Stories of our Elders

By Youth of the Mohican Nation
STORIES OF OUR ELDERS

by

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1999
DEDICATED
TO OUR
MOHICAN ELDERS
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The elders in our community hold a treasure chest of stories. Over the years, individuals in families have been collecting these stories in notebooks and with tape recorders. Some of the Woodland Writers, a group which originated in our community, are writing books for children using stories told by their grandparents. A few of the elders have had their recollections printed in the Elderly Stream and Mohican News.

From our elders we are learning our family histories and tribal history. We know that there is so much more that we can learn. Perhaps that is why some of us on the Historical Committee had the idea of having a workshop for the elders where they would begin to write their own stories. A Woodland Writer consultant who had just published her own memoirs indicated she'd like to work with the elders.

It so happened that when we approached the elders with this idea, they were less than enthusiastic. We caught on that they did not perceive themselves as writers and were perhaps a little afraid to record their lives on paper. Remembering that the elders had met with the young people in our community and had talked to high school students in their classes, we had another idea. Could we involve the youth in the Summer Work Program? They could be taught skills in gathering stories, then go out and visit the elders. It seemed to us like a very positive and constructive kind of summer project. All we had to do was make the idea a reality! We discovered that indeed, as it takes a whole village to raise a child, it takes a whole community to write a book!

We would like to thank the community for making this book possible. The Mohican Nation (Stockbridge-Munsee) Historical Committee urged and encouraged us to continue gathering stories from our elders. The Mohican Nation provided the funds to the Library Museum. Ruth Gudinas gathered the scattered suggestions, organized, and implemented the project. Beatrice Ganley provided inspiration and instruction in creative writing to the young people who participated in the project. Shannon Miller,
Director of the JTPA Program, provided help and supervision. Theresa Puskarenko, Director of Education and Cultural Affairs, lent departmental support to the project, and Gary Ehman, Communications Department, did the layout and provided technical assistance.

Our gratitude also to the following for their generous cooperation and assistance:

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Full Circle, p. 1.

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INTRODUCTION

Besides entertaining us, stories can instruct us, inspire us, and pass on our culture. I can think of no better way to demonstrate this than by telling a story.

When we were kids, my dad used to save all his change in a big jar. Every night he'd come home and empty his pocket into the jar. A couple of weeks before Christmas, the jar would be full of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. We would roll the coins in wrappers and divide them among the kids, so we could buy each other Christmas presents. The first time we did this, we asked for more change so we could divide the money evenly.

My dad made us put some change back and divide it that way. He said we had to leave some for “seed” anyway. Now, we were living in the city, so I had to ask him what “seed” was. He explained that his father taught him that you should not take all of anything. You had to leave some so it would grow again. Every year after that, we'd leave some money in the jar for next year’s Christmas presents.

I hope that these stories of our elders, gathered by our youth, will at least entertain you. But maybe, like my children, you will also learn something, and leave some seed money in your change jar.

Theresa Puskarenko
Director, Department of Education and Cultural Affairs
Mohican Nation
In 1998 the JTPA students had to do a project with the elders: to go to their houses and collect stories from their past about how they lived, where they worked, and what they did. The seventh of July was the first day that we set out for an adventure that we were ill prepared for. I was driven to Cille's house, wondering how this project would turn out. Questions raced through my mind. I had known Cille for a while and was unsure how I would get the stories, but it worked out very well.

The first story that I heard was when Cille, her mother, her daughter Jayne, and her son Grumpy all went to pick blackberries. Cille's mother was wearing heels that day. Cille put the kids behind a fallen tree. They had hardly gotten there when Cille's mother told them to get to the car and told the children not to cry out or look back. Cille wondered what her mother had seen and how many berries they were leaving, so she looked where the kids had been and saw a huge bear with its mouth wide open, eating berries. Then she and the others got into the car. When they got home, they noticed that Cille's mother had no heels on her shoes.

Another story was about how Cille became such a good pie maker. When she was about ten years old, she wanted to make pies, but her mom wouldn't let her. When her mom was gone, she asked her dad. He said that she could. She went into the kitchen and started to make pies. She used a big tub-like thing, so when she got done, she ended up with about ten pies. Her mother came home and asked who had made all the pies. Cille said that she had. Then her mother said that she would not make another pie, and she never did. Cille made them from then on.

