





After Thanksgiving, the holiday season seems to snowball into several different holidays during the month of December, including Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Years Eve, just to name a few. For many people, Christmas represents a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with family, friends and loved ones. Christmas trees and homes flooded with presents and decorations have become the norm.

When Christmas comes to mind, my initial thoughts bring me back to those times during my childhood living in New York, seeing the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center. I think of scarves, gloves, blizzards, hot chocolate, pajamas and staying up late watching Christmas films and hearing Christmas music. I remember opening up presents while my mother took pictures of me with her disposable Kodak cameras.

I believe Christmas represents the quintessential opportunity to spend time with family and strengthen those ties that may have been weakened throughout the year. Since my birthday is Christmas Eve, Christmas has always been my favorite holiday. Some of my most enjoyable memories took place during Christmas. In 2007, I spent my Christmas break primarily on the Fort Pierce and Brighton reservations with my father Kevin Tommie Sr. I developed very close bonds with the Seminole side of my family during that time.

Spending time with my Seminole relatives made me realize another side of my existence that I had yet to truly tapped into. Over the course of the last 10 years, I have made efforts to become more knowledgeable and accepting of my Seminole heritage and will always continue to do so.

My Seminole relatives embraced me as if I never left the reservation as a child. They have always made me feel welcomed and have kept me abreast on any events that have taken place within the Seminole Tribe of Florida. There were presents that were exchanged during that 2007 Christmas, but being around my relatives was a better gift than I could have ever wanted.

Christmas seems to have become so commercialized and focused on acquiring possessions that, at times, there are missed opportunities to experience the joys of giving. For several years, led by Vice-Chairman and President Mitchell Cypress, the President's Office has done a toy drive that provides toys for children in need. As Tribal citizens, we all know how much the Tribe takes care of its people, so for the Tribe to be able to extend that action to other groups of people is something I greatly admire. Since this is the season of giving, there is probably no more appropriate time to share the blessings life has afforded us.

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