**Jim Clark The Center of the Moon**

The name that was given to me in the English language is Jim Clark. But my Ojibwe name – my name in my language – is  Nawigiizis.

People ask me, "What does that mean?" And I tell them, it means the center of the moon. Giizis is the Ojibwe word for sun or moon.

So then people say, "How do you know it’s the center of the moon instead of the center of the sun?"  And I have to tell them how I know.

When that name was given to me, I was just a little baby. The man who gave me that name told my mother to make a painted brooch. It was very small – most brooches like this are approximately 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 inches in diameter (and many are made of beads). The man said this particular brooch should have a white background. Standing in front of that background should be a figure of a man with a hat on. The man should be standing there with his left arm down and the other arm outstretched. In this outstretched arm he’s got a pipe, a long pipe that touches the ground.

It’s all white – a black figure on a white background. That’s the man in the moon. So I have to tell them that, that’s how I know Nawigiizis means the center of the moon, although it’s true that the word also means the center of the sun.

There are other people who have the same name. I have a nephew whose name is Nawigiizis. And there’s a fellow who grew up here near Onamia whose name was Nawigiizis. I grew up in Aazhoomog over near Hinckley.

There are women who have that name, too. Nawigiizis is a man, and Nawigiizissokweh is a woman.

As I said, a man gave me that name. That’s because in our tradition, only certain people can give names. There are people who are gifted by the Creator to be able to give names. The Creator or some being teaches them and gives them permission to use this kind of a name or that kind of a name.

When an Indian person is gifted in some way – such as being able to give names – they don’t advertise that fact. But other people will come to them and ask, "Will you give my baby a name?"

Today there are some Anishinaabe who do not use the Indian names they were given and instead use only their English names. Eventually, some may even forget their Ojibwe names.

I hope they do not, because these names were given to them for their protection from whatever evil they may encounter throughout their lives. So if you have an Anishinaabe name, use it so you will be remembered and known by friends.

I don’t have that brooch any more. I lost it one day over at a carnival. I was getting some money out of my wallet for my daughter, and I must have dropped the brooch. But I still remember and use my name Nawigiizis.