**Ken Weyaus Sr Sharing Cultures at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum**

I recently retired from the Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Onamia.  At the museum, we are preserving Ojibwe culture.  It is not just a place for tourists – the museum also keeps the culture alive and teaches it to our people.

People read and hear a lot about Indians, but sometimes they confuse the tribes, so we help them understand about the Ojibwe.  For example, some people ask us how the Ojibwe carried heavy wooden poles, which held up their homes, when they moved each season.  Well, they didn’t, because there were a lot of trees in this area, and they could cut new poles any place they went.  It was the Dakota Indians on the Great Plains, where there aren’t that many trees, who had to conserve their poles and carry them wherever they moved.

Some people also say that the Ojibwe used horses or dogs to carry things.  But back in the old days, before the logging companies came in, the trees were plentiful.  I’ve heard stories that you could walk for days without seeing the sun, that’s how thick the pines were.  A dog could run in between the trees, but if he was pulling anything, that wouldn’t make it through.  And of course a horse wouldn’t have the food, because it couldn’t live off the forest.

So here at the museum, everybody is happy we’ve got the Four Seasons Room, because we’ve preserved how the Ojibwe really used to live back in the old days.  We also show a lot of artifacts here, like beadwork and bandoleer bags.  There are sections about the dancers, and on our veterans.  And we have lots of workshops, like how to make moccasins or snowshoes or bows and arrows.  We get people from all places who come to these workshops, but I wish more local people would come.

Also, I got calls everyday at the museum about what Ojibwe words mean.  People across the state want to name something, and they want to know what it means in Ojibwe.  A lot of people want their boats to have Ojibwe names.

A lot of visitors to the museum from Europe and the Far East have seen TV shows that depict all Indians in war bonnets, hooting and hollering.  But we don’t live in the past.  We live in homes, and we have water and sewers and paved roads and running water and electricity.  It’s pretty hard to find a wigwam on the reservation today!

I’ve met a lot of people from different cultures here at the museum.  I talk to them about their culture, and we’re amazed that our people kind of lived the same way.  For example, the Laplanders stay up in the mountains during the summer and come down in the valley in the winter, kind of like the Ojibwe traveled with the seasons.  And a visitor from either New Guinea or Uruguay said they have houses like our wigwams, only they used palm leaves.  I’ve learned that cultures can be similar in many ways.