

George Newago

The first thing I want to do is thank Mic [Isham] for doing what he did. We wouldn't be sitting here and I want to thank Mike and Fred Tribble, for doing what they did, sitting there having that discussion and consciously going out and violating. I've had a real diverse background. I used to work as a GLIFWC warden. I used to sit at the head of the table as Tribal Chairman of Red Cliff Tribe. I sat in as a *Voigt* representative. I've harvested many things. Back some time ago, I had a desire to hunt moose and I met some guy from Canada that started talking. I said, "I'd love to hunt moose." "Hey, you're welcome to come up to our land and hunt moose." "Good, that sounds good. All right, good." So I started asking a few people, "You think I can get that thing across the border?", "Nope, never happen. Never get a moose across the border."

One of the things that I've always brought with me is an understanding that we need to really acknowledge our ancestors. We need to acknowledge our elders. We need to acknowledge the spirits that are out here to help us. Me, Marvin Defoe, another gentleman by the name of Todd Bonney, and a Bad River tribal member, Mikey Wiggins, went to Canada. On our way we stopped in Duluth, Minnesota to purchase 120, 130 gifts and then went to this small community, Red Gut, up by the International Falls, Fort Francis area. We went in that community and we gave the people tobacco and had a little old lady talk for us. We asked if we could hunt moose on their land. "Yeah, you can hunt moose on our land."

Now this is the impact of harvesting. It isn't about sports. It's about harvesting and for a lot of us it's about feeding our families and getting meat and moving in that direction. So we went out four days, rode and rode and rode with these tribal members at Red Gut. Man, we didn't see any moose.

I dreamt about that moose before I went there. I said that, "Anyone who wants to go, I'll show you how we do things in Red Cliff." So my buddy, he stepped up to the plate and we went and we got a moose. We harvested a moose. Then we come across the border with a letter from the chief of that tribe gifting that moose to us. And we pulled up to customs with that letter, "You have anything to declare?", "Yeah, I have a moose," and handed him that letter. He read that letter. He says, "Pull your vehicle over here." We had two vehicles. And three-and-a-half hours later, he sent us back into the Ministry of Natural Resources. We had to go back up there and wait. Those guys were really scratching their head.

Finally I brought them guys out and I said, "You know, here's the story. Here's what you need to do and this is the story you need to tell and everybody stick to the story." So I told them the story. The only one I was worried about is that Bad River guy, Mikey Wiggins. He was nervous. He thought he was going to jail and they were going to confiscate everything and he's staying on the story. So we went in. I'm not knocking Canadian law enforcement or conservation wardens, but man, they put us all in the same room to interrogate us. Everybody just be quiet, I'll do the talking. So at any rate, they were really confused about that because they'd never seen that before. Since then I have brought across the border six moose due to my harvesting efforts.

The other thing is that I should have been on that last panel, the legal panel. The thing is that all the knowledge that sat up here and all the things that were done, I can remember the things that I was involved with and how they got to where they're at. It goes back to remembering who we are, *Anishinaabe*. Remembering about *asemaa*, remembering to acknowledge and ask our ancestors what we should do. And we sat in a room and they were

willing to negotiate with the State of Minnesota. They were going to negotiate with the State of Minnesota. I stopped everything. I asked people to leave the room and only *Anishinaabe* were in that room. "How many of you here have asked your relatives what we should do?" Nobody could raise their hand. When we finally asked over in Lac du Flambeau, *Waaswaaganiing*, we asked and had that ceremony there, *jiisakaan*, that shaking tent. It was tough to ask that question, and there's people that are in this room that were at that ceremony and they said, "No, you've got to fight, you need to stand up. You need to take care of what you need to take care of."

I went to the Supreme Court and when you're going in to the arguments, they're all walking down there. They had that drum there in front of the Supreme Court. It was like thunder. When you stood next to that drum, it was so powerful what was coming, it was unbelievable. And the end result was a five/four decision, but that's because we asked what we should do. We asked what we should do. So when you tell a story you need to include the entire story.

You can all recall back when the treaties were first started and we started harvesting. I can remember Dave Obey coming over wanting to buy, wanting to rent, and wanting to lease. Tommy and all them wanted us to give up. Marvin Defoe and I went around to every community, every tribe. We gave *asemaa*, we gave tobacco to the leaders and we gave tobacco to the spiritual people in those communities. We came to Red Cliff to my mother's house and we sat in that room and I got the education about treaties right then and there in about four or five hours. All those people talked about what it was and what I learned is that those treaties were a vision of our ancestors. It was our existence, *Anishinaabe*.

So I've been so blessed to have learned of the things we need to do and you can't forget that. We sit here and we talk about all the things we need to remember. We need to remember our elders. It's hard to talk because I think about the people that taught me what I know. My dad, Sam Newago, and my uncle, Mike Newago, those were men. They didn't wear feathers in their hair, they didn't smoke pipes, but they were *Shinaabe* every day. They lived their life *Shinaabe*. And that's our responsibility. And the impact of harvest is we need to teach our children. We need to teach our people to remember where we are from and who we are because those treaties are us. That's our life.

When you set everything aside, we can survive. I had the privilege this past ten days of spending some time with some *chimookamaan* from Iowa. I can't describe these people. We call them traditional *chimookamaan* because they live from the forces of nature and life. A long time ago this guy came and built a canoe with Marvin Defoe. He came and searched him out. They don't live with any power and they don't live with any electricity. They don't have cars. They just live to survive. And that's the way my dad and others lived, to survive. And it was so refreshing to see people live like that and talk about it and have a sense of community, because we forgot all our community.

The only time that we have our community is when we have tragedy. The only time we get together as family is when someone dies. Then we come together. "Oh, it's good to see you." We're forgetting all that. I can remember growing up when people came to my parents' door and they'd knock on it, and hear "Come on in, come on in, have some coffee." Now you go knock on someone's door and we are told "What the hell are you doing here, what do you want?"

