

Strong Chippewa
By Luisa Gonzalez-Rivera

As the day grows older, as I grow older and wiser in my years, I've learned to thrive. These words make me realize that all through history my kind survived hardship from the white race. Even from taking our treasures and putting us on reservations, we still stand strong. There were weak points once but the fact is that our historic battles made us the mighty warriors that we are today. Mostly I figured out that being a young person today we face the same road blocks as our ancestors. I believe that could change by getting to the top of the system and I believe this will lead to greatness and unity as people.

Now when it comes to my nation's history, I believe we have the most fascinating culture. Our name, *Chippewa*, came from the way we make our moccasins, which was a "puckered design," and the word *Annihilable* means the "original man." We are also part of the Algonquian people. The Potawatomi, Ottawa, Cree, and Chippewa tribes are the people that make the Algonquian nation (Dens more). Also the people back then were very organized; everyone always had a job to do during the day and at night nothing was left undone say Nominees (Dens more). Every family member had a specific job to do during the day; either it was cooking, weaving, building, racing, or trapping. The Chippewa tribes were mostly timber and trapping people.

One of the highlights in my reservation's history was when we were battling with the Sioux at Battle River. I remember when I was little my cousin's husband told me how the story went. All the women and children were hidden while all the men went and fought for our territory and won. That's how we got the name of the lake, Red Lake; because it was the bloodiest battle we'd had driving the Sioux out of our territory. At one time before this, we controlled all of Michigan, Northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Turtle Mountains of North Dakota (Dens more).

What I plan to do in the future is to get into the government's system. The only reason I

want to do this is because many people believe natives can't do this kind of work. When my dream does happen I know for sure that people around me will know I have broken the gate to the road to success and I will help many of my people to believe that they also can have the drive to do the same. I know there are many road blocks to do this job but I believe I have that drive to succeed. Since I've chosen this path I have brought light where people now think the youth has gone into darkness. I also believe I am part of the seventh prophet onto "relighting the old flames" (Benton-Bandai) and starting the path to greatness and unity.

Thinking of my future made me realize that the people who have helped me become who I am today are my elders. Elders are the people that helped me build my identity as a Native American. They've taught me the way of life, the dos and don'ts, and some of my language. Our elders made the language "the heart and soul of Indian culture," said Albert White hat in "Listening to the Elders." My elders to me are the most sacred people. I dare not cross them because they are wiser and wittier than me. The one major rule they've taught me was to respect everything around me and good things will happen. Even though some people don't respect our elders or anything else, they will soon learn it's just a matter of time.

As a result of this I've learned a couple or new things: like knowing all the seven prophets and how they were foretold and also learning that my tribe was a dominant native nation that is still going strong to this day. It is very good to know that I am part of only one of two nations that are closed reservations in the United States. We are strong and our nations will lead to greatness and unity for our youth so they can be mighty warriors forever. And finally the elders and youth are the backbone of our sovereign nation; we need to keep our heads up high and lead!

Works Cited

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