**Ken Weyaus Sr Traditional Roles in Ojibwe Society**

Men, women and children all had their roles in traditional Ojibwe society.  The men’s main role was as the providers for the family.  Men hunted, got the food, and brought the food home.

Stories I have heard tell of some men stalking a deer for days trying to get close enough to kill it.  Today, you can shoot a bow and arrow from 100 or 200 yards away.  But back then, hunters had to get very close to an animal.  They just had spears, and you could only throw that spear about 5 to 10 feet.  Or else you could sneak up to the animals, get very close, and stab them.

Men learned different ways to hunt from their fathers and grandfathers.  They also learned to use a sweat lodge to purify themselves.  That way, they wouldn’t have a human smell on them, and they could sneak up on the animal.

Men were also the protectors of the camp.  They stood guard and noticed if someone was entering their territory, trying to raid their camp.  There are a few stories about being raided.  One story talks about when the Ojibwe attended a treaty gathering in Prairie du Chien.  When they were at the treaty talks, they were friendly with the Sioux.  But when they were coming home, they got attacked.  That was one time they weren’t in a defensive mode, but most of the time they were in that defensive mode, guarding the village.

When the men hunted and brought home the animals, then it would be the women’s job to cure the meat, tan the hide, and use whatever bones they needed.  The whole animal was used, and they used the bones in all kinds of ways.  For example, the shoulder of the deer was used as a hoe for their cornfields or their squash.  I think the bones of the deer were also used to make games, like the hoof game.

The men would cut wood that the women needed to do their work.  Today, when we get ready for winter, we stockpile a lot of wood.  Back then, they didn’t do that, because they knew that sometimes they wouldn’t stay in one place – their winter camps wouldn’t be a permanent settlement.  If a war party sighted something, they would come to camp and say it’s time to move.  It would be a waste to leave wood stockpiled.  So they would cut wood every day for the fire for that night.

The Ojibwe were always good conservationists like this.  Because if you cut a lot of wood and stockpile it for the winter and then you happen to leave, you cut that wood for nothing.  They just cut what they needed, and they didn’t waste anything.

Children’s traditional role in society was to listen to what they were taught so they would remember it once they grew up, because there were no books back then on how things were done.  The boys were taught how to gut and field dress a deer, and the girls were shown how to preserve the meat, tan the hide, and make clothing from the hide.  They were taught in a hands-on way so they didn’t forget.

Children were also taught to respect everything – the animals, the plants, their Elders, everybody.  How you raise your child is how he is going to grow up.  If you taught him well, taught him to respect everything, he remembers that.