**Loretta Kegg-Kalk Growing Up with Traditions**

I was born the second-youngest of 11 children, and raised on Shawbushkung Point in District I of the Mille Lacs Reservation (where the powwow grounds are located today).  The main village of the reservation was on the next point over, called Indian Point.  We lived on the outskirts of it.  When they had ceremonial powwows on the reservation, we could hear the drums all around the lake.  My dad was involved in the big drum, and he and my brothers went to the ceremonial powwows.  The rest of us went down to the lake and listened to the drums.  The sound carried so beautifully across the water.

Both my mother and father were very traditional people.  My dad, Martin Kegg, could speak some English, but not much.  My mother, Maude Kegg, could read and write some English.  I heard more Ojibwe than English, so I never forgot it.  I can still speak it fluently today.

Growing up, my mother tried to keep me in the house and teach me how to cook and do the things girls are “supposed” to do.  But I was more the outside type.  My older sister, Betty, was the inside girl.  She was the one who was inside cooking and cleaning.  I followed my dad and brothers in the woods.  They were always hunting, fishing, ricing and trapping.  I guess that’s where I got my hunting and fishing skills, which I later helped teach my sons.

During ricing season, they would gather the rice and cook it in big kettles.  After it cooled, they put it in another big pot.  They told us that the youngest or the lightest one had to jig (dance) on it, because they wouldn’t crush it.  I found out years later that this was just a way to get the kids involved and help their parents.  Even when we were little, we were always helping out.

After ricing season was done, we took our annual trip into town to buy school clothes.  My mom would flag down a Greyhound bus and take us to Aitkin.  My mom would buy shoes, coats, material and thread.  Then we’d take the bus back home in the evening – that was a big trip.  Only going into town once a year, I didn’t know that people were different.  I had no idea that we were from the reservation.

I went to school in Onamia and had to fight my way through, because I was from the reservation.  I learned what racism is when I was in seventh grade.  If my brother was picked on while riding the school bus, I was the one who stuck up for him.

When I grew up, I got married and moved to Anoka.  I lived there for about 12 years.  My husband passed away in 1972, and I decided to move back to the reservation with my five boys.  They were pretty young – my oldest was 11 years old and my youngest was four – so we moved in with my mother in a two-bedroom house on the reservation.  We had a lot of memories in that house.

My father had passed away several years before I moved back, so it was always me, the boys, and my mother.  I have to give credit to my mother, because she was the one who kept us together.  As busy as my mother was, she always had time for the boys.  She would walk down to the lake and take them fishing.  She helped raise my boys.  She was a magnificent woman.