



November 12, 1986

Ms Debbie Ellis  
Route 4, Box 4566  
Grayling, MI 49738

Dear Ms Ellis:

Thanks for your interest in the Nishnawbe News. I'm sorry to be so slow in responding.

The Nishnawbe News was established in the spring of 1971 at Northern Michigan University. As director of Research & Development, I had started an American Indian Program at NMU the previous year. We formed an advisory council made up of Indian people from across Michigan to help us develop the program so that it would fill the needs of Indians as they saw them to be. They told us that highest on the priority list was a newspaper to provide a vital means of communication for the state's estimated 30,000 Indians.

Various efforts had been made by Indian organizations to get funding to start the newspaper, but none were successful. Dr John X. Jamrich, then president of NMU, provided the "seed money" to launch the paper when all else had failed. I was their advisor.

The idea was to base the paper at NMU so that it would not be influenced by the various political interests within the Indian community, of which there are many. The paper was autonomous, and operated and staffed entirely by our Indian students. NMU provided a small basic budget, plus office space and other in-kind services.

The paper soon evolved into a full size (broadsheet) from its original tabloid format. Under the leadership of several capable editors, its circulation was expanded from Michigan to the Great Lakes states, with large numbers of papers sent to Canada, particularly Ontario. Eventually it was subscribed to by many government offices, libraries, etc. across the country, and was considered one of three major Indian papers in the U. S. Peak circulation was 8,000.



Page 2  
Debbie Ellis  
Nov. 12, 1986

The paper was free to Indians; a set subscription rate was charged organizations, agencies, libraries, etc. Some schools used large quantities for teaching purposes in the classroom.

Financial support for the paper came from a variety of sources. Grants were given by a number of church organizations--Lutheran, Catholic, Presbyterian; private foundations (one in England provided some of the paper's largest grants), an insurance company, and other groups. These helped the paper exist from year to year, in addition to the many donations sent in by Indian readers and the subscription money.

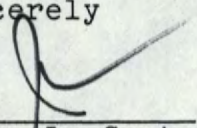
The last issue came out late in 1982. The financial squeeze in Michigan caused NMU to withdraw its budget allocation, and it was getting increasingly hard to obtain grant monies. Not knowing from year to year if the paper would survive was also difficult on the students and to plan for the future. We never did receive enough from subscriptions and the small amount of advertising to allow the paper to pay its way.

The change in the Indian community was another factor in the paper's demise. Gradually, many Indian reservations and organizations established their own newspapers and newsletters and the need for a paper like the Nishnawbe News diminished. Interests of Indian students on our campus broadened and many of them apparently didn't see the need to continue to devote the time and energy on the newspaper.

Over the years the Nishnawbe News served the needs of the Indian community very well. I enjoyed working with the Indian students very much and struggled with them through each issue, sharing their pride in accomplishment. I might add that experience working on the paper proved to be valuable for many Indian students, resulting on good jobs with the media and related fields after graduation from NMU.

I hope this information is sufficient. If I can be of further help, please let me know.

Sincerely



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James L. Carter  
News Director



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