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## How we Lived

### Sophia Mishenene

I was not brought up here. I lived up North as a child and was brought up there. We stayed here for two months and then went home. My dad was not from here. I grew up in the North. There are the women you are looking for - ones that are from here. [(She is still wondering why we want her input)]

When we were getting big, when I was 15 years old, that's when we moved. We stayed in the wilderness. In the spring we came here. We were gone for just a little while. That's what happened in my life while we were brought up.

We were brought up as Anishinabe people and that's why we are alive today. We never saw anything like today. I don't think we were crazy. I liked the way I was brought up. The way we ate has something to do with our health. As a child I worked just as hard as the older ones. That was just the way it was. Every child had to work alongside the elders. There was no play time. I don't remember lying around and today I still don't know how to play. I guess I can play now. Everyone was that way - no play, just work.

There was a certain time everyone played - even elders. Sunday we gathered to play and eat together. That was what happened when I was growing up. We knew when to work and what to do. We didn't have to be taught or told. The reason we knew is because we were with our parents all the time. Today there is nothing like that. It is very hard today for the young. They don't know how to survive. They knew how to survive then. We were never lonely wandering around. I'd be gone two days and then want to come home. I like it here in town.

In winter, we as children always got firewood. Older people went hunting. We always wished that the people we stayed with would come home. He was not our dad, who passed away and then we only had Mom. My mom's older brother was the one that killed moose. In the winter it's how we survived. We made leather moccasins. My grandfather was with us. We set up rabbit snares when we were children. My grandfather was out all day and a long way putting up snares. My grandfather expected us to check snares. We followed broken pine branches. We did bring rabbits. They made me a blanket out of rabbit furs, which I used when I was a child. That was how life was when we were children. After spring we quit setting up snares. That was when rabbits had little ones. That was what we did. We went on top of the snow and we set up nets for fish. We were always with our grandfather. That was what we did.

We were told about life when we were young. I was 15 years old then. When young girls started thinking about starting with men, that was the time that her mother started talking to her. She was told what would happen when she started staying with this guy. She was allowed to go and stay with this man. She was told she had to go and stay where this man lives and raise her children. She was told about married life, that it will be hard. She was told that it was a hard life

being married. I was also told this. She was always told what to expect as life goes on. As she gets older she starts to understand.

It was always true what elders told us. I always believed them. I was told this man I stay with will stray. That is true. I was told not bother or worry because they will not kill you. You are not allowed to come home. You are told to stay with this man no matter what. That was taught to me. You will have children. You'd think that was wrong, but that's not true. Try and understand and believe what was taught to you. You'd start thinking your husband is going with someone else. In some cases it's true. You look after yourself and don't start doing what your husband does. That was taught to me.

It was very good when Anishinabe lived their lives. I never knew what they meant by running out of food. At the time the blueberries were ready, people picked lots. I helped pick when I was a child. Anishinabe dried blueberries for the winter. The white man preserved them in different ways to keep them for the winter.

There are different ways to preserve blueberries. You tie them up in rows as long as you can. We picked lots of cattails. They grow in water. We have to cut them, not break them. The [cattail mats] dry them real good. Then they deep-fry them. They eat these berries all winter. The white man does it different. That's a very good life. The men made a smoke house, and they smoked moose meat.

Anishinabe does not waste anything, they even use bones. White man wastes lots, but Anishinabe never kills food for nothing. Even the ears are cooked. They make leather. They make soup out of bones, which is very good. They make cracklings and grease. After the bones are boiled they are thrown away. Even the moose feet are boiled a long time. Moose feet soup is very good. After the feet are boiled the nails come off but are thrown away. Even the little bones are good. Break the bones and the grease that's there is very good.

That was life. The ones that didn't hunt did the cooking. They also cooked the fish, and they dried fish. The head of the fish is also eaten. In the fall people will leave for a different place. Some people will stay behind. People always left in the fall. People who stayed behind had fish. They are very good. The bones are good. Bones are hung up to dry. Heads are broken in half and hung up in rows. There will be a time when we don't have anything to eat. They will come in handy for soup.

Nobody went hungry. There were times that we didn't have anything to eat, just like today at times. Even though the people were good at preserving food, at times it was hard. Women who worked at home always had a good, hard day. Men went hunting. My mom made cradles and lots of things. Women did as much as they could. That was life. That is as much as I can remember so far about life. The people were raising their young and it was very good. They used all the land also. They planted gardens and used the earth lots. That's how they raised and fed their children. That was very good. Children were raised good and healthy. Children were always in cradles made out of wood. Nobody today does that; nobody uses the earth for their purposes anymore. I tried using cradles for my grandchildren and use the earth as much as I can. One of my grandchildren used to get out of his cradle (laughs). You can see that it's already changing.

There is a certain way you cut up the moose meat for the winter. They cut it up in chunks in winter. In summer time it is sliced up. They cook the brain. They make dumpling soup. They

use it to soften leather, but don't use too much. They let the leather dry up first, and after you spread moose brain on leather you hang it up. They use the moose brain for a lot of uses.

This was the way I saw leather made. They work on the hide right away. They cleaned it, then they dried it. They had to get wood to make fire to dry the leather. It took about four months to work on a whole moose. The leather looked like a big blanket. Today nobody makes leather. My grandmother made gloves and all kinds of things out of leather. In spring it's soaked in water. Elders said it was better that way.

The hunters only got a little bit of meat. That was funny the way they only got a little bit. They should teach this in schools. Little ones should know how to work with moose hide and moose meat. The children will learn fast. Some people used to make axes and picks. The tools Anishinabe made were very sharp. Axes were very sharp. How is anything going to work if the young are always sleeping?. There are rules set up for us. We were supposed to sleep at night and get up in the morning.

## Tommy Spade

Translator: Gloria Littlejohn

This is what I'll say. Anishinabe were given their own life. We had never seen the white man. Anishinabe were given laws, even to eat certain foods. Anishinabe never had a fridge or storage place for food. When the people started wandering around with their children, they looked for food. Anishinabe lived to be 100 years old and never got sick. They had a very strong life. They made their own tea. They made birch bark houses for storage. They made pipes. They made tobacco from willows. They dried it up. Week-kay was also used. They even made chewing tobacco.

I'll talk about food. Their food was moose lynx, elk, deer, beaver, and rabbit. These animals were the food that people ate. Others were not supposed to be eaten, like martin, mink, squirrel, and skunk. They were told not to bother these animals on their journeys on this earth. They were to enjoy these animals that they can't kill. It was the same with ducks, owl and the bald eagle. All these animals were not to be eaten. They are put on this earth for their company so that Anishinabe won't get lonely for as long as the Creator lets Anishinabe live. Whenever they hear the sounds of these animals they should know to be happy. This is what Anishinabe life is. Anishinabe were very good and they led a straight life.

I'll talk about blueberries. I don't really feel right talking about certain things. I'll just say a little bit. I guess they'll understand and feel good about what I talk about. In the summer time, Anishinabe picked blueberries. They only picked enough for themselves. No white man was seen. No white man's way of life was known. Chewing berries, eyeberries, little bear berries, weed berries, heart berries, yellow berries, saskatoons, tomatoes, summer berries, goose berries, moose berries, and furry berries. These were all the berries that Anishinabe was given to pick and use. There are some that I didn't name because we never ate them - like snakeberries and bearberries. They picked berries which were dried. They made birch bark baskets to dry these berries. They took them in the mountains, and made a hole to keep them safe from others. They made them in certain ways so that animals like the bear, wolf, martin, and fox wouldn't bother the berries. These were the things Anishinabe did. They didn't have to worry because this is the life the Creator set for them.

There were Anishinabe that had knowledge to tell what is going to happen ahead of time. If they were worried about what is ahead, then they had the knowledge to find out what is ahead. A white man just puts on the radio to find what the weather is ahead. When an Anishinabe was sick, they made their own medicine. They never saw the white man's life. They were given the knowledge to make medicine by the Creator. The white man cannot cure cancer. What the white man can't cure, Anishinabe can. All these trees we see, like the red willow, are all medicine. If an Anishinabe takes what was given to him, then the medicines should work. This is the life of Anishinabe. They were rarely sick. They ate healthy foods to keep them healthy, strong, and strong willed. This is Anishinabe life. They fished for food. Five different kinds of fish were caught and dried. They ate the [\*\*\*] on what the white man calls Christmas. In the summer they picked blueberries. This was the gift Anishinabe were given while they were alive. It wasn't like the way white man lives, with a car and silver boat. They used horse and buggy. They made the harnesses. They taught the dogs. They made huts as they traveled. They fed the dogs good and they were strong. The dogs were tied up, that's why they listened. The dogs were never lazy.

## **Josie Kaminwaish**

At the residential school our walls were bare. It's not the fact that I was in school that my walls are bare. It's because of my eyesight, I can't have clutter.

*Tell me about when you were in residential school.*

I was about 7 years old when I left. I can't really think that far - I think my mind is still blocked. I don't remember how I got to the school. The first thing that I remember though -- I'm sitting in this room with lots of kids, and I see this person standing there dressed in black and white talking to me in a foreign language and I'm crying. There are so many years there that I can't remember or maybe I don't want to remember. Or maybe things weren't going too badly so things don't stand out.

When I realized I was in this strange place, I don't even remember knowing that my brothers and sisters were there. But they were there -- an older sister older by two years, and I had a brother on the other side, the boys' side. We couldn't see the boys. My sister, because she was older, I only saw her from time to time.

*Where was this school?*

Macintosh. I was there from age 7 to 14. I completed Grade 9. I came home in the summertime for two weeks? months?

