**Lee Staples Spirituality Part II**

In my last column, I wrote about spirituality in terms of our relationships to other people.  This time, I’d like to concentrate on our relationship with the powers in the environment or universe that are greater than us, as it was taught to me.

We are taught that each and every one of us would not exist on this earth without a power or spirit watching over us.  We are told to be mindful of this and to treat each other respectfully, because to do damage to another person would be comparable to doing direct damage to the power or spirit watching over that person.

We have to pattern our lives to the best of our ability after those manidoog or spirits that we rely on to assist us as a people.  These spirits only know what is good – compassion, kindness, caring and love.  That is what we have to strive for in our lives.

If we take a look at Anishinaabe life as it was years ago, we can see that the Anishinaabe were given a built-in daily spiritual program.  For their dwellings, they had wigwams.  Spirituality played an important role in the construction of these wigwams.  As the people picked the small trees such as ironwood to use as rafters for the outline of these wigwams, they stopped to acknowledge the spirit or power within those trees.  They offered their tobacco and gratitude for the availability of these trees to be used in this way.

If it was birch bark they decided to use as covering for the wigwam, again they acknowledged a power greater than themselves – that of a birch tree.  For a siding to the wigwam, if it was the broad leaf reeds that they wanted to use, an offering would go to the spirit within the lake from which these reeds were gathered.  For the bulrushes used as mats in these wigwams, again they did their offering.  Living in these wigwams also further enhanced their relationship to the environment, because they were able to hear all the noises from the wild daily and nightly.

The list could go on and on pointing to the many times the Anishinaabe acknowledged those powers greater than themselves.  They did so as they gathered the food to feed themselves and others in the community, as they gathered the medicinal herbs, and as they went about their seasonal activities of the wild rice harvest, tapping trees for the maple syrup, and berry picking.  The spiritual relationship that the Anishinaabe had to the environment and others was one of great depth, in which they constantly acknowledged their teachings throughout the day.

I encourage other Anishinaabe and all people to acknowledge and offer their respect to the powers in the environment and the universe while doing their very best to treat others with the utmost respect.  Doing this as often as possible on a daily basis can only bring a peaceful feeling to your spirit.