**Leonard Sam Hunting: an Important Way of Life**

I started hunting with my dad when I was very young.  At that time, I didn’t have my own gun, so I tagged along like a puppy dog.  When I finally got a gun, my mom would buy me shells and I would burn them up.  Hunting started to grow on me.  “I would hate to be an animal in the woods, son, because you kill everything,” my mom used to say.

As I got older, I would hunt with my brother Earl.  We had a lot of good times together.  Once we were out hunting and Earl shot a deer.  We started to approach, and Earl said not to get too close to the deer because they kick hard.  Suddenly I heard a thump.  Earl’s son Geno got too close to the deer and the deer knocked Geno down.  I still remember that moment when I’m out in the woods today.

As I got older, I started to hunt by myself and eventually got very experienced.  Back then, hunting deer and other animals was a way of life.  We grew up in the woods and did a lot of hunting and trapping.  I used to have my own trap line.  I would always do trapping before I went to school.  Back then, we didn’t have a lot of time to sit around or play.  We had to haul water, chop wood, and work hard.  We didn’t have much money, so hunting and trapping were ways to add to our income.  Mostly, we trapped weasels, muskrat or mink.

Now, under the Treaty of 1837, I hunt a lot on the treaty lands in Minnesota and Wisconsin.  These are open to all Band members once they get a hunting license.  I usually hunt with about six to eight guys.  Hunting with a larger group is difficult.  It’s going to be hard for me to slow down, and right now I try to get out to the woods as much as I can.  It feels good, and I don’t make hunting hard on myself.  Sometimes I get my four-wheeler and go by myself.  Often I hunt and give the animals to other people.  As always, I put out tobacco and say a prayer before hunting or fishing.

I also hunt with my kids and other kids who don’t have the opportunity to hunt with their dads. We hunt hard, sometimes from morning till night, and it’s a good group effort.  I took my kids hunting individually until they got old enough to hunt alone.  When I see my kids hunting, it’s great to be able to say I taught someone new skills.  They look to me to lead them and it makes me proud.