*How was it when you'd come back to the community?*

Coming back was strange - very strange. That's all I can tell you. Like I can't really talk about it, though I have come to terms with me being in school and with me having gone through this and that. The only the way that I can summarize the whole thing is - it was quite an experience. Other than that I can't really say anything. Because well some parts I remember, as I got older. When I was about 12, I remember some good parts and some bad parts, but I don't ever try and analyze anything. But sometimes when I'm just sitting there and all of the sudden a thought will come to mind and then I'll start thinking about it and from my own way of thinking I'll kind of maybe see what has happened, but for me to go beyond that - I think it would be too much for me. I don't mean I wouldn't be able to handle it, but it's for me to work over time, my mind to work over time, my heart to work over time - for things to happen naturally, for things to come to me.

*You've been on a discovery journey in the last years, of finding tradition, of finding language.*

Well, when I left school, I think I was 14, I left before I turned 15, I/we lived in Central Patricia. And then was a place where not a lot of native people lived, because they worked at Pickle Crow mine. These were Cree people from the northern reserves. I had a hard time trying to mingle with them because my only language was English.

*You lost the Ojibway totally.*

Yeah. But as time went on I picked up a few words here and there, and even if it was Cree it was still a native language, but I didn't know at that time that it was supposed to be an important part of my life. It was only when I was 19 that it hit me that I was Anishnabe. Before then I didn't know I was Anishnabe because that's what they taught us when we were in school. Or maybe I knew, or I didn't want to face the reality of being Anishnabe. I don't know because of the way that we were told that Anishnabe was no good and all that. At the time I don't think I knew who I was, because I knew that I wasn't white either. But when the reality hit me it was through a friend of mine who made me see that I wasn't part of his world and that he would never be a part of my world. At the time when it hit me. It was horrible because I didn't know what to think - I felt as if I was in limbo - you know when you're at a standstill. But you know my dad was around then, so I went home and I just sat with him, and I never said anything to him and he never said anything to me but I guess he kind of sensed that there was something wrong. So we left it at that. It was the next day when he started talking to me. But he never asked me what happened. He just talked to me about life in the past. He spoke very good English. We used to use him as a translator between mom and us.

*Eventually, did you all learn enough Ojibway to speak with your mother?*

No. Mom left before we were able to speak Ojibway - she was taken to the hospital - she was half-paralyzed. My dad went off with another woman. That left me, her and a brother that had Down's syndrome. We didn't have any welfare in those days. And I had a job that paid only \$2 a day for 10 hours' work And I had to walk from Central Pat that I had to walk there and back - four miles every day. I had to, otherwise they would starve. Me, I got food from the hotel 'cause it was free room and board. It was really hard for me with my mom and every time I came home from work I had to do the wood and the water and you know I can't see to cut wood but somehow I managed.

*Did anyone help?*

Everyone did their own thing. But there was a guy who'd come and check up on us and do a few things. In the wintertime it was hard, but somebody had to do it.

One time, I came home and found the house was empty. I couldn't understand what had happened - no mom, no brother. There was a woman who lived next door - it was like an apartment building. I asked her if she knew what had happened to my mom and my younger brother, she said no, but there had been a government car, so that's when it hit me that they had been taken away. They were alone from 8 to 3:30 and then 4:30 to 7:30. It was about that time too when we didn't have any say in what happened to us. They didn't even let me know that they were going to be taking my mom and my younger brother away. I never saw my mom again, but my younger brother after 30 years, I only saw him twice and then he was dead. There was a lady working at the nursing station, she found out my mom had a stroke and contributed by sugar diabetes, and she phoned me and asked me to come in for a test, because sometimes it runs in families. I told her about my family life, about my little brother who had Down's

syndrome. We hadn't heard anything for many many years, and my dad had gotten a letter about him from a place called Orillia. A few months later she told me she had tracked my brother down. He was a place called Picton, maybe an hour and a half drive from Toronto. We were taking some students that summer, so I talk the kids down, and there used to be a friend of mine who lived in Woodbridge, came to meet us 'cause she knew some of the kids, and she said if you could arrange for somebody to look after your kids I could take a run up there with you. A lady looked after them, and that was the first time I'd seen my brother after 30 years. In a way I recognized him but I was really surprised that he was a man.

I kind of feel he might have felt a connection with me - he couldn't speak either. I was talking to him but he never responded to me, except by rolling his eyes. I left him sitting at the table, and I walked away from him, and suddenly I could hear someone crying out, and when I turned around he was running towards me with his arms out and when I took him, he just cried and cried. About two months after we heard that he fell and broke his neck. My dad was unable to make the journey because he was getting on in years. He didn't trust any of my brothers to go because they were all busy with the bottle at that time. He was in Kingston. I don't know if he knew who we were. The only part of his body he could move was his head. The doctors told us of the dangers of life support. Once pneumonia set in the lungs - he'd be gone the next day. He was moved to intensive care and that's when I knew he was going. I left the hospital before he died. I left my sister there.

He died that evening. I didn't come home though. I went to Woodbridge to stay with my friend. I didn't want to come home right away., didn't want to answer any questions. So after three days I came back the when I went home my two brothers jumped on me and asked me where I'd been and don't you know my brother died and all that and of course I knew 'cause I was told that he was going to die.

*So did they bury him here?*

He's buried at the St. Joseph's cemetery just up the hill. Just over here just beyond the bridge, the first bridge.

*You're 19 and realize that you're Anishnabe. Then what?*

I guess I just kind of drifted and kind of slowly found where my place was in this world. I was working at the Lake Hotel at the time. I liked my job - I was a chambermaid, so I interacted with the non-natives but also started hanging around with the native people. There was a gang of 7 of us boys and girls that hung around together -- natives, but they knew their language and I didn't, they would laugh at me because I didn't know my language, but they put me to work interacting with the non-natives. As the years rolled along I re-learnt my language. A few years after I sobered up I found that I was just existing, but it never dawned on me - I didn't know what was missing. Though I knew I was Anishnabe I didn't know what was missing. I learned my language a little bit here and a little bit there, I still didn't know that knowledge to have that. One day it just hit me to go and see this old guy. I had know idea why I did go. I didn't say anything, he didn't say anything, we just sat there. And then one day we started talking and he became my teacher.



*Who was he?*

James.

*What did he teach you?*

Lots of things. Language. I would say something to him and then he would explain to me the proper word that was used to say what I'm saying and where it came from. And then at the same time off and on he would tell me a little bit about this and a little bit about that - he never went more than 5 minutes about anything. I laughed one time I was telling him - the people want kids to learn how to set a fish net when it's wintertime. He looks at me and he says 'you want to be able to do that?' And I said not me I don't know anything about bush ways, I wasn't raised that way. He got serious and he says do you know what you do when you go and check your net when you're alone. He knew I didn't know this - I didn't even know how to put a fish net in. Well I knew, I used to go out with my in-laws and they'd put the net in, but I had no hands-on experience, I was just an observer.

He says, when you go alone, you take a big rope, longer than the one you usually take. He said what you do is you make a hole in the middle, and then you open the one at the far end, the one you're going to be working on and then you tie a rope around the far end, and then you pull it this way, and when you think you're about half way you go back to the other end, and then you go back and check the pole. It sounded so simple but I don't think I'd venture to want to do that.

He talked to me about the teachings of the four directions. I don't know who else he would have spoken to about this. I used to marvel at what he was telling me - some of the things I learned when I go down East where the real Ojibway heritage is - I marveled because I find that now we mix Cree with Ojibway even in our language, for me to hear him talk about these things. It makes me wonder if we are to go back to these teachings. But how do you separate these things, especially if you've been brought up this way?

The only thing that came back with me in a flash was my brother had invited me to go with him to go and break his came somewhere beyond Mud Lake, so I said OK. Once we'd passed this big lake, the river goes this way and that, and while I was in the boat, flashes came back to me of us traveling with the family and dogs running along the shoreline. And when we got to his camp we passed a little brook running past where he used to have his camp and I started thinking about rapids - I remember shooting down rapids and how I thought it was so much fun to go down rapids - I was so small and didn't realize it could be dangerous. When we used to travel from one place to another, did we ever travel along that little river going this way and that way, we had dogs running along the shore, and he said yeah. Did we ever shoot down rapids - because when we used to go from the Old Osnaburgh to Macrae Lake there's rapids there and I remembered that - but I also remembered at one time when we had dogs running along shore I remember my dad and my mom quickly getting off the canoe or boat whatever they were using. I remember my dad saying to my mom - 'cause I knew my language then - one of them has to go. But I think we'll be able to keep one. And I was thinking then, I know they're talking about the dogs. But they had to kill one dogs. And I remember seeing my dad having something black

steel, I think it was metal and going off into the bush. And they had been attacked by porcupines and they had quills and that's why he went into the bush, and I heard the dog crying or barking - I think he was taking the quills out. And these kind of flashes they come at odd times.

About this residential school. I can't remember. I even went to the site. This elder guy who was working with us he said he had never gone to a residential school. He had this dream that there were kids babies crying from underground asking for help. He was bewildered when he woke up but he knew there were some spirits asking him for help or somebody for help and I don't know why but the name Macintosh came to my mind. So that summer when I read in the Wawate that there was going to be a gathering at Macintosh at that Long weekend in Sept. When I make plans to go I always have a backup plan, but this time it didn't work out - I wasn't really meant to go. And the second time I didn't go. But the third time Daisy and I went - Daisy kind of dragged me to go and I was willing to do. Was that place ever small. I mean the building wasn't there, but the area, and I used to think it was so big - really big, but I remember some of the building where they used to be and I remember a dam, but there was never a walkway there. We went down to the stream, and I was telling Daisy I remember us girls sneaking off to go wade in the stream, but we were told not to go there, but we used to have so much fun there. We washed our feet there, we knew we'd get into trouble. I was telling my brother - and he said, wasn't that the way in residential school? We did have fun, where we had fun, but with the knowledge that we'd get into trouble. So that's the way it was then. We even went to the place where we used to play baseball. It looked so small. We went to the graveyard - everything so small. But you know when I left there, Daisy asked me how I was feeling and I said to her I don't understand - the only things I remember is the good fun that we had there. Even afterwards when we got into trouble, I don't know what kind of punishment we had. I don't know if I honestly do not remember or if I choose not to remember.

