

Life on the Red Lake Indian Reservation

By Ryan Auginash

Living on the Red Lake Indian Reservation has been both good and not so good at times. As a young boy my late grandfather Mckinley Auginash taught all his sons and grandson's how to hunt, fish, trap, cut wood, plant gardens, pick wild berries and make maple sugar. I have many fond memories of the times when we did the maple sugar camp with my uncles, cousins and friends. This past 2006 maple sugar camp was a very great year with the maple trees producing several jars of maple syrup. The first step to maple sugar camp starts in late March. We go out to the Auginash maple sugar camp out on Nebish Road and place taps and cans on the maple trees. We then go out each day and check the trees to see how much sap they are producing. When we get at least 40 gallons of sap we can begin the boiling process over an open fire. We haul our own fire wood or we just cut and split wood nearby for the fire. We get a lot of visitors while we are doing the maple sugar camp. They usually want to see how we make maple syrup and sugar cakes and usually end up helping us collect the sap. This past maple sugar season we had a least 150 cans to collect. A lot of students from Red Lake Elementary, Red Lake Middle School and Red Lake High School came out to our camp this 2006 year. It was a great learning experience for every one who came out to the Auginash maple sugar bush. I especially enjoyed being out in the fresh air and not having any noise such as TVs, radios or other distractions. It was just me and my uncles, cousins, friends out there at the maple sugar camp – some times we boiled the sap until after midnight! We finished our 2006 maple sugar bush just a few days ago on April 12, 2006.

Now the 2006 spearing for northern pike has started. This is another thing my late grandfather taught my uncles. And now my uncles taught me how to spear northern pike and how to clean them and put them away for a fish dinner. I speared a big northern just yesterday April 11, 2006. Fishing on Red Lake for the famous Red Lake Walleye has been on hold for several years now. Red Lake was over fished by commercial fisherman. On May 6, 2006 Red Lake Tribal members will be able to go out and fish for walleye again. The daily limit is going to be 10 walleye per fisherman. The reopening of fishing on Red Lake is probably

going to be a day to celebrate by many tribal members. I know my family will probably have a nice big fish fry with lots of great food, desserts, and beverages to celebrate the reopening of fishing for walleye on Red Lake.

Deer hunting season begins in September usually after the does had their young fawns and are grown a little by now. I shot my first deer at 11 years old when I was along with my uncle. We were out shining one night in the fall and it was my turn to shoot. I shot the deer and learned how to gut it with a sharp hunting knife. I was told I could not eat the first deer that I killed according to Ojibwa Indian customs. I killed a few other deer and was able to enjoy the venison. These are some of my good memories of living on the rez.

My not so good memory happened at Red Lake High School on Monday, March 21, 2005. I consider myself very fortunate to be alive today and am grateful to be here to enjoy the things I have wrote about. I was featured in the March 21, 2006 issue of *USA Today*. I told of being wounded and described how it felt to have been shot in the chest. I did not know if I was going to live or die that day. I also remember helping my teacher Carol Larson up from the ground after she slipped on ice while trying to escape from the shooter. I was wounded and in a lot of physical pain and bleeding and seen her fall, and nobody would help her. So I stopped and pulled her up and gave her a shove so she could run to safety. Then I ran, I felt like giving up and just wanted to lie down because my side hurt so terrible. I just kept running until someone helped me to safety. I sat down behind a conservation truck and it seemed like a very long time for an ambulance to get me to the Red Lake Hospital. I said, out loud "Pray for me!" I also asked am "I going to die?" While I was in the emergency room at the Red Lake Hospital, I kept asking for my mother. I was then transferred by ambulance to North Country Regional Hospital in Bemidji, Minnesota. I was taken to the emergency room and the surgeon placed a chest tube in me and I was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit for 3 days and then down to the second floor. I had many visitors and well wishers from all over the place. Two of my former teachers came to visit me. One drove from Wisconsin and the other from Fargo, ND. My recovery from this horrific event has been difficult. I went to a substance abuse treatment facility for

45 days called Four Winds Aroura in Brainerd, MN. I graduated from the program. I also had some private counseling. I have a scar on my chest and back from the .40 glock bullet wound. I also have about roughly 18 to 20 small fragments still embedded in my right lung and will have to live like that the rest of my life. I am starting to enjoy doing things once again. I especially enjoy the outdoors here on the Red Lake Indian Reservation. I plan to graduate from high school and go on to college in the future. I either want to get a degree or get a trade and work as an x-ray technician for a hospital. I also like music! I am grateful to have survived the Red Lake High School tragedy on March 21, 2005.