The last three are short stories. The first one was about when Cille's cousin was in an accident. She was hit by two trucks down on the bridge by the park. The church group went outside to see what had happened. She was unhurt. People said, "The Lord must have been with her." Cille's cousin replied, "He wasn't anywhere around." She thought the people had said "Loren," not "Lord."

The other one was about when Cille's uncle broke his leg. He wanted Cille's cousin to move it for him, so she picked it up and moved it but didn't put it down. When he said to put it down, she just dropped it and it hit the ground. He was all right. It didn't break anything.

The last story was about when Cille broke her foot. She had fallen down
and two girls were with her. She asked them to help her up. The first one put her hands on her hips and said, "I'm not helping you up." The other one helped her up. Cille just thought it was funny how the other girl didn't want to help her.

We, not exactly understanding why we were doing this, were blown away half blind into the life and times of the elders. Eventually, we understood what was going on with the help of many talks and interviews. We interviewed more than fifteen elders and collected the stories in a week's time.

Selena Fluhr

We came to Priscilla's house to extract the intricate detail that brings her into being. We felt fear wrapped with apprehension about not asking the right questions, or maybe in the least the possibility of sheer boredom. We felt a fear that things her into being. We felt fear.

Priscilla was born on June 3, 1917, in Shawano County. She was born to an enrolled Stockbridge mother and a German father. The family consisted of four brothers and three sisters.

Priscilla attended the Lutheran Mission School in Red Springs, Wisconsin. She enjoyed the school because of the stories in a week's time.

Selena Fluhr

"I thought it was funny to help her up. Cille just thought it was funny. I thought it was funny how the other girl didn't want to help her up."
Lutheran religion and stayed in the dormitories right on the mission campus. To her, the dormitories were like home. After the cook was done cooking, they dished out their own food, and after meals everyone washed their own dishes. Her good friends from the mission school were Bernice Pigeon and Lucille Miller who are still her good friends today.

After school, Priscilla worked for a farmer’s wife in Red Springs. Her duties included washing dishes and helping cook. She was eleven years old then.

When Priscilla was twelve, tragedy struck her family. Her mother was lighting their kerosine stove when it backfired and her mother was engulfed in flames. While Priscilla and her father were trying to extinguish the fire, they caught fire on their arms. Her mother died before reaching their outdoor water pump. She was only thirty-five years old.

Years later, Priscilla went to a baseball game where she met a dear man by the name of George Church. But everyone called him Elmer. On July 12, 1936, they were united in marriage. Due to the Depression, they didn’t have a big wedding, and because of differences in religion, they couldn’t get married at each other’s church, so they went to the Lutheran mission parsonage in Red Springs to be married. On July 12, 1998, they would have been married 62 years.

During the Depression it was extremely hard to keep a job. To build a house they had to use whatever came to them, so they used stone. Elmer built their current house out of stone.

Later that year Elmer and Priscilla moved to Milwaukee where she worked in a dry cleaning service. After about ten years, they were blessed with six beautiful children — three girls, Verlie, Verona, and Verna (also called “Puggy”) and three boys, Rick, Rodney (also called “Butch”) and Vern (also called “Bun”). “Being a mother is great,” says Priscilla, “but back then I was so young that I felt like I was growing up with them!”

After their children grew up and graduated from high school, Priscilla and Elmer lived alone until 1986. That year their daughter Puggy died of cancer at the age of forty. She left behind two children — Dave, sixteen and Keri, eleven — who lived for a short time with their Aunt Verlie. But then Elmer and Priscilla weren’t alone anymore because their grandchildren came to live with them. At eleven, Keri was the same age as Priscilla was when her mother had died. It was hard for Keri.

After the grandchildren grew up and graduated from high school, still living in their stone house, Priscilla grew a love for cookie jars. She soon had a large collection of such jars, such as Scooby Doo, Puss ‘n’ Boots, and Noah’s Ark. After having such a large collection sitting on her shelf, she decided to sell the jars. She sold all of the jars for $1000.
In 1994, tragedy struck again when her daughter Verona died of Alzheimer's disease at the age of fifty-five. She left behind a husband, Dennis, Sr. and a son, Dennis, Jr. This was the second daughter that Priscilla had lost.

In mid-1996, Elmer grew sicker and was confined to a wheelchair. Priscilla was worried. On February 5, 1998, Elmer died. Priscilla was all alone.