(very warmly ---with great spirit) But then again how can I choose not to remember? Don't you think you would remember even if we choose not to remember?

I used to sing in a choir too when I was at school. We went to this church, this church building, it's still there. We didn't look inside. I remember how it looked -- everything was so brown. It had an upstairs like a balcony, but I can't remember where the piano was but we used to sing up there. I remember the choir nun that did that telling me I had a very good voice. She used to tell me to eat burnt toast. I don't know if that causes a good voice - maybe she just wanted me to eat burnt toast. They used to tell me to eat lots of carrots because it was good for my eyesight.

## Johnnie Derouin

I was born out there, Metcalf Lake, and one of the councilors, Connie, her grandmother delivered me, right in the middle of the woods. My dad's dog team couldn't make it quick enough to the old reserve here, but my dad was smart enough to have a midwife, and he brought her along, and somewhere along the way, my mom couldn't hang on, I couldn't hang on, so my dad built a little tent just in the middle of the shoreline, middle of December, kind of cold too they say, and there it was. Didn't bother going to the clinic here in town, just turned around and went home.

So we lived there at Minnis Lake in our village, and we lived there till the MNR came along and told my Dad that there were shutting down his commercial fishery out there. That was about 30 - 35 years ago, they told him they're going to shut it down, that they're not doing any more commercial fishing up there. So we moved to the road here, to 599, and our village up in Minnis Lake which were basically our year-round homes, they were turned into trapping shacks, turned into seasonal. We kept going back and forth every year, and we did that for a long time, going from our permanent homes there by the road to out there for the summer, sometimes in the spring and the fall, whatever we felt like doing, but we had our permanent home by the road. Then the school caught up to us, so we all had to leave home. So we went boarded out to all over the place, Pickle Lake, Thunder Bay, Kenora, wherever they could find us homes, I guess, places people would take us in.

*So you didn't seek out school, school sought out you.*

Yeah, yeah, that's basically what happened. I was eight years old when I started school in Pickle Lake, and they put me in Grade One. I was a little too old I guess, cause I had spent all my time in the bush with my grandparents; I didn't stay with my Mom and Dad, but with my grandparents. They sent us out to Thunder Bay.

*Commercial Fishing...your dad had a commercial fishing license?*

I don't know if it was personally his, but he was operating for somebody I guess that had the fishing license for up in that area, and I believe that when my dad first moved to this area, he come out to fish, and that's where he met the people that are my family now: he met them all at Minnis Lake, and put them to work on the nets and stuff. That's how we came to be, that's how we originated, that's how he met my mom and stuff, about forty years ago. It's about 30 years since they shut him down.

*What did he do after the commercial fishing was done?*

He just kept doing the same thing. He'd take odd jobs here and there. In the summertime, there was a lot of highway work back then. You know, he did a bit of bus-driving for the Harrison brothers, ran a bus line up here at Pickle lake, he'd do all the freight and stuff, pick up the mail and stuff that came off the train. He did that for a while, plus he did his trapping and stuff.

...Me and my brother and sister, we would just play games, like, sometimes I would be the moose and they would be the hunters. Stuff like that, 'cause there wasn't really much to do, 'cause we didn't know much, we didn't really have an outside world to get influenced by, so therefore, we just acted out whatever these people were telling us, you know. It was fun at the time, because that was the only thing we knew.

We had nothing like big Tonka trucks and stuff, but my grandfather used to make us stuff. Like little airplanes, little boats, stuff carved out of cedar, and he'd make us little bow and arrows and little rifles made out of wood and stuff like that. I remember seeing a toy car one time, when we were at Charlie Davidson's store at Pickle Lake, that was around 69 or 68. We saw this little toy truck, so obviously we couldn't afford it, but we had the basic idea in our heads, so when we got back home we built it ourselves out of wood. So it was an old wooden truck, but at least hey, it worked. (Smiles)

So that's what we used to do when we were kids, but like I said, we didn't really have any outside influence like Nintendo games or anything like that to take away that. And we were kind of lucky too, I feel lucky, I think it was very lucky to be able to do that.

...This is what my grandfather and my grandmother used to do. Early in the morning, about six thirty in the morning, we would paddle out on the lake and go put our net in the water. And at about eleven o'clock that same morning, we'd go and pull all the fish out of it, bring it back in hang the net up so it dried off. And grandma would take all this fish, she'd make it all up, and by twelve o'clock she'd have it all up on the smoke rack, getting it prepared. She'd fry some up for lunch, and she'd sit there all afternoon in her smoke rack, getting this fish prepared. So at about five or six in the evening, after slow roasting it all day, she would have supper ready. And they used that smoke like a freezer, cause when it has the smoke and heat, it cannot spoil. And no bugs are going to get on because of the smoke. So instead of freezing it like you would in a freezer, it's the same concept, except you use the smoke to preserve it. And that's what basically the smoke rack was all about, it was like a freezer. And then you just take it right off the rack and eat it. It's the best food in the world.

...I never kill anything unless I'm going to eat. That's the way I've always been taught. Unless you're a mosquito, then you've got problems. Back in the old days, Grandma used to take some moss, put it in a tin can with a match in it, that long, stringy moss, and it would sit there and smudge, and she'd close the door of the tent. Everyone would get out of the tent for about twenty minutes, and she'd smudge this thing and the tent gets full of smoke with moss. And then when everyone was ready to go to bed, we'd just get in the tent and make sure no bugs get in, and that was how they did it. But nowadays we just throw a mosquito coil up, it's easier. See, that's what I mean, getting back to the point -- we used to use moss for mosquito repellent, but how many people would know that today?

## George Kiesickquayash .

George spoke in Ojibway and then translated into English himself afterwards.

Videotape

February, 2002

My father was an Anglican preacher. He didn't teach his children the traditional ways. When he died in 1945 or '46, I went to live with my aunt, who taught me how to live in the bush. We lived in a wigwam and shot beaver, muskrat, and all kinds of animals.

I was sent to stay alone in the bush, and I wasn't given a blanket. All I had was a fire to keep me warm all night. I kept putting wood on the fire. Later, my uncle told me that he came out there every night to check on me, to make sure I was safe. We usually took flour, noodles and sugar, but this time I had nothing. If you didn't shoot or snare anything, you didn't eat. That's how you learned. I never forgot the things my uncle and aunt taught me. They taught me about tobacco. My uncle died when a tent burnt while he was in it.

When they died, I went back to live with my mother. I grew up in Pickle Lake, and just came here to Lake St. Joe for treaty days. My sister is Eva Skunk. My uncle taught me to make everything, like rabbit snares, everything. I was to live alone, but I didn't listen and got into a lot of trouble, a lot of drinking, stealing. Ended up in jail in Thunder Bay, Stoney Mountain, and a few other places. That's how bad it was. Nobody made me drink. I took it, I did it. Everyone is responsible for his own actions, myself included. It really makes me angry when people don't take responsibility for their drinking and other bad behaviours.

### *A story from his youth.*

It was nice outside one evening, maybe about midnight. The moonlight shone off the snow that surrounded the wigwam where we lived. As I was walking, I saw a stump with some snow on top of it. Somebody was on top of the stump. I watched it for I don't know how long, maybe 10 or 15 minutes. Then it popped up – flew way past the trees. That snow went to the North. It flew. There wasn't even any wind – it was a quiet night. There wasn't even a sound through the trees. I never mentioned this to anyone for a long time. Ten years after that, I mentioned it to a few people. They didn't say anything. I was told not to tell. Some kids see these kind of things, and are told not to tell about it. I don't know what that means - you can learn something from it. It's a teaching.

I stayed for two years in a Residential school at Pelican Falls. Two years. I was there for two years when someone keeps bugging me. I felt a big hand right on my chest. I started shaking. That's what happened when I was in school. I couldn't even move. It was not a dream. I can feel it, a really big hand. I can't see his face, just feel it. My friend wanted to go to the washroom, and I saw someone sitting in hallway. I was screaming, crying. The lady asked me what was happening. I told her that someone's sitting there. She didn't believe me.

I've seen a lot of visions before. I never keep them. I'll just forget about them. One time, I saw a vision when I was hunting in springtime, hunting ducks. I saw some geese sitting there in the middle of the river. I was getting close to them and I heard someone walking in snow. I saw a person walking there. He was wearing green pants and a green jacket. All green. Green

pants, and even shoes. I don't know who that guy is. I was scared to call to him. I took off on him. My aunt was still living then. I told her what I saw. When she heard my story, she almost hit me. "You should never tell," she said. Back then, I didn't know why she said this. I understand now, though, because this person was Shamackanago (Person who goes across Canada in spring). Every spring he travels. He was holding a stick, that was his rifle. She told me the story about that one there. It was a long story.

He came north, hit the south. That's the last one I saw, that vision there. I don't know how far I ran, maybe two or three miles. It really scared me, that one. They told me he won't bother me. He was Ok. He's just traveling, hunting. That's what he does.

Talking about Shamackanago – when he traveled, he was singing. I remember how that song sounds. He was singing to the woman I was talking about. I tried sometimes, but couldn't sing it. This is the first time I remembered that song. Ever since he traveled in spring he sings that song. They don't touch anybody. Kids try and catch him, and he walks right through. Only some people saw him. When he walks across the lake he gets smaller, that's how he walks through the lake. I don't know what kind of person that is. He doesn't smoke, but he takes tobacco. He just walks. Tobacco is an offering for when he catches something. That's what he does.

