

It's good to learn to laugh at yourself

OHSWEKEN — One of the things I used to find hard to endure as a native person was the ethnic joke. This is when someone pokes fun at a person's race or ethnic origin. Jokes that began "once there was a herd of wild Indians" set my teeth on edge.

Then I found out how wrong I was. A psychologist told in a book that it's good to learn to laugh at yourself. It makes you more mature and broadens your outlook and does a lot of other good stuff to you. He was very convincing.

After some thought, I decided that it's selfish of me to keep laughing at myself and for me to keep getting more and more mature while others keep their immaturity. I think good stuff like that should be shared with my white friends. So to help you readers become more mature and well-balanced, I have a couple of stories to tell you.

In the 1960s, scientists discovered uranium in Northern Ontario. One of the deposits was on an Indian reserve. They went to the old chief and told him that they were going to dig up the rocks. They tried to explain to him that these rocks contained uranium, which they needed.

Our Town George Beaver



Later, a newspaper reporter asked the old chief what he thought about all this. He said: "Long time ago, we had lots of animals, trees and rocks. The white men came and killed off all the animals for their furs. Then they went away and left us with only the trees and rocks. A few years later, they came back again and cut down all the big trees for lumber. Then they went away again and left us with only the little trees and rocks. A few years later, they came back again and cut down all the little trees for pulp wood. Then they went away again and left us with only the rocks. Now, by golly, they've come after the rocks."

One day, an Indian man was walking down Colborne Street reading a book. A white man got curious and walked over and asked him what he was reading. The Indian replied: "This is a book on the Mohawk language. I'm learning to speak Mohawk."

"That's a waste of time," said the white man. "Don't you know that Mohawk is a dead language?"

"That's okay," said the Indian. "When I die and go to the Happy Hunting Ground, I'll be able to speak to my grandparents and relatives."

The white man didn't want to lose the argument so he said: "What if you die and go to hell?"

"That's okay," said the Indian. "I already know how to speak English."

These stories are comparatively mild so they may only produce a few chuckles. In that case you may not feel more mature, only a bit older.