After Elmer died, that large shelf that once held the cookie jar collection now holds her pictures, memories of her mother, her children, her grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and her husband. Elmer now holds her pictures, memories of her mother, her children, her grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and her husband.

Thank you, Priscilla, for your time. It was well worth it.

The trials this woman had to endure is something that left us in awe. The trials this woman had to endure is something that left us in awe.

Trisha Williams and Dan Terrio
Teaspoon Davids lived in Milwaukee most of his life. He said that when he lived in Milwaukee, he didn't think of himself as Native American but thought of himself as German or Polish because there were no Indians who went to his school but his cousin and him.

In 1946, when Teaspoon was out of the army, he went to Grosskopf's for a dance. He asked his cousin, "Who is that girl?" His cousin said, "Pat Tousey." He didn't know he would be marrying her in five years.

Before and during the war, Teaspoon and his family didn't have much money because his dad had trouble finding jobs. He didn't mind being poor because back then everyone was poor. After the war was over, everyone had some money saved up from during the war and they started buying farming tractors.

One Christmas morning when he was about five, he remembers waking up and getting presents. They weren't new presents; they were used things, but he didn't care. When he was about seven, his mom tried telling him there was no Santa, but he didn't believe her. He didn't know why she was telling him that, but now he understands that it was because his parents didn't have enough money to buy them presents.

I thought it was fun being at Teaspoon's house talking to him.

Chachi Mendez
RUTH PETERS

Our interview was with Ruth Peters. She had some nice stories to tell.

When she was younger, she hoped to be in show business. She and her brother had a chance to go to a radio station in Marinette to try out for a big break. Ruth sang mainly country music, like "You Are My Sunshine," "Cowboy's Heaven," and "Down in the Valley." Her brother's girlfriend called and asked him to come by her in Oneida, so he left. There Ruth was, stuck in Red Springs with no partner to sing with. So she forgot about the idea of show business.

When Ruth was twelve, she started playing an old pump organ at her grandpa's house. Now Ruth plays the piano every Sunday morning at the Bible Church. She is very good at it, too.

As a young girl, Ruth never got to have a birthday party because they were too poor. She says that one of her favorite holidays is the Fourth of July because of all the parades and the bands. They always have homemade bread, commerates, sweet potatoes, and sometimes chicken. They usually ate ham on Easter Day, also. On Thanksgiving, they had baked chicken and ham. They raised turkeys, so they could have roasted chicken and ham. They never ate pie because of all the parades and the bands. On Christmas and the Fourth of July because of the Fourth of July food. She is very good at the piano. When Ruth was twelve, she started playing an old pump organ at her grandma's house. Now Ruth plays the piano every Sunday morning at the Bible Church. She is very good at it, too.

Our interview was with Ruth Peters. She had some nice stories to tell.
Faye Church lived in Janesville most of her childhood. Born nearsighted, at the age of three-and-a-half she became completely blind. At the age of seven she attended a school called The Wisconsin School for the Blind.

The fact that Faye was blind didn't stop her from having fun as a child. There were about fifteen to thirty kids called The River Street Gang because they lived on River Street. They made a rule, of course, that you couldn't go across the street, and they always had to stay on their corner. They could hide anywhere they wanted but couldn't go in the house. Goal was always a street lamp. Sometimes they would hide behind a tree close to the goal, but that didn't work too well because the trees weren't big enough to hide behind. They would also try to hide behind cars and lie on the ground so that they couldn't be seen. They had some crazy places to play, like a wood pile which they would lie behind.

One time Faye and some friends were playing tag. Usually, she would make it to the goal without much problem. This time, however, Faye went running, trying to beat the person who was supposed to find them. She made it all right — she ran right into the pole! Faye had to sit for a time out to revive and had a lump on her head for a couple of days, but that was all.

Faye's favorite teacher was Miss Carlyle, her third grade teacher. There was a lot of prejudice at the school she attended, but Miss Carlyle was very, very nice to Faye. Any time Faye had a problem, no matter when or where it was, Miss Carlyle always came. She would hold Faye on her lap, talk to her, and stuff like that. Miss Carlyle understood things. During the spring of that year, Miss Carlyle got sick and died. Faye had a hard time with that. She felt as if her mother had died.