I can't remember all the stories. We always used to talk about stories, especially when going to bed. It was just like now, when you start reading a story, kids begin to sleep, listening to story. They just listen to story and get to sleep.

Some of them, they don't believe these kinds of stories. I've never seen or heard anyone talk about that one, except for one person. I've seen that one person talk about that story. I was smoking that time, and I gave him tobacco after he told me that story. That's what I usually do. You listen to a story, then offer something.

## Abraham Masakeyash

Translated by Mary Masakeyash, February, 2002

My dad's name was Sinclair Masakeyash. I will tell a few stories of the past. Dad passed away when I was eight years old, so I don't really remember that much about him and his life before that. My mother and my uncle took care of us when we were growing up. My uncle was older than my dad, so he looked after us. We almost starved when my dad passed away. Sometimes we would only kill one rabbit in a day. Sometimes my mom would catch only one little jackfish in a day. The next day she would feed us fish again. That was the only thing she would catch. We never had flour or anything like that. We had a pretty hard time. If mother didn't catch anything, we would starve. I would make myself a fishing rod so I could fish down by the lake. Sometimes I would bring back four pickerel or jackfish after a whole day. We lived alone. Sometimes Mom would be gone all day trying to get food for us. Sometimes somebody would show up with a pack of moose meat or whatever they had, so we wouldn't starve. Not until I was 16 did I go trapping on my own to help out Mom. We only had traps to use – nothing else to hunt with. I used to hear stories about people who would starve because the men had no energy to hunt for them. So they'd starve until they got their strength back.

I was only bothered by Mensokaneck once, but they didn't really bother us. They just yelled at us from across the lake. We would see tracks sometimes, but they didn't really bother us. So we left the old settlement, and traveled down river to get away from the Mensokaneck who were yelling at us from across the river. Me and my mom went to a river named Wahagamang, which is by the power lines up there. Somebody was taking our muskrats off our traps and also turning our traps upside down so we couldn't catch anything. We almost stayed up there because we couldn't catch anything. We had only two smoked fish when we decided to come back to the settlement. We finally decide to set the fish net for the night. I was small at the time. I was looking around like a normal kid, and I saw two figures. I thought they were human, and I asked my mom what they were. She said that they were two moose which were far from us. We had only a 22, and had only had two long-range bullets. She was paddling, and we didn't even get halfway to them before they noticed us. Mom took a shot at one, and the moose turned around and ran away into the bush. My mom said that she thought she had hit it. When we got closer to shore, we saw the bush moving close to shore. She had hit the moose right in the throat area, where the 'V' is. We killed a really big one. We were so happy that we had killed it. We cut up the moose, and stayed up there about four days while we were smoking it.

Then we took off towards Lake St. Joe and met up with family. That is the first time I ever ate bannock. They fed us when we got there. We gave them some of our meat. I remember going out towards where they had supplies, and Mom had a few muskrat pelts to sell. Another time we went out fishing at a place called Gowahagamany. As soon as we got to the river we could tell that fish were spawning there. We could see their fins sticking up out of the water. While we were setting up nets, Mom saw a moose. Mom had a big long musket with a flintlock on it, and she took a shot at it and killed it instantly. We were getting ready for the upcoming winter, and we were rich in food. We had smoked meat, smoked fish, pemmican from moose, and pemmican from fish. We only had two traps.

## Carrie Lastheels

Paraphrased by Mary Masakeyash

Feb. 24, 2002

People in the old days used to have fish and moose meat for their basic diet. There were a lot of fish around back then. It was foretold to me by elders that there would be a lot of drinking going on. It was foretold that people would fall into that trap. I was also told, long before the road was put in, that there would be a road going through. I don't know how the elders knew that.

The first time I saw a white man, he gave me an orange. I threw it away because I didn't know what it was. The first time people ate sugar, they got sick. Kids had no cravings for anything sweet in those days. When they wanted something sweet, they would take a stick to a tree and they would get something sweet out of there.

James Masakeyash told us a lot of things that would happen. I can't tell you all of those things now, but some of those things have already happened.

A long time ago, people lived off the land. People brought supplies from Sioux Lookout and Hudson. They would only come in twice a year. My dad only bought flour, lard and tea. They called flour "seven-pounders." Lard was cut into small chunks. I don't know where Dad got the money to buy things.



## **Francis Muckuck**

Translated by Gordie Massakeesic  
January, 2001

When I was born, my father became the midwife. There were no other people around. I was born in the snow, and my dad had to get some branches and break the branches on the snow for me to lie on.

When I was born, my family was traveling from one place to another, so that's why I was born on the trail. But most babies would have been born in the tent so that they could be kept warm. It's amazing to me that I survived in that very cold weather.

On the following day her grandmother was going to visit, and she was very happy because she could deliver her grandchild. A while later the father met the grandmother, who said, "I want to come deliver my grandchild." But the father said, "It's too late - she's already born."

We left a little boy behind, Edward, he passed on. He was very small.

When the grandmother arrived at the place she had been born, they put up a tent there and waited a while until the mother was really well, and then they moved again.

When they were traveling and needed a shelter, they had to make their own shelter out of spruce or jack pine. Just a tall pole with branches formed a shelter type of structure. When they built a fire, the snow wouldn't melt. Instead, it would just drip along the outside, like water dripping down a roof. When you built a fire inside, the smoke would go out of the little opening at the top.

They used to use birch bark for shingles. They would cut up birch bark into sheets and sew it together, and then use it for shingles. It was very warm, good shelter against wind, just like sitting in a house. They learned to make these things by experience. It was natural. There were a lot of resources out there and they learned by using these materials. They used some kind of vine-like root of a tree as a kind of string to patch up holes in the birch bark. It was really strong. This was like sewing a patch, and it did not leak through once it was mended like this.

Some people had a very hard time surviving in the bush. It could be very sad. Some people didn't know how to make proper shelters. They would just put branches on top of the snow, pack the snow down and put branches over and that was their bedding. It was very miserable. Some people didn't have proper clothes like others did. Only the ones that killed rabbits had rabbit coats and pants. She herself didn't have that kind of clothing, because they didn't have any rabbits.

*So there were differences in the lifestyles and knowledge of people living in the same area?*

Nobody was able to have a big group like we do today. You want to stay in the group, but this was not possible - large families had to move on. Some people stayed, but some would just keep

moving, continuing to live off the land. People were in that condition when they couldn't build shelters, and they had to stay and learn from the other people. It was really hard in those days, especially if you had a large family. All you had was a large teepee or wigwam and that's where you'd stay. There were no beds like today – you'd just use the ground.

The only way of transportation was by foot, with snowshoes. If the men were gone hunting they'd be gone for days, ten days at the most. If they hadn't caught anything, they'd stay out until they had something. They wouldn't come back without game. They would travel by snowshoe, pulling sleighs, and the only source of wood they had was an axe. They did not have handsaws at that time.

When the men came back, they would unload whatever they were carrying, whatever they had brought. Then they'd stop for a while and help the women gather wood again, and as soon as there were enough supplies in the camp, they would take off hunting again.

They had no matches, but just a piece of metal. On the birch tree there would be a black fungus which would be about the size of a hand. They would bang the fungus against the piece of metal and this would create a smoldering which started the fire.

In the days of fur trading, you'd have to walk all the way to the community called Mishkeegogamang. That was a long ways to walk in the wilderness. There was no community called Pickle Lake. Sometimes you'd have to go for 50 miles or more. When you were in the wilderness, you'd have to walk all the way down. Of course, you had a sleigh where you would carry your fur and extra food. There were no planes, there was nothing except water and land. It's not too long ago when gold was discovered. In the days before the mining industry began, life was very hard. You wouldn't hear of an accident if someone was shot. You wouldn't hear about it if someone fell through the ice. There was no way of passing news along. But if someone was really, really sick, the news might get out by someone passing through and bringing the news. Life was very hard then.

When you have to travel from Minakwa Lake, by car it's only a few hours, but if you walk it's 10 to 15 days. My father traveled to Mishkeegogamang all by himself. I had to do that sometimes. When the mining industry began, air travel began. When you were in the wilderness, the planes would hardly ever come along. When you were moving from place to place, a guy would always have a rifle with him, prepared for wolves, or moose. You were always armed. You'd never forget your rifle.

*How would they find their way from way out there to a small place?*

I've wondered about that too. When they traveled they would just go straight on ahead. They never had to look around. Sometimes if they'd come to a river, or some rapids, they'd walk along it for a ways and start to look around for beaver lodges, or they might start looking for rabbit trails. They didn't have to search around for the way they were going, though. I'm amazed how they found the places they were looking for.

Moose hide:

They would stretch it out quickly before it freezes, first cutting it in half and then stretching it out. If it froze you'd have to thaw it, and then start over again. They would cut off the fur with an axe, clean it, and then tan it. And that's where they got shoes, mitts, and hats.

*How did they get their lard?*

Moose fat was used. It was rendered by putting it into a large frying pan, or metal container, heating it up until it was liquefied, then letting it freeze. That was their lard supply, and it always had to be done.

In the springtime, just before everything melts, they'd clear all the snow and get out the moose meat that had been killed during the winter. Then racks were made, and the moose meat was smoked. There's a little piece above the hoof and below the knee where you make a little hole, and there's lots of fat there. That was used for lard. When the meat was smoked, it was crushed, and more meat was piled onto the racks.

Ducks and geese have a lot of fat. Their meat was cut up, sliced, and smoked on a rack. On the goose there is a tube in the throat that ends in a little sack. When you blow it up it's like a kind of balloon, and that is where the fat is stored. They would combine the powdered moose meat with the fat, and put all into a birch bark basket. It was the same thing with fish, such as jack fish. They would strip the skin off, scrape that out really good, and then blow it up and use it to store grease.

