Elizabeth “Chee Chee Thunder Bird” Haile, born in Southampton to Edith and Henry Bess (Chief Thunder Bird) on July 26, 1930 entered the Spirit World on August 21, 2015 at her home on the Shinnecock Indian Reservation. She was surrounded by her loving husband of 58 years Dick, sister Edythe and brother Fred, children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren.

Elizabeth attended the first annual Shinnecock Pow Wow in 1946. Ever since she was a teenager, Ms. Haile had choreographed and performed a dance based on “The Lord’s Prayer” at the annual Shinnecock Indian Nation Powwow, and she did so on her own until the 50th powwow, when she began inviting her granddaughters to dance with her.

Elizabeth graduated from Riverhead High School in 1948, Salutatorian of her class, having attended Riverhead Schools all her life. She was graduated from Oneonta State Teachers College where she obtained her bachelor’s degree in 1952. She then obtained her master’s degree at NYU. She would go on to teach in the Schenectady School system, involving eight different schools as Physical Education teacher, and continued on to instruct Indian Culture and Modern Dance.

Elizabeth met and married Richard Haile in 1957. They made their home in Schenectady, NY where they lived and brought up their four children. For almost 30 years, “Chee Chee and her husband, Dick” were very active in the International Folk Dancing community and were involved in many groups in the Schenectady area and elsewhere.

Elizabeth went on to teach in Early Education and Native American Culture and became a consultant on this subject. She involved herself in many organizations including Inner City Ministries of Schenectady where she was a founding member of the “Refreshing Spring Daycare Center”, the first daycare established in Schenectady.

In 1989, the Hailes moved from Schenectady to make their home of the Shinnecock Reservation. On Shinnecock she dedicated her energy in countless organizations including as a founding member of the Shinnecock Tribal Council, committee and founding member of the Hayground School, Vice President and Secretary of the Shinnecock Nation Cultural Center and Museum, founding member of the Padoquohan Medicine Lodge, Inc. and Advisory Committee Chair for the Wuneechanunk Shinnecock Pre-school, just to name a few. In 2002, she was the recipient of an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from LIU. Her influence on her community will forever be cherished and valued.

Elizabeth was a founding member of the NorthEast Jurisdiction Native American Ministries Committee in 1999. Along with her daughter, Reverend Holly Haile Davis, she attended NEJ meetings. Although a member of the Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth was devoted to the advocacy work of the United Methodist Church’s NEJNAMC and a valuable asset as an elder to further the committee’s work.