Many years later, Garth Tousey asked Faye to go into town with him to get something to eat. She said, "Okay," and got into the car. They started down to Gresham and they couldn't find any restaurants, so they decided to go over to Bowler. The sun had not been shining, but while crossing County A, all of a sudden it came out and blinded Garth. He swerved off onto another road to get out of the sun, but it had kind of disoriented him. He hit the shoulder, and it pulled him into the ditch where they hit a rock when they were going maybe forty or fifty miles per hour.

Hitting the rock messed up Faye's right heel quite a bit. The bone
connected to the tendon sheered off and moved that piece right into her leg. She had to have surgery on it. The doctors had to pull that piece back down and pin it to make it stay where it belonged. The other side of Faye's heel was crushed. She had to get it reshaped and couldn't do much of anything with it. The doctors gave her casts of all sorts which she wore for about three months. They were the type you could take off, though. Back in the old days there were casts made of plaster of Paris, and those you couldn't take off. This was the one accident when Faye got injured the most.

Visiting the elders was a great experience, and it was fun. Faye, being blind and having a blind brother and sister — that was amazing! I liked the experience, and I know the elders liked the company of the blind and having a blind brother and sister — that was amazing! Joanna Miller

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Pat Davids was raised on the Stockbridge Reservation along with her three brothers, five sisters, and her father and mother. She lived in a shack that her dad built for his family on Mick's Road. They had to sleep on beds made of straw and pump their water from a hand pump well. They ran their farm for money and food.

We wondered what they did while not working, not having any electricity to watch TV. She responded by saying that they went swimming at Besaw's in the summer, and in the winter they went sledding in the park. She had to walk to school in the summer months, and in the winter months she got a ride from her school bus.

In 1949, when she was a teenager, she went to a dance at Grosskopf's. There she met Teaspoon. Two years later they were married. They lived in Milwaukee and had six kids, three boys and three girls. In the summer they came to the reservation of Stockbridge.

After living thirty-one years in Milwaukee, she decided to come back to the reservation after all of her children had gone to college. Ever since then, she has been growing things on her farm.

This experience with the elders was fun. I liked the way they smiled because we had come to talk to them.

Tony Malone and Travis Miller
Today I interviewed Roger Cuish. He has lived on the reservation all of his life. His main job was cutting the gun powder, working with artillery, and setting up bombs.

Then he went in the service for two years in Germany. His main job was cutting the gun powder, working with artillery, and setting up bombs.

Roger’s first job was working in the woods. Later he had his own gas station where evergreen trees now. He says that the roads were all full of grass.

His biggest role model was Hank Aaron. Roger would go across the street and listen to the Milwaukee Brewers games on the radio with his grandpa. For his dates, he would go to the movies and go to dance clubs.

At the age of fourteen, he started driving and bought his own car for money. He roller skated down the street.

Roger would go across the street to feed the cows, and they had to get water from across the street.

He remembers from during the Depression the big dust storm that came all the way from Oklahoma. They had to cut leaves off the trees in order to feed the cows. They had to cut leaves off the trees in order to feed the cows.

Roger’s mother told him that he was a houseware and did much of the cooking — raised two cows and a pig for meat. His mother lowered chickens. He has three sisters. His father ran a school. His parents’ names are Edam Cush and Louise Cush. He went to Bowler School. His parents’ names are Edam Cush and Louise Cush.
After he left the service, he worked for the phone company in Clintonville. He worked there for twenty-eight years, then retired. He says that they didn't have pow-wows up here when he was a kid, but up at Menominee and Oneida they had some. To close this, I'd like to say that I really enjoyed working with the elders and learning more about the place where I live. I now realize how much our elders mean to the community, and how we need to respect everything because it won't be here long.

Amanda Miller

ELNA PFANNERSTILL

Elna spent many years working in Milwaukee. One of her first jobs was at the J.C. Penney warehouse where she says, "They worked the heck out of us." They were constantly on the run — stooping, bending, carrying things in order to fill the catalog orders. They had no union. If a person worked fast and was able to fill a large quota of orders in a short time, instead of being rewarded with a bonus or some time off, they were just given more work to do and were expected to keep up that pace.

Elna also spent some time at Komar laboratories, a firm that manufactured cosmetics and personal care products. One thing most people don't know, she says, is that it hardly matters what brand of cosmetic you buy — Revlon, Avon, whatever. These companies purchase products from Komar and simply put their label on them. No matter what brand you buy, you're getting the same thing.