*Where did your grandparents and her great-grandparents come from?*

My maternal grandmother was a Sioux native who came from down south, but my grandfather was from Mishkeegogamang. They met in their travels. When my mother's parents passed away, a guy came down from the Lansdowne area, and he felt sorry my mother because she was an orphan. He began to take her out for hunting, and that's how he eventually took her as his wife.

People just became partners for the time before the minister came around, and when he eventually did, he'd give them an official document saying they were married. When the minister finally came around, everyone got together and all the ceremonies were done at once. Children were sometimes several years old before they got baptized.

[When someone died] in those days they had no shovels, so at burial ceremonies they would use a part of a birch tree, like a ski, if the gravel was soft. But if the ground was hard, they would use a frying pan as a shovel.

## **Francis Muckuck**

Translated by Pat Nadeau

Spring 2001

The native never ran out of food, he never went hungry. He always had lots of food. He had moose meat from killing moose. There was no shortage of food. He always felt good. And not that he eats white man's food, it's as if he is drained of life. That's what I think, that could be because I'm an elder now. I feel empty, that I have no energy to move around. I used to be very strong, I felt, because I looked after myself the way I was meant to, to be strong. Hunting was a very good thing. A person never used mechanized vehicles, he only had his legs to use, to walk with. The same with me, I slept out on the snow when I was helping out with the trapping. I did well for myself by trapping, and I tried to learn everything about why things were done the way they were. I could do everything. I even learned how to trap under the water, I could kill those animals that live in the water.

And that's what I miss for the native people that live on the reserve. Why are they not still teaching their children the ways? They should still be teaching those ways because they are still valid ways. This land was given to the native people to live on, and that's not happening at all. He is not looking after himself. He always sits inside a house. That's how I am, I always sit inside. I don't hunt. I don't get my wood. I never ran out of things when I was young. I always worked. I wasn't happy if I was inside too long. I had to be outside, to be working and hunting outdoors. I was striving to be able to trap. I could use a canoe, I could paddle to where I had to trap. [Even though I was a mere female,] I was able to get all the animals that a man could get. And that is what the children should be learning today. That's what a good life there was for the native person then. From childhood, he learned to fend for himself by copying the way things were done properly by the adult men. That worked well. That's how it was for me too. It was good for me to kill animals to feed myself and my parents and elders, with my hunting skills. The hunting life is really good.

Eating only the white man's food is no good. It wasn't like that in the old days. I never feel full when I eat the white man's food, only native food. When I eat the white man's food, I feel that the meat is empty. But when I eat wild food, I seem to be stronger even in one week. I seem to feel healthier. But when I eat the white man's food, it doesn't agree with my stomach. And that's why I say this. This is what is going to happen to the native children. They will grow sluggish because they are not eating the food that they were meant to eat, the food that their parents would have taught them to eat. The mother should be teaching this. And the water that's taken from the frozen lake, where it's been stirred by the fish that are taken out, fished out. The mother could be teaching this skill to the children. That's what I was taught.

We were taught all over the place. I still have not forgotten all the things I was taught. I worked all the time. I was never sick. I was strong when I was young. I was truly very healthy. I was as healthy as this one here, I never felt tired when I walked even through the deep snow. I used to accompany my father, that's how I learned how to hunt. I used to break in the deep snow for him. That's how I realize that the old ways of the native people have truly fallen. The ways of hunting and fending for oneself. These ways have fallen, I have seen it happening, that's why I say it. And this is happening with native people everywhere.

I think only a very few native children are being taught this kind of thing. I saw some little girls here, their mother was hauling firewood. And these girls were helping their mother. And

so this a kind of education for children. And this is what they are going to pass on to their children when they reach that age, they will have no fear of hard work, they'll get out there and work hard. And that's what our women elders should teach the younger ones. The older woman should teach the younger woman to help her, to teach her how to do things properly. That's what was done to us, that's how we still know these things to fend for ourselves.

Our mother taught us many things. We were also taught how to look after our homes inside. We were taught to keep our yards tidy and clean so there would be no garbage lying around outside. And so we learned while we worked. And that's what I miss for the native people on the reserve, that they are not teaching the children the old ways. This is what I taught my child when he was small. He cried when he tripped and fell. He was small but I made him walk. I wanted him to walk far and carry the minks he trapped. I wanted him to be a good worker. And so, he became that. He never lacked anything, because he would always go out and hunt for what he wanted. He'd spend nights out in the bush. But now he cannot go away because of his poor health.

I don't know what else I can talk about. But still, I could NEVER run out of things to talk about if I have to describe exactly how the people used to make their tools. The native person used to make his own tools from trees. To make a dish, he simply took birch bark and fashioned a dish out of it, then sewed around it, to put things in it. And that's where he put anything he didn't want to get dirty. Those were quite roomy and big. And some birch bark items looked like this. He placed his food in it so the food wouldn't spoil. He placed them outside. That's what native people did long ago, and it was a good way to live even though they didn't have modern tools. I wouldn't have enough to talk about, I could talk about how things were. I'm only talking about the things that I can just think of, as of last night, or even this morning. But I still remember the things that happened way, way back.

When a person experienced some misfortune, another person who had more fortune and therefore, more food, would go over and give some food to that less fortunate person to help out. That's how people lived in the old days. They lived very well. They look after one that was less fortunate. If a person had poor clothing, a richer one did not hesitate to give him clothes to wear. No one thought anything of it. The old women gave each other clothes to wear. That's why things went well long ago, because they fended for each other. I could tell lots of stories to describe exactly what when on.

It's important to appreciate what was given to us, to know the traditions and gifts that were passed to us, we own all of this, all that grows on this earth, we own the trees, shrubs, the earth. We were given those to live on. And that's why I say the children are only listening to the words of the white man. And so what's going to happen to them in the future if they are only going to live like white people and cannot work? The white man lives well because he can work well [in his own environment]. That is what I miss. The white man owns all of our world. And we love him for owning all that for us. It seems that we are rejecting the things that we were meant to have. We are rejecting so much that was meant for us to have, to use for our survival. This includes all the animals that we had for food, all that moves, all that's in the water, all this was given to us native people, we were not given white man's food to eat to survive. That was given to the white man for him to use, to grow and use. That was given to him to use, to feed himself. And now that's all we native people eat. We just eat the white man's food. We have already rejected what was given to us to use, so that we would be healthy.

It would enrich your children if you could teach them the ways that were given to them – hunting. We were meant to hunt. Now that I am an elder, I cannot do that anymore. I can only

watch the white man while he eats his food. I cannot even work for him so that I can feed myself. I can't even do that anymore. When I was young, even though I couldn't understand English, I still worked for the white man. I worked at the Hudson Bay Company store. I worked hard, earning money. I was afraid of running out of money so I worked really hard. I earned a wage there and that enabled me to buy tools that I then took to the trap line with me. I hunted and trapped out in the snow all winter and I had enough supplies to last me till the end of the season. And then I took my pelts in.

And this is just what happened way back when the native people had nothing. But he was not poor even though he look poor. He provided well for himself through his hunting. He never rested, he took his children with him. The father took his children, to teach them how to hunt. That's what I did for my child too. I had him hunt so that he would know how to. And he did until now because his heath is not so good now. He can't walk too much because he's rather sickly. That's why we don't have too much native food here right now. I never had any times of difficulty long ago, I never had the feeling that we were going to perish from starvation in the wilderness.

I went out there too with my tools, weapon, and blankets. We camped out there on the snow, just trampled the snow down to camp. There was nothing wrong with us, and the morning we got going with our work. People would go out to trap. I went out in the deep snow by myself too to set my own traps. I trapped the same amount as anyone else. That's how the children could be taught too. They would never know difficulty. They would learn independence when they trapped animals. That's how they would be. That's what I am telling you now. You people would be impressed by what I could tell you about how native people lived long ago. When I was this small, I can still remember clearly how people lived back then.

We never saw any motorized boats or vehicles. We just had dog sleds. To get some assistance from elsewhere, we had dogs to haul for us. But it wasn't until the snow on the trail was packed down that we would get the dogs pulling their sled. When an animal was killed out in the bush, the dogs would be used to haul it out of the bush. That's what was done in the old days. The native people were quite amazing, how they were able to look after themselves. They never came close to danger, even though they were so fond of hunting, they never were afraid of danger and the deadly cold weather. I never ever heard of a native person freezing to death in the wilderness. I never heard of anyone falling in the water either. I never fell in the water either, when I was hunting with my father.

I also know about looking after a house inside. Our mother taught us the proper way of doing it. All the ways that women are supposed to do. But now we are getting too old to work. We never ran out of anything, she [mother] used to prepare moose hide and that's where we got our moccasins from, and she'd take two pairs of those into the bush so that she could change them when it was necessary. That's what native people did long ago. And that was a good way for native people to live. Long ago. And now, the native person just sits there in his white man's shoes, following the ways of the white man. He wasn't meant to wear those kinds of shoes. I never see those kinds of moccasins nowadays on native people. Also mitts. My mother made mitts. I still remember people wearing those kinds of mitts here and there. And I see the pairs of mitts. And that was the right way of doing things. When people got cold in their arms, those were the things to wear. And they were able to keep warm. That's what was done long ago. Well, I think he/she is about to arrive now. If you people had told me earlier, if you had arrived earlier in the morning, but now it's getting late, and soon it's going to be night.

