

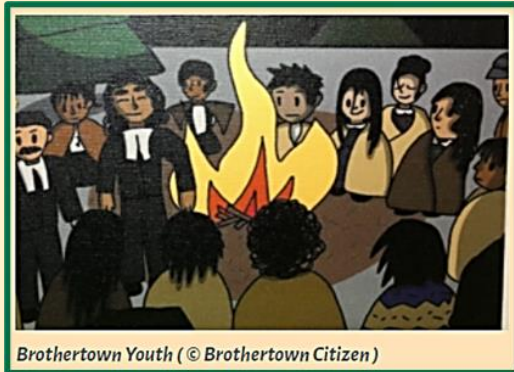
Excerpts from Youth Essay Contest

Sponsored by the Brothertown Circle

Winners

Article by Caroline Andler

From the December 2002 Quarterly Report Newsletter



***The future of the
Brothertown Nation lies with
our children and these
thoughtful winning entries
show our Nation will be in
good hands!***

“What being a Brothertown Indian means to me?”

(last names of children removed)

What being a Brothertown Indian means to me that I’m very special because not many people are Brothertown Indians and I feel special because I’m in a Christian tribe. There aren’t many Christian tribes. The Brothertown Indians are made up of seven different tribes.” - **Matt, (Byhalia, MS), age 10**

“What a Brothertown. Indian means to me? Being part Indian and part Chinese makes me feel special, Being Indian feels like I can feel my ancestors and my people close to me. So being an Indian is what I am, and nothing can ever bring me down because I know who I am!” - **Amanda, (Austin, TX) age 13**

“Being a Brothertown Indian is knowing I have a family heritage. It’s knowing that my father and grandfather were both Brothertowns and I myself am one. It is also knowing that I am in a way connected more to history than others. Like all Indians from generations ago I also have a spirit that soars and a heart that always needs to be free. The Brothertown heritage will always be with me, no matter who I become. No matter what job I take up, no matter where I live, I will always be a Brothertown and to me that’s something to be happy about.” - **Christopher, (Green Bay, WI) age 13**

“I am Treasure, I’m 12 years old and I live in Atmore, Alabama (lower Alabama). Being a Brothertown Indian means to me that I am an individual. I am not Cherokee, Choctaw, or even Creek. It’s really hard for me because living in Atmore, most people think I am Creek, but I have to explain that I am a Brothertown Indian and that I am Mohegan. Another thing being a Brothertown Indians means is to be traditional and try as hard as you can to follow the old ways and original culture. Most people think that all an Indian is those people you see at the Powwow with feathers and bustles, but that actually is the exact opposite of what an Indian is. An Indian is a person ... believes in the old ways and is as Traditional as they can be. One thing that I have learned from my dad is that you can’t be half Indian or Indian in spirit only. The only thing that makes you Indian...is blood. Because I have Brothertown Indian blood in me I am proud to follow the old ways. I am lucky because I do live in an Indian community, growing up traditional and I hope someday, when I’m older, I can come to the Homecoming Celebration and share some of the things I have learned. That is my essay on what being a Brothertown Indian means to me.” - **Treasure, (Atmore, AL) age 12**

“Being a Brothertown to me is more than just a heritage. It’s having friends and a second family. It keeps the memory of our ancestors fresh and alive. Not with powwows or fancy get togethers, but with picnics and walkathons. We don’t need to have a big casino to make money, we have fundraisers that not only help our tribe, but help to get federal acknowledgment. Not that we need it, no matter what I’m an Indian. Being a Brothertown is to be proud. With all the efforts of the U.S. government to move us West, our ancestors stood firm and gallant as possible. Then hard times crept over them, and they stood together, along with the Oneida and Stockbridge tribes. They were separated, but only for a short time, when, again, they fought to get land back that the U.S. government took away without compensation. To be a Brothertown is to hold your head up high and have faith in your people. Although sometimes at our little meetings we forget that to be a Brothertown also means to work hard and not just show up and make yourself heard if you disagree with a decision. Our ancestors worked together, and we should too. That is what being a Brothertown Indian is all about.” - **Courtney, (Green Bay, WI) age 15**

“What being a Brothertown Indian means to me is that we have the great honor of ancestral blood running through our veins. And this blood is part of the same blood that went through my grandmother, and her grandmother, and her grandmother. This means that I have the blood running through my veins that allows me the same expectations as my great-great-great grandfather. These things are not the only things that makes a Brothertown Indian. We support our tribe, which is also one of the things that make people Brothertown Indians. The support they show could lead to our national tribal recognition and more Federal grants to help us.” - **Chris, (Olive Branch, MS), age 14**

“To be a special person that a lot of people are not. It means to be a group that works together. It means to make everything seem fun at powwows and to meet new people.” - **Casey, (Olive Branch, MS) age 9**

“I sometimes wonder what it would be like to be a ten-year-old Brothertown Indian 200 years ago. At my age I would make arrows, plant, fish and hunt small animals. I might have a dog and would like to play games with my Indian friends. I would be strong in body and spirit and have a deep respect for our lands.

I am proud to be a Native American and a member of the Brothertown Tribe. I feel especially honored to be a descendant of Samson Occom, founder of the tribe. Samson Occom was born in a wigwam in Connecticut in 1723. In 1734, when he was sixteen years old, he converted to Christianity. When he was twenty years old, he began his education with the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock, who was a teacher of the children of the colonists and Indians. Samson Occom took charge of a school in Connecticut in 1747 when he was twenty-four years old. He was a very successful teacher and missionary all of his life.

Samson Occom went to England in 1765 to help raise funds for the Indian Charity School of Reverend Wheelock. While in England, Occom delivered over 400 sermons and collected much money for Indian education. Unfortunately, most of this money did not end up actually being used for Indians. When Occom returned from England, many churches wanted him to preach for them. I live in Albany, New York, and find it interesting that one of the churches he preached at was the Presbyterian meetinghouse in Albany. In early 1770’s, after much urging by Samson Occom, the Christian Indian community called Brothertown was established in New York. Samson Occom died in 1792 at age sixty-nine after years of fighting for the rights of the Brothertown Indians. I am proud to be a member of the Brothertown tribe, a tribe that has always been determined to survive. The Pequot massacre, which killed close to 600 members of my tribe, did not defeat us. The government taking our land did not defeat us. We are people that do not give up. We want to keep our Brothertown customs and traditions alive. It is a special honor to be a Brothertown Indian!” - **Bradán, (Slingerlands, NY), age 10**