Her best early work experience was at Allen Bradley Electronics where they had a union. The pay was good and the working conditions were better too.

Elna's most interesting job was tending bar in a restaurant across from a hospital in Milwaukee. Being a bartender involves more than mixing drinks, filling glasses, and wiping the bar. She had to go to school for several weeks where they learned the skills needed to deal with situations that might arise in the course of their work. They would be given imaginary situations that might be challenging. Then they would role-play
so that they could practice how to handle problems, such as refusing to serve a person who had too much to drink or calling the police to prevent an argument from becoming a dangerous fight.

Most people who came to the bar were construction workers — masons, carpenters, plumbers, and the like. "They'd work all day," she says, "then come in and 'work' the bar stool for several hours." She recalls in particular one man, a mason from Germany. At the beginning of the evening he was usually very cordial and polite, but as he consumed more drinks, he would begin to get obnoxious. Often溰ing the stairs he would mumble "You Indians..." or "You uncultured people." He would begin to get obnoxious. One evening he started harassing Elna. "You Indians," he said, "where would you be without us? We brought you civilization, all kinds of good things." He went on and on like this.

Finally, Elna had heard enough. "Look," she said, "we were just fine, thank you, before you arrived. We had none of the diseases that you brought with you. You arrived, then you left." She refused to serve him any more drinks and told him that he'd better go home.

I learned a lot about the life of a hard-working woman during my visit with Elna Pfannerstill. She learned a lot about people in her work as a bartender.

Beatrice Ganley
LEONARD (MR. BINGO) WELCH

We interviewed Leonard Welch. He was born January 21, 1938. He attended the mission school.
Leonard got the name Mr. Bingo from working at the Stockbridge Bingo Hall. He was the first caller ever to call at the Stockbridge Bingo Hall. He usually sold two to three more sheets than anybody else, so, of course, he had two to three more winners than anybody else. After a time, people started calling him "Mr. Bingo." They thought he was lucky, so they took pictures of him and wanted him to touch their bingo sheets. Soon people from Milwaukee to Wausau knew him as Mr. Bingo.
In 1987 Leonard opened a restaurant and called it "Mr. Bingo's." In 1993, the restaurant burned out, but Mr. Bingo fixed it back up again. Overall, the interview was quite interesting, especially the lemonade and cookies he served us while we were there.

Sterling Schreiber and Donavan Malone
HAZEL KRUEGER

Hazel lives at the Ella Besaw Center. She is eighty-five years old and hopes to be moving back to her house in Morgan.

She has lived a very hard life. When she was two-and-a-half, her mother died while giving birth to her sister. Later, her father died while cutting hay by hand. Hazel is the only one left of her family.

Hazel had two brothers and a sister. She attended the mission school for a while. Then her uncle told her to go to Tocmah Indian School. She only went up to eighth grade, and a few years later got married. She didn't have any real kids of her own, but she adopted two boys named Jerry and Charles. One of them lives in Pennsylvania and the other in Oneida. Her son from Pennsylvania wrote her and sent her his number. She waited one month to call. When she did call, nobody knew who she was talking about. She says that she has a feeling that he is dead.

She went to the doctor a year ago, and he said that she was going blind. Although she can see where she's walking, she can't read. That's one of the things I did with her while we were visiting.

As I was talking to Hazel, I realized how much love the elders need, and how special it is to have visitors. I told her I'd continue my visits with her even after this program. She's eighty-five, and you never know when they will go. I hope I can learn more about how she's related to me.

Amanda Miller

REGGIE MILLER

Reggie Miller was born July 25, 1918, in Gresham, Wisconsin. Reggie is an only child. His mom was a school teacher and graduated from Stevens Point. His dad went to an Indian school. It was hard because they had no money. They had to raise their own food on their own little farm where they raised cows, pigs, and chickens.

Reggie attended the Lutheran mission school in Red Springs, Wisconsin. He attended as a day student. Reggie said, "It was like any other school,
just more religion added to our studies." Some of Reggie's friends were Roland Miller, Irene Hall, Chuck Hall, and Cille Miller.

After two years, he left and attended Gresham High School. He graduated in 1933. Then he went to Shawano High School during the week and came home on weekends.