What I want to say is, I want to talk about how native children were raised by their native parents, I'm not going to discuss the white people. I shall just discuss the teaching of native children the customs. I'll be continuing what I began yesterday. It's the woman who teaches the children what's going to be lost. The mother. When food was killed (brought), it was prepared immediately so that it wouldn't spoil. Wooden poles were spread out and that's where the moose meat was hung, and that's where the children were taught how to hand it properly so the meat would be prepared properly. That's how the native people educated their children. It's the children's education that I talk about. Same for the fish. When the women got the fish from the nets, the little children ran down to the lake, and brought up the fish, to clean the fish as they were taught. They filled the fish so they could be hung to dry on the racks and then cooked them after. And then they made dried fish flakes out of them. Nothing was thrown away, no animal meat. Only the intestines were not prepared for food. Maybe some people did that for food for their children. They used the liver for food, and those children looked so healthy from eating like they should. They looked fat and white. And it was the old women who taught the other to feed their children like that. And that's what they told the younger women, "When you have children, you will raise your children the way I have taught you." That's what the old woman said. That's what I had been taught in the past. That's what the people did long ago. And now that is not apparent.

The men were going into the bush to hunt, and the food was prepared, so that it would be good. The foods were very fatty and good and that's what the men ate when they arrived. They chewed the fat up with their meal. No one looked bad long ago, to be bony. They looked so good long ago. That's how they looked long ago. And that's what the children should be doing today. They could be making them gut up the animals that are killed, the beavers that are killed. Even the little children who are really small learned all these skills because they were taught at an early age. That's what was done to us. There was nothing that we couldn't do. That's how the native people raised their children long ago. The old woman taught everything. That's how our old grandmother taught us. We didn't go running about the adults were busy. I got in there too. Even if I could do it, I persevered at the task. And that's what happened. When kids couldn't accomplish a task, they were told not to give up. They were told this, "When you grow up, there will be no one to look after you. You will be looking after yourselves, doing what you have been taught." That's what they were told. And now that's not happening. That way of raising children is not being continued. The raising of children the old way was very good. And when you saw someone who was experiencing bad luck and was getting hungry, you helped by giving him food.

You had food because of the way you were taught to make it. And that's what we did. We tried our best. Sometimes I cried when I was not able to fillet a fish properly. I was urged on to keep on doing it. I had to fillet the fish, hang it on the drying rack. That's what I was told long ago. But now, I'm not able to do that. I do still remember how to teach children if I see the mothers at their tasks – young girls. It was the young girls who got the teachings. Also the men, the boys. They were requested to get the firewood that would be used by people who were smoking the meats. The children were never lazy even when they were tiny. It was good for the native people long ago. The business of teaching the children never stopped. They had to finish their chores first before they could run about to play.

The girls were taught everything that the women do in their work. When moose was killed, the old woman used to make moose hide in the summer, while teaching their children how to do

that. It wasn't until the children could do it, then they stopped teaching them. (can't catch what she says here [spoken too fast] something about a blanket?) and that's what the girls do. And they couldn't do it, that's where they lay under the blanket, the moose hide. And that's how they were able to do it. And that's how they got big, because they worked with moose hide. And they were taught how to pull it [to soften it] and to shake it well. That's how the girls were taught. That's how we were taught too. Our mother taught us that. She taught us everything thoroughly. Our father too taught us. He would take the moose hide and work it with his hands to dry it, and our father would pull it repeatedly. That's what they taught us. And they would hold it near the fire but not too close or it would burn, we were told. And just for a short while. It dried pretty soon. And then that moose hide was sewn to form a tube. It was then placed over the smoking fire so that the smoke could enter it. There was no flame, just smoking embers and that's how it was tanned brown. The girls who were this size were taught to do that. That's what a woman did to teach her children. The native people taught their children everywhere. And now we don't have that, even I don't do that. But I still remember how things are done, exactly how they were done by native people. That's how they were taught too. I know everything that was taught to me by the people.

And in the winter, the father would make preparations. He would look around at the trees searching for the material he would use for snowshoes so that he could walk in the deep snow in the bush. The child was taught this skill. The father would take the young men to go look for the right kind of tree for this. The birch had to bend just right, that's how the boys who were this size were taught. About two went off to go looking. That's how the children were taught to get their snowshoes. They learned by watching him make the snowshoes. And as they became young men, they were able to do so too. I too was able to make my own snowshoes. I learned by watching. "This is how you will do it too, you have to bend it just right," I was told. "If you bend it improperly the wood will break." And sure enough, I did as I was told and I was able to make good snowshoes. But now, I'm not able to do anything. I was able to do anything that a man could do. And so I was able to have snowshoes from being taught. And same with the lacing of the snowshoes. That's what we did. We used to cry because we couldn't lace properly, we didn't know how to weave the sinew properly, they would be strong any old way. "That's not the right way!" we were told and I used to cry too. I would have to unlace it and do it all over again properly. And that's how I eventually learned to do it properly. It wasn't that I rejected doing it. I just cried out of frustration. I wasn't angry. But we still did it at the end. I can still do it a little. She's not even looking. The mother and the father too, taught their children well.

And the birch tree was so tall. It was split in half down the middle. It was obvious that it would work well being split in half. And then it was made into a board, two of them, and that's what was made into a toboggan. And then he bent it so that it would be curved like this. They looked really good, those toboggans. Women's toboggans too. They were able to make their own toboggans to carry their own things. I used to see a bunch of them pulling their belongings in them when there was moving going on. The moving was taking place on top of the snow. Young women had their beautiful hand-made toboggans of their own. That's how we did things. I wasn't taught that skill myself. I was only able to make the snowshoes that curve upwards. My snowshoes looked like everyone else's snowshoes, curving upwards. I used to plane the wood for the snowshoe, taking all day sometimes for one snowshoes, long ago when I was young and my eyesight was good. The native people never ran out of time, because of the



way they were taught. And their children were like that too because that's how they were taught. And that's how children should be taught now.

And people also lived in wooden tepees. They never lived in houses. The poles made of cut trees leaned against each other. They were shorn of their branches. And some of them were tied together with roots and then some more poles were placed on them. And then moss was placed there and also fir branches. Water never got through. The cold air never got through either. And that's where the native people lived. And they also took pieces of birch bark – you've seen birch bark – these pieces were sewn together like a quilt. So you'd take these and place them end to end, about this thick. They were quite long. And then these bark scrolls were placed over the wooden tepees. It was never cold. That kind of home was very warm. A big home. Recently I made one like that here out of birch bark pieces but I burned them up. I could still make one that could then be copied.

That's what was done. That's how we were taught, how our mother taught us. She knew how to do everything. That's where anyone could run to if she didn't know how to make something, to our mother's, the novice would run with something that she didn't know how to do. And our mother would teach her until she learned how to do it on her own. That's how effective the native way of teaching is. That kind of education is extremely good. The way people prepared native food was very good. People never went hungry. When people wanted to eat, they would just go to where they had stored food. The one who taught her children to store their food like this, she would be the one who would go to her store of food and share her food. And this would be the same food that her children had helped gather, this food that was being shared. There is no end to how good this kind of knowledge was. I learned this too. Sure, at first I cried because I felt that it was difficult. But eventually, I got the hang of it. As I grew more skilful, I got to enjoy it more. It was more fun when I know what I was doing. That's what happened with us long ago. And I think that's what happened everywhere with the education of our children the traditional way. And now, that is not happening at all throughout the native land. I don't think that is existing anywhere. At least where I have gone, I don't see people to be living like that anymore. People only use the white man's tools and live in houses.

Well, we used to live only in the wood tepees. They were quite big, and that's where people lived quite comfortably. There was never any smoke from the fires to sting our eyes. There was never any smoke from the fires to sting our eyes. The same with birch bark wigwams. There was never any smoke from the fire to sting our eyes. It was so...and we used fir branches as flooring and as mattresses. In the summer, we slept on the fir branches in the wood tepees. And where the space is open at the top, it was closed off with leafy branches. No mosquito could find its way in. That's what native people did long ago. That's what a person could do today. That's what people could do if they wanted to sleep there. They used to fashion leafy branches all around, using the long leafed trees (willows? We call them). We pulled off those branches and then we placed them to form a dome. That's what we used to do long ago. Heck, we used to do that very recently. It's just now that we're living by ourselves that we don't make things like that anymore. Myself, I can't do as much, other, I'd be making stiff like that still. I would be hammering wooden pegs (laughter)

I'll only say a little bit. I don't really know too much about what happened with my parents back then. Still, my father came from Attawapiskat. From the east. And our grandmother came from Sioux country. And that's where my mother came from. That's where she came from – a Sioux woman who was stolen from her people by the Ojibwas. And that's where our father came from, from a Sioux woman. And this is what they did. They went to each other. Our father came to

Osnaburgh, and that's where he saw the woman he would marry. Our mother was an orphan right at that time. And so our father took her because he felt sorry for her, that there would be no one to look after her. That's what he felt, why he took her. And sure enough, she accepted him too. She agreed that she wanted to be rescued. And that's how it came about that they would be a couple.

And so it was here in Osnaburgh that our father spent his times because he got himself an Osnaburgh woman for a wife. Osnaburgh was where that old Sioux woman used to go often, and ended up living here. And so this is where our father ended up too because he took the Sioux woman's daughter. And so it happened, how we ended up, our father came here to hunt in this part of the wilderness. He always dwelled here. He hardly went to Osnaburgh. He hunted here all the time. Here, where we live at this lake. We spent all our time all around this lake. All summer, we'd move from one site to another. That's what he did. Nothing bad ever happened to those two when they lived at this lake. And that's where we lived all that time.

And now there are just five of us. We used to live here with our father. This is where we were all born. We were not born elsewhere. This is where we all spent our childhood. And this is what our parents did, when our father dies, we went to spend the summer in Osnaburgh. When our father died, and this is what I thought, that we should not give up living on this lake, where we were born. It would end with us when we die, is what I thought. And that's why we dwell here. There is more story to this that I'll be telling to explain why we are here. We are here so that we cannot be on the reserve. We are trying not to disobey someone's words, why we are in the middle of this ground. People do see us living here, they see some movement here, whenever they pass by.

