camp is now located).  My mother was born and grew up here; my father was born and reared in the Aazhoomog (Lake Lena) area on a piece of land my grandfather leased from the state.  We were frequent visitors here during the summer and at ricing time, and then in the fall, we went back to the home my father built in Aazhoomog.

I lived there until I was drafted into the Army.  I was assigned to the medical department, where I worked in Army hospitals.  After I got out of the service, I worked various jobs in the woods and driving trucks.  I wanted a job that was less physically demanding, so I headed to Minneapolis.

I found a job at Fairview Hospital in 1953 as a storekeeper handling material.  I left Fairview in 1967 when smaller hospitals where merging with larger hospitals.  I then did a lot of moving around to different hospitals, including Lutheran Deaconess Hospital, Abbott Northwestern, and Children’s Hospital, then I retired in 1983.

A couple years later, I was lucky enough to get an Ojibwe teaching license, and then I taught for eight years before retiring again.  I am lucky my wife still works so I have something to eat.

I was with non-Anishinaabe people for so long, it’s hard for me to say how living on the reservation is different from living somewhere else.  But, I do believe that if we – by some quirk of nature or unseen reason – lose our reservation, our language, culture and traditions would be gone.

The reservation IS our language, culture and traditions.  If we lose that, we’ve lost our home.