He married Beatrice Fairbanks who was a Chippewa Indian from White Earth, Minnesota. They met in Arizona where they both worked at Keams Canyon. He worked in the office, and his wife worked as an RN (nurse). Right after they were married, they enrolled in the army as medical assistants. Soon after this, they had three children. Reggie said, "Being a father was fun because we lived all over the United States." Reggie's most memorable moment was when he and his wife got married. "But, life is full of beautiful moments," said Reggie.

Reggie enjoyed being chairman of the tribe. It made him feel that people trusted him, and he enjoyed working with new people.

His advice to kids is, "Study, 'cause you can't quit high school. You won't get nowhere."

Trisha Williams and Danny Terrio

VIRGINIA JOHNSON

We like to listen to our Grandma Gin tell stories because they're funny and interesting. We're going to tell you about a story she told us about herself and some of our uncles and aunts.

One time our Grandpa Johnson needed some Marlight, which was some wallboard. So our grandma took Grandpa to work, then took her son, daughter, and granddaughter to Shawano. They got the wallboard, tied it to the top of the car, and Grandma had her son drive.

On their way home, the wallboard started to slip off the car, and they had to keep on stopping on the way to fix it. So finally her son got so put out with it he said he was going to lie on top of it. But her daughter and granddaughter didn't have a license, so Grandma was stuck driving the car. She started to drive, but, since she never drove much, it was different for her.

After a while she started to like driving, forgetting that her son was on top of the car. Her son started to shout at her and said "I can't breathe,
Mom!” So she hit the brakes. Her son and the wallboard went flying, and he landed on top of it. All Grandma could do was laugh about it. Don’t worry, he was okay.

Charles Terrio and Martin Welch

KEITH HILL

Keith Hill is eighty-six years old, born a full-blood Oneida in 1912.

When he was a young boy, he was sent to Wittenberg to a mission school. One day, a friend told Keith that he’d give him a nickel if he’d run away from the school with him. Keith told him, “Hand over the nickel.” Keith and the other young man walked to the Oneida reservation some sixty miles away.

Keith’s father later sent him to an Indian school in Tomah. At the time, his father was living in Green Bay. His father told Keith that if he wanted, he could go to Green Bay, so Keith moved to Green Bay for schooling. He was the only Native American in that high school.

As Keith got older, he started working in the woods up north. During that time, Pearl Harbor was attacked. Keith’s superior told them that he had to enlist for the military. He enrolled and was sent all over the country.
He got his license to drive a truck for the military. He said that the training was hard. He had to drive big trucks through water and over large hills.

After he was released from the military, he met his wife. They later got a house together in Red Springs.

One day, Keith's wife went to Neopit and adopted two Menominee children. Keith didn't know about this. When his wife came home, she said, "Keith, these are our children." He said, "Okay." Later, he and children moved to the Stockbridge reservation and lived in a log cabin. The reservation is where he lives to the present day.

I wasn't nervous or anything about interviewing Keith. I thought his stories were interesting.

Travis Miller and Tony Malone

EUNICE STICK

Eunice came from a very poor family, living with her mother and the rest of her siblings. She and her younger brother attended the Lutheran mission school when she was seven and her brother was six. They both walked to school all the way from Morgan. She laughed as she thought of how they walked all that way, being that young. When Eunice was twelve, she went to the mission to make up two grades in one year because she was behind in her schooling.

Eunice got into a fight or two with one of the students at school who liked to bully around all the kids. Eunice stuck up for everybody. Eunice and this student were kind of related but never got along, so Eunice's mother took her out of school to prevent her from getting into any more trouble. Then she became very sickly, and the mission didn't want to be responsible for her, so she was once again denied school. She stayed home helping her mother with all her younger siblings because she was the oldest, and her mother had all the children close together. But she never forgot about her education.

Being the oldest, she thought she could do what any "grown up person" could do, so she went to work in Neopit at the age of fifteen. Later, at the age of seventeen, she and a friend ventured off to Milwaukee seeking employment. For two years Eunice did maid work, then she went to work for an assemblyman. He suggested that she go to government school, and she wrote a letter of recommendation for her to go to the Native Ameri-
can School at Flandreau, South Dakota. She attended that school for a year, but then received a very sad letter from her mother that she was having problems with her sister. So Eunice came back home to help her mother out.