And this is what our father said, that when he died, we were not to leave the land where he raised us, and this is where we were all born, not one of us was born elsewhere. It was this same one lake where we were all born. And that man who was my father gave me life. They were travelling on the snow one time, and my mother was in labour. I was born right on the trail in the middle of the snow. I was born in the snow. Only my father was there to attend to my birth. They were travelling somewhere. And that's what happened. And this is what they said, both of them said this. Our mother had died already. "This is where you [daughters] are going to live, where we raised you."

And so this is why we stayed here. We did not want to break our word, why we did not move to the reserve. We do not want to destroy his words. And those of you who know what has happened to our reserve, what has happened to us on our reserve, why we came here. They made fun of us. They were cruel to us because we were orphans. And so we were not wanting to remain there in a house on the reserve. We had a nice enough house there left to us by our mother. So we dismantle our home, and left that house that had been left for us by our mother. As so those were the words of our last living parent, that we should return to our home here. And so that's what happened finally.

They left first. I was by myself at that house. I was the last to move out. I was afraid towards the end when people would bring liquor into the house and do their drinking inside. Sometimes I would stand outside and wonder what to do or where to go. I didn't want to bother anyone else in their home. I didn't want to sleep where there was drinking. There was also some gas sniffing going on. But I was able to stop the sniffers. I would grab their sniff but they tried to fight me. They weren't really able to fight me. Still I was afraid to stay there. The policeman knew about this. But he was the one who chased us off the reserve so that we would move to this spot here. Go back to where you used to live, he said to us. And so those are two

people's orders that we followed. It seems that we are following those orders. That's why we are here.

[About traveling to Osnaburgh]

Over there, we often took the usual route that people traveled through. We went away and followed the route, including a portage until we arrived at Osnaburgh. That's one way we went. There are two portages. There's a river there and then it forks, and then it connects to Osnaburgh. That's how we traveled, by paddling. No motors, just our arms. His bundles were spotted from spoilage, his belongings and the same with his food. It was so difficult for the native person as he traveled around. Comfort was not known, it's only recently that we've known comfort, since the flooding of our land.

*How long did it take to travel to Osnaburgh from here by paddling a canoe?*

I think people slept five nights when they traveled all day. It would have been five nights even when people traveled the whole day right till when the evening sun started to set. That's when people were coming from over there. And the river is rather wide. Where the ...River comes out, to ... and then they portaged where there's sharp rock rapids. And then they crossed there and then came out to this lake here. And then finally to Osnaburgh. And then up to Swamp portage, and then again it crossed over to Osnaburgh. And suddenly you reached Osnaburgh.

...And now the native person has tools to use. Back then there was nothing to use. We had a saw that you swing back and forth. There were lots of axes long ago. Also the fire that you just hit. The "apiz", it was called (flint?) and it was curved, that was their fire. And they just hit it repeatedly into birchbark, actually the "zagataagan", birch tree fungus. That's where they hit it until that fungus began to burn, and then they placed birchbark close by until it ignited into flame. That's what they used to do. I saw that fungus myself.

We used to hit it repeatedly just to try it out. "You'll cause a fire!" we were told. And sure enough, it would spark. That's how creative the native person was when his "apiz" went out, that was it. It won't start a fire. Only when that 'apiz' kept an ember was it good. Another thing that used to be hit, it looked different. It was metal and it curved like this. And that's where a person hit it repeatedly to make a spark and that 'apiz' caught fire, the ember fell there and the fungus burned. There were so many difficulties that beset the native person long ago to make his life misery. But he never acted miserable (it was just the way life was). He used to put syrup in tin cans. They were large cans, about this large. And that's where he kept his fungus. He would then take his fire with him and then he would take it out, blow on it repeatedly until it burned. That's where he got fire. That's because an ember in a birch fungus does not extinguish. That's what the native person did when he traveled about. That's what was done long ago. These ones would know that as they saw it, this 'apiz' that I'm talking about. It was worn around the neck. "Don't lose it," we were told. We used to toss it up in the air, me and Eva. It was metal and big. Sure enough, we were careful to not lose it when we played with it. "That is fire, don't play with it," we were told. "We won't have anything to make a fire with if you lose that," we were told. "We'll starve if we can't build a fire," we were told. And that would be what would stop us from twirling it around in the air. That string used to be long. It wasn't real string, it was moose hide thong. That's what happened to us long ago.



## Eva Skunk

Translated by Mary Masakeyash  
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I'll talk about people and how they lived in the old days. People didn't have houses then like they do now. Conditions in the houses back then were quite poor. We used to look for big tree branches to make a wigwam. We never had stoves to make a fire, so we had to make fire outside. We used to have an open fire inside the wigwam. I don't know how it didn't make any smoke inside the wigwam. I don't know how we managed to clear the air. That's what I remember from back then.

Blankets didn't look like the ones we have nowadays. They used to use rabbit skins. They used to call them *hozhabannick* in Ojibwe. This is how they made a rabbit skin blanket. They put the rabbit skin over a stump and tied a string around it to dry it. It depends on how many rabbit skins you put on it – that's how big the blanket will be. After they dried 100 skins, they did something different afterwards. It's just like the way you stretch a moose hide. That's how you dry rabbit skin. You make it really dry, because when you dry it like moose hide it will shrink a bit. After 100 skins you will have a real big blanket.

A rabbit skin will last a whole year. You would do this every winter. I saw this with my own eyes. They also used to make rabbit skin jackets, rabbit skin hats, even mitts made out of rabbit skin. They used to make pants out of it too. Little kids used to look really cute in those outfits. The kids used to look like little monkeys running around. The outfits the kids wore were really warm so they didn't need a blanket. When we went to sleep, we could sleep anywhere because we were warm all the time.

Even though people were poor, they would never run out of stuff to make things out of. They also used to use caribou and deer skin for mats to put on the floor of wigwams. First they dried it out in the bush, with the fur still on it, and waited for it to dry. They were used for mattresses and rabbit skin blankets to cover themselves. Caribou or deer skin were also used as a blanket. In the wintertime they used to make sure skins didn't have any bugs (ticks) on them. They would hang skins out in the cold to freeze them, so that there would be no bugs on the skins. The same was done with rabbit skins. That's how the old people used to do it. That's how they lived.

Most of the time people didn't have food except for rabbit once in awhile and fish. They used to make hooks out of tin cans. That's how they caught fish in the wintertime. That's how the mothers fed their kids – using fish broth. Men were always out hunting and women were always at home. They would hunt for anything – even trap. They even used to hunt for lynx, bobcat. They also ate lynx. Practically everything they killed they ate. Nobody wasted any food. Everything was eaten, even fish guts. Even beaver, everything was eaten. Even the rabbit; they didn't waste anything. Everything from the head to the guts they ate. When the white man came, living conditions improved a bit. I don't remember if I had any shoes. I remember in wintertime wearing shoes made of rabbit skin until my dad killed a moose. Then my mother made moccasins for us. The moccasins would last all winter and would never break. They didn't break because we were just kids.

When we got older they taught us to work. We were told to help our mom around the camp. We used to help with the chores. Anything an adult did, we had to do too. We would make wood, chop wood, stuff like that. It wasn't like it is today when you have all these things. It wasn't like that long ago. Everything was taught to children at an early age either by the parents or the grandparents.

Far back as I remember, kids were taught not to swear or say anything bad. A long time ago we were not allowed to say one bad word. It's not like that today. That's what parents used to tell their kids a long time ago. One spring when we were out camping, they told me and another girl we couldn't eat one day, and we asked why. We were confused for a while, wondering why they didn't want to feed me and Chee Chee Anne that day. Her English name was Charlotte, I think. We were told not to eat, but just to sit there and watch them eat supper. After supper my Dad's brother got up and walked away towards the shoreline. He was fixing up something, breaking branches off the tree, and then putting all the branches on the ground as if he was making a bed. Then he came back again. We weren't even allowed to drink water. They put black ashes around our eyelash area and on our foreheads. We didn't know what they were doing to us. When we were about to leave, our mom asked if we knew what they were doing to us. We were told we were being taken over there to seek a vision. I was very confused. I didn't know what that was all about.

So we followed our Uncle to where he put those branches. Then they dressed us up. They made us wear rabbit skin jackets and told us to go to sleep and not to say anything bad or dirty. They also told us not to be scared because somebody would be by later on in the night. The girl I was with couldn't fall asleep. She was scared of the dark too. So finally I guess I fell asleep until she tapped me to wake up. We were lying side by side. She said, "somebody's coming," and we heard the rustling of the leaves in the bush, the crackling of twigs coming towards us. I thought it was a rabbit. Sure enough, it was a rabbit, so we gave a sigh of relief and it ran away.

As we were lying there wondering who this person is and what they were going to do to us, the other girl said, "Let's go home to our camp." So we snuck home. I don't think it was even midnight when we snuck home. They only do this in the springtime. So we went to the camp where the teepee was and slept at both sides of the teepee. We were too scared to go in. There was a little thing there on the side of the teepee, and I climbed on there very quietly and fell asleep. Then I slipped down and fell right on top of the teepee. I could just hear my mother yelling. She was startled, I guess. "What's going on there?" she asked. Then I heard the other girl fall to the ground. I guess I startled her, too. They told us that we shouldn't have come back to the camp. They let us stay at the camp, but we were told to sleep outside with just what we were wearing. As long as we stayed outside, we could stay in the camp.

