**Jim Clark Teaching People about Anishinaabe**

I have spent much of my life trying to help people learn more about the Anishinaabe, because I think if everybody understood each other, we’d all get along so much better.

For a while, I taught at an elementary school down in Minneapolis. I would also go out to other schools and organizations to talk about Anishinaabe people.

I found that kids were shy at first, sometimes because they didn’t know what to expect from an Indian. Some of them had never met an Indian in person before. They thought that all Anishinaabe wear feathers and run around half-naked and ride horses.

I remember one time as I talked to a group of children, I noticed that one little boy kept turning around and looking at the door. Finally, I asked him what he was looking for, and he said, "I’m waiting for that Indian to get here!"

Well, that Indian was sitting right there in front of him – it was me.

That’s a funny feeling. They looked at me sitting there and didn’t say anything. I talked to them about our people and our traditions. And when I got done, those kids were all around me asking questions. Before I had talked to them, they wouldn’t touch me with a 10-foot pole. But after I was done talking to them, they were all over me. Someone finally had to chase them away and say leave him alone so I could go home.

Besides talking to the children, I would ask them to draw pictures. When I first got to a school, I’d ask them to draw a picture of Indians on one side of a sheet of paper, and they’d usually draw people living in tipis and wearing feathers.

Then when I was done talking, I would ask them to draw a new picture of Indians on the other side of their paper. This time they’d draw people wearing baseball caps and t-shirts. It made me happy that they started to understand Anishinaabe are real people who are alive today, not just people from old cowboy movies. And that would be after only 45 minutes of talking to them that they’d change their minds.

I wish we had a way to talk to adults like that, too, so they could learn more about us. Because I remember many times when Anishinaabe have not been understood by non-Indians. That has made Anishinaabe afraid, or even feel ashamed to be Indian.

When I was a kid, people were afraid to speak Ojibwe in public. And I remember when you’d walk into a store, like those department stores in Minneapolis, an employee would start following you around. I’ve seen that a lot of times.

I remember one time my wife and I were trying to get something for the kids for Christmas, and we walked into a store, and the people started looking at us. Maybe they figured we were going to steal something. We were embarrassed, so we left.

I think if we all understand each other more, there wouldn’t be some much fear or shame. That’s why I hope more non-Indians will learn about Anishinaabe people.