



Lester E. Drift Sr., 70, of Nett Lake, “Zhaazhaawanigiizhik”, his Indian name meaning “one cloud in the South”, of the Bear clan, passed away on Sunday, December 21, 2014, at Essentia Health (St. Mary’s Hospital) in Duluth. He was born on July 14, 1944 at Nett Lake, to Raymond Sr. and Margaret (Farmer) Drift. Lester graduated from Orr High School in 1962, and was lifelong resident of Nett Lake. He married Karen Strong on September 25, 1963 in Nett Lake. He was a fluent speaker of the Anishinaabe language and was third level Medewin. Under the Indian Relocation Program he went to Cleveland, Ohio and learned the welding trade. After his completion he returned to Nett Lake where he worked in construction for many years. In 1980 he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology from the University of Minnesota- Duluth. He worked in treatment centers and schools and was the chemical dependency director for the Bois Forte Band. Many came up to him throughout the years and expressed gratitude to him in how he helped them in their recovery, and how he made a positive difference in their lives. He was dedicated to the people he served. He was also involved in mental health treatment. Lester’s longtime major cause was finding help and assistance for the homeless. He was instrumental in surveying the homelessness of Minnesota Native Americans for the Wilder Foundation, which opened the door for millions of dollars to aid homeless Native Americans. For his outstanding effort he was given an Achievement Award for the Homeless from the State of Minnesota. He was a member of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and from 1984 to 1990 served as Secretary-Treasurer on the Bois Forte Tribal Council. His family fondly recalls his attraction to casinos, joking to them that “I win every time”. Lester liked hunting and was an avid berry picker. He loved his grandchildren and great grandchildren, and gave each one special treatment. He and Karen were dedicated foster parents and legally adopted 4 of his own grandchildren. He will be sadly missed by all who came to know him. In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by 1 son, Lester Drift “son son” Jr. in 2008; 1 brother, Raymond “Diggy” Drift and 2 sisters, Marsha Drift and Jeanette Halverson. Lester is survived by his wife of 51 years, Karen Drift of Nett Lake; 3 sons, Peter (Lorie) Drift Sr. and Mark (Adrienne Whiteman) Drift Sr., both of Nett Lake and Bart Drift of Virginia; 2 daughters, Karlene (Donald) Chosa and Farrah Drift, both of Nett Lake; one sister, Myra Thompson of Nett Lake; 29 Grandchildren, 22 Great Grandchildren, numerous nieces, nephews, and special granddog, Oakley.

SERVICES: Traditional services will be at 10:00 AM Friday (December 26th) at the Bois Forte Government Center in Nett Lake, where the Wake will begin at 7:00 PM Thursday. The spiritual advisor will be Billy Blackwell and the co-spiritual advisor will be Kenneth Boney. The casket bearers will be Brent Chosa, Peter Drift Jr., Mark Drift Jr., Shane Drift, Erick Halverson and Alden Connor. The honorary bearers will be Donald Chosa III., Perry Drift, Parker Drift, Leon Chosa, Phillip Long III., Josh Ervin and Curtis Thompson. The interment will be in the Nett Lake Cemetery. Funeral arrangements are with the Mlaker Funeral Home in Cook.