Eunice's grandmother was kind of an old-time Indian and taught her brother the old ways — berry picking, hunting, etc. Her brother was an outdoorsman, and he loved the woods. He hunted gophers because there was a bounty on them and he would give the money to his mother. It was the Depression back then, hard times. Eunice would baby-sit and give her mother the money as well. They ate a lot of fish, but no venison because it was bitter. Eunice made macaroni and tomatoes; the next day was macaroni, tomatoes, and onions. They were that poor, and there wasn't welfare like there is today.

Eunice remembers the time when she went to Milwaukee with her friend. They got a ride into Shawano around 4:00 p.m. Their train wasn't leaving until midnight, so they went to see a movie called Stowaway starring Shirley Temple. They were so excited about it all that they just giggled all the way. They didn't sleep at all, and when they arrived in Milwaukee, it was like nothing they had ever seen before. It was dark, and the lights were beautiful. Wherever they looked, there were lights clear around. There they both found jobs and did the best they could.

In 1974, Eunice moved back to the reservation when the Library Museum was just getting started. She got a job working with the elderly. Then Eunice heard about a program that was available to those who wanted their GED. She attended this program once a week in Wausau,
husband very ill. Now she feels that she is too old, and it would be impossible for her to go on.

I had a great experience during this project, considering it was a lot of work and time involved. It gave me a chance to get to know an elder from my tribe. I was nervous because I have only one grandparent left; the rest are deceased, and I don’t have much experience speaking with elders. Now, however, I have a better understanding about how to communicate with elders and how to listen with my heart as well as my ears.

Nicole Hirthe and Brad Pecore
AFTERWORD

Ruth Gudinas, Dorothy Davids, and I arrived at the Elderly Center on the Stockbridge Reservation at 8 a.m. on Monday, July 6, 1998. We were there to meet the sixteen Mohican youth who would be working with us on a project that had been developing over the past year. The three of us had a clear idea of what we wanted to accomplish: memories gathered from the elders, collected on tape by the youth, transcribed by them, and given to me who would write from those transcripts a story or two to represent each participating elder. Ruth and Dorothy would then finalize them for publication.

The young people had a less clear concept of why we and they were to be working together for the next week. One day of intensive sessions was given over to explaining the project, eliciting objectives from them, and teaching them how to prompt the elders to share some autobiographical stories. They also had to practice using the equipment.

Tuesday, they went forth on their mission, feeling nervous, not too well prepared, even wondering if they would be bored. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings were spent returning for follow-up visits or in the computer lab writing up their experiences from the tapes and from their notes. Some worked in pairs; others worked alone.

For some reason, instead of a literal transcription from the tapes (which is what we had expected), the first few pieces came in written up as narratives, with comments and reflections of the youth along with the stories from the elders. We found something authentic and inspiring in the "voice" of each young person's work, so we decided to change our original plan and to present the stories and comments just as they came to us from the writers. Some minor editing has been done, but for the most part, each word, each phrase, each sentence is the work of the writer or writers whose names appear at the end of each piece.

One objective offered by a participant in the opening session was that to know our history is to know ourselves. By their hard work and collaborative efforts in gathering stories and writing them up, the youth and elders have reached that goal. What they have accomplished together in a short time is more than this publication; there has been a bridge constructed across the generations, a bridge built of love and respect.

I am honored to have had a small part in the building of that bridge.

Beatrice Ganley, Editor
July 25, 1998
PROJECT OBJECTIVES
composed by the youth

FOR THE MOHICAN NATION
• to have stories of the past
• to know our history so that we know ourselves

FOR THE ELDERS
• to be remembered long after they are gone
• to be recognized and honored
• to help them know that people still care for them

FOR THE YOUTH
• to get to know the elders
• to learn about past mistakes so they are not repeated
• to be inspired by the elders
• to have a new learning experience
Youth who gathered stories from elders of the Stockbridge-Munsee (Mohican) Community and whose writings comprise this book: (Back row, left to right) Trisha Williams, Selena Fluhr, Nicole Hirthe, Amanda Miller, Dan Terrio, Sarah Spencer, Joanna Miller, Travis Miller. (Front) Donavan Malone. (Not pictured) Chachi Mendez, Shelby Moede, Sterling Schreiber, Tony Malone, Brad Pecore, Charles Terrio and Martin Welch.