I can remember getting hit by my uncle when I was a little boy. I didn't go home to tell on him because I'd get hit when I got home. Now if you hit a kid, the dad would come down and say, "What the hell are you hitting my kid for?" Our lives are changing and we're taking steps backwards and it's only us, the people in here, that can make it move forward. We need to remember all those things that were given to us. If we don't use them, you lose them.

You know, to watch a canoe being built and watch it develop in a ten-day period is unbelievable. That's from going out and pulling the root. They tried to get me to pull roots but I'm too impatient and I can't get long ones. They said it would take a long time to sew with the roots I was getting.

So the thing is we're important and everything going on here is important, but we've got to remember all the people that got us here. We've got to remember everybody good and bad that brought us here. I was coming over here and sometimes we get pissed off because you sit down with guys from the Department of Natural Resources. You know, like I said, I've been on each side of it. I've been sitting over there.

I was working with a good friend of mine a warden. I was always of the belief that if someone told me a good enough story, all right, I can believe that. When I worked with the Department of National Resource wardens it was like you're guilty until proven innocent. I don't like that. I worked at a decoy deer operation and a guy come with a great big eight-point buck. I said, "I'll work with you, but I'm not going to put that out there. If a guy's going to shoot a deer, he's going to shoot it right from there." It don't make no difference if it's a doe or anything. They come out with little bitty basket rack, which was good.

But the thing is that it's all about attitude. He would just love working with the department. He'd go and chase after them and follow them around and he said "George, can you help me bait my bear stands." "I can help you out." So I met with him. Went up there and you are supposed to have your name up there and all your address, all your information near your bait. The bear ripped it apart, took the sign down, chewed it up. I said, "This is what I want to tell you. This is what I learned from that. Now you're working with the woods and you're in the field and you go up to that bear bait and a guy comes in and there's no signage there. When he tells you that the bear must have got it, believe him because it might be the truth."

We are here to harvest. We're here to feed our families. We don't need people. That's why we feel the imposition at times when we've got to count all these fish. They must be 20 inches or less. There are lakes that we fish here that you can't find the less than 20-inch fish in them sometimes. You'd be there all night long looking for them. So it causes us then to be violators because you've got to learn to cut the tails just right. You've got to learn to do this, where to hide it and all that stuff. We're harvesting, okay. So it's about harvesting and the impact of it.

The other thing is that they were talking about earlier about the ten-year-old kid that now didn't get to hunt. What do we have to do as a people, as an organization now to infuse that rule into our organization? The state gets to make the administrative rules. So the thing is that how do we as an organization improve our ability to harvest? We used to have to kill a deer and register it that same day or become a very good liar. Well, I got that deer yesterday. Its eyes are sunk deep into its head, all. Now we get we get the luxury of three days.

Mic [Isham] asked that question about private land hunting. We've got codes that make it illegal to do that. My cousin was prosecuted in Bayfield County court, hunting on my private land. The judge told him because you're native and taking your hunting rights will not affect you, you're going to serve seven days in jail. That's racism because if you're a white man, he'd just get his hunting privileges taken for three years or whatever it is. There's a differences that we have to acknowledge. And as tribal leaders people need to step up and say what's going on here? There is a difference.

Over in Red Cliff, there's a Buffalo Bay. My dad, his dad, and every other Indian way before them fished in that bay. I go there one year to set my nets in the springtime and there's a damn crib sitting there. It's part of the beginning of a dock right on top of where I set. So I put

my net there and I go out.

Next morning I come to get my net and there's some white guy standing there, "Hey, that net's kind of close to my dock isn't it?" I said, "No, that dock's pretty close to my net." I was being brass and bold and I said, "You know, enjoy it because that's all you're going to get right there. This is my right here to fish." We fished for over 100 days straight. Fished for our families and do some other things along the way. But the moment that we slipped out of that, I went there in the spring that dam dock was there.

Now I talked to the DNR board, I talked to the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, I talked to the tribe, I talked to everybody. You people know how hard it is to go fish every day for 100 days? That's a big undertaking for four people. And the thing is, I said, "You know what, can't you say you made a mistake?" "Nope, can't do it, the permit's been issued." That dock's been in there now for the second year. We can't fish there anymore because the whole fishery's dynamics changed in that little bay. They completely destroyed a place where we could go and get food for our families because they wanted to listen to a few that are using that resource. So that's our effort of harvest.

One more thing I'll tell you about is people making maple syrup. I hated making maple syrup all the way growing up. It's like getting going and having to go weed a garden, I hate it. But my dad died in 1991 and I made a commitment to keep that going, so every year we go out and we make maple syrup. We go every season and make maple syrup. It's about keeping it alive. Now there's more people making maple syrup. Our community has about five little sugar bushes now with people making maple syrup. My family has been doing it for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. And it's a great time to get out there. You get to visit, you get to be community a little bit.

So we need to get back to the sense of community. I was watching and I was getting pissed about gas prices going up. I said, "That's a good thing when the gas prices go up because then that will create community because people aren't going to go out and venture off." Maybe that's the tragedy that we need. Maybe we need that \$10 a gallon so everybody stays home and we start to visit and start to communicate with one another. I tell you it's been an honor for me to be here. And we need to remember those things because that's all the story. Let's not tuck these two guys in Chapter 3 or Chapter 4 or Chapter 5. Because somebody else said, "Well, what about the treaty?" "Yeah, the treaties are there, they exist." If those guys hadn't done what they did, we'd all be sitting at home wondering how in the hell we're going to get that net out, it's already daylight. So *chi-miigwech*, Tribbles, *chi-miigwech*.