The next morning we were not allowed to eat breakfast. At first daylight, they told us to make wood. We were being punished because we didn't finish the night before. Maybe when we finished our chores they would feed us, we thought. I was wondering when I was doing my chores what would have happened to me if I had stayed out there all night and I knew who would have come for me because I saw this thing once. It only comes around in the springtime. I saw it once. I knew it would have come for me. That's what I was thinking when I was doing my chores.

Something came for me one time when I was sleeping. This person would sit on top of my legs, making them really hot. I couldn't move. I thought it was a dog at first, sitting on my legs and feet, but this person that I saw, sitting on my foot area, was really ugly. He had a big nose

and I couldn't really see his face. He had a pipe he was smoking, and he also had a hunchback. I couldn't speak to that thing. I was trying to move my legs. I could feel him looking at me. I just shut my eyes really tight. I was scared. He was really awful looking, this thing. I didn't know what it was. All of a sudden my legs felt really light, like someone had just got off them. My eyes were closed. I forgot to mention my dad shot a moose that day and he had hung its guts and intestines on the smoke ring. Before that thing took off, before he got off my legs, he would touch every one of those guts and intestines. I wondered who that thing was after he left. I was trying to find him out in the open area. It was really shiny in the moonlight. I was trying to find him, but I couldn't see him.

By daybreak, I got up really early, excited to tell my parents about what I saw. So I went to ask my mom if she knew what Peenitchteenekan looked like. I told her about the thing that was sitting on top of my legs. She gave me a slap on the head and told me not to tell anyone what I had seen. This happened to me twice in my life – seeing the same person. I think that's what they call a vision. I'm not sure. I guess James knew what the vision was. He used to tell me every detail about it. He would laugh at me. He told me about the time he went for his vision quest and what he learned.

Everything started to change when the white man came. When white man came, we started losing our way of life. We were also taught to honour our parents and all the elders, to honour or respect our parents and elders. And not just our relatives, either. We were also told that we were supposed to help them out with anything. Not just chores, but feeding them too, even cooking for them. I tried to do that when I was young. I always tried to follow what I was taught by my parents. Sometimes I mention this to my grandchildren when they come to see me. "I don't know why I had my daughters and I don't know why I had grandchildren when there are a lot of you that can help me around the house," I tell them.

I usually tell them I never used to do that to my grandmother when she was alive. I used to help her, especially with chores and cooking. I tell them I used to really try and help everyone that was elderly. Even now I still try to help the elders. I really love the elderly. That's what I was brought up to believe in, and that's why I do what I have to do. When I say that to my grandchildren, they usually just laugh at me. Of all my grandchildren, I don't think any one of them ever comes to the house just to clean up my floor or do the dishes. I guess everything is different now because of the way parents teach their kids. Ever since white man's education came, things turned different. Everything seems to be lost already. People don't even go out trapping any more. Not the way it used to be in my time.

I still try and instill in my grandchildren what I've learned. I still go out to trap, and I try to teach them the way of life the way I've learned it. The rest of my grandkids don't even know how to make a fire in the bush. But I still talk to them once in awhile and tell them not to treat me this way and to help other elders. I tell them to try and help out anybody who needs help with anything and that they should always keep in mind what I tell them. I think some of my grandkids did take my advice because I hear them talk sometimes about elders they have helped. You should not think about what you should get paid for all of this. That is how important an elder is. It does not have a price. What I am telling you now is some of the stuff I have learned from my parents.

The fish nets didn't look the way they look now. I will make one like they used to look like if you have the time. We made our own floats using long sticks that aren't like the floats they have now. We used to gather some little rocks to use as sinkers and used tree vine to tie the sinkers and floats to the net. We used to make our own nets. I remember helping my

grandmother make her own fish net. There is a certain way you make it. It wasn't like it is today, when it's easier for people nowadays to go fishing because the nets are already made for them. It was hard for people to put out nets, especially in the winter. They didn't have any augers, so they used big sticks. It only went a certain way. Where it stopped you had to make a hole and let it go under the ice again. I don't know how many holes they made to set out a net in the water. That's it about nets, but I have a lot of stories to tell. I want to make my stories short.

People use trucks now to transport moose, but it wasn't like that in the old days. They didn't have toboggans so they used a moose skin as a sleigh. If they were lucky enough to have dogs and sleigh they would use that. Those dogs usually had really nice reins. If I had the time I would show you how they were made, before I am too old. Right now as we speak, I'm 76 years old. But I'm still really into the traditional way of life. I haven't given up on it. I'm still into trapping and stuff.

People used to make tents or a shelter. There are three different kinds. The Pokwoyogan (like a teepee), the She o go be gan (like a wigwam, made with tree branches, but more round), and the Mit-o go gwam (like a log house, although not that particular shape). This was like a house, but there was no stove in there. They used to have an open fire. I've seen these things. My dad used to make them, and I saw him make them so I know how to make them. Weganagan is a round wigwam, where you bend the trees. I know if I make one outside my house, people will get the wrong idea. They will think I am making a shaking tent, but a shaking tent is shaped differently. That's one thing I never saw my dad make, a shaking tent. It was just a while ago that I saw someone make a shaking tent. It was someone local, but my parents never did that.

These are a few stories I'm happy to share because you asked me to share a few things with you. I know quite a few legends that were told to me when I was young. Some of the legends I have heard are very long so I won't get into them today. There's another thing I'm going to tell you. I always wondered how they made fire. There is one way I saw them do this in my time. They would chop down a cedar tree – cut it down and chop it and make it really smooth. They would make a little stick, put it between their hands, and rub it together. They would make a little hole in the middle. You would see little sparks coming from the cedar. I don't know how they got the sparks to go when they did that. That's how they started the fire. One time I saw them use rocks. They used to use two rocks and bang them together and I wondered why a fire came from that. We used to really shred little things like birth bark, moss, and other little things. We held them in a bundle and that's where he would bang the rocks together, on top of those bundles. I used to see my grandmother do this. She would start the fire by doing that. She told me that she was taught that by her mother. After they banged the rocks together and sparks got onto things, the fire would start. After she got the fire going, she would go out and look for a birch bark tree and she would look for this thing called sakatagan. The embers would never die. You put this in the fire and keep the embers. I never saw where they kept it so I can't tell you how they kept it. It lasted a long time.

I used to see my grandma and mother them make all kinds of things out of trees. There's a different kind of thing called Meesako, and they used to make cups out of it. Those things passed on from one to another. There was an elder, his name was Peecheench. He used to make his own stove. He would pile rocks up one on top of the other. He used to use white cement that looked like mud to put between rocks and it would dry up. They would do brick laying just like in the movies. They would make their own stove using rocks and clay. That's how smart they



were in those days. I'm only mentioning the things I saw or heard about. The things I didn't learn from my parents I'm not going to share.

I think the kids should learn some of the stuff I've said. It should be passed on and they should hear about how people made detergent out of a poplar tree. They burned the tree, and then gathered the ashes. They would store the ashes in a birch bark bowl. They made the bowls so well that they didn't leak. I can imagine how their laundry looked. I didn't hear how they made the detergent. I've heard that they made shoes out of jackfish skin. I don't know how. People would use them and not get their feet wet – it was like wearing rubber boots.

I used to hear a lot of stories from grandma and great grandma. My great grandma used to do all the teaching. One incident I can't get out of my mind. It happened to my great grandma. She got hit in the back of the head with an axe handle by this lady named Charlotte (Che Che Anne). She was knocked unconscious and lay on the ground a long time. We were home by ourselves with our grandpa. Our parents were out in the bush getting a moose they had killed the night before. One of my brothers took off to find our parents. We were all crying and scared because she wouldn't move. I went to check on her to see if she was alive. All of the sudden she came about and started crying. My little brother was long gone when she finally came around. He took off so fast that he had no jacket on.

My parents were on their way back, and they saw him halfway between Big Lake. Father saw my brother running in the middle of lake without a jacket, and he dropped his sleigh and ran towards the bay and asked what was going on. My brother said that grandma had just gotten killed. Father asked what happened. "Che Che Anne hit her on the head with an axe," he answered. Father left everything and ran home as fast as he could. I was trying to drag my grandma into the tent. I heard his voice outside the tent and I explained it to him. He asked why grandma was hit with the axe. George was just a little baby in a tikinagan at that time. I dragged my little brother out in the tikinagen before Che Che Anne hit the grandma. I don't have any idea why she got mad at Grandma. She really got an earfull from father when he got in. I saw my mother running towards the shore, and then my father explained to her what happened. My grandma was still crying so I gave her tea to calm her down and I also gave her some of the leftover meat in the pot. Sure enough, she stopped crying afterwards. It felt good to see her stop crying.

My mom was told to stay home, because father didn't want anything else to happen. Father went to get the rest of the moose by himself. I could see Che Che Anne crying way out by the shoreline while she got earful from father. She was told not to pick on an old lady because she wouldn't have survived without her. This was not the first time she picked on Grandma. She even picked on Grandma when she was going blind. She was very old. After my father came back that evening, he told us to sit down and he would have a talk with all of us. We were told to respect and honor every elder, and not to pick on any elders. What that person did to an old lady was very wrong, he said.

After that I was scared to stay with Grandma by myself, because she might get hit over the head with something. I was sitting there and thinking that if I saw her pick on Grandma again, I'd hit her on the head myself. That must be how children feel when they see parents or anyone fight. That's what sticks in my mind. When I think of it, I picture my grandma laying on ground. It was a long, long time she laid there. My brother who went to get my parents was Frank Keesoquayash. This happened right outside the wigwam (Pokogamang). I don't really recall how it began because we were out playing. I don't know if she dragged her out or chased her out. I ran back when I heard her screaming. Before everything started, she threw us out too.

Che Che Anne's niece was standing there too and she said, "I think she's fighting your grandma." That's when I saw her hit her with the axe handle. From then on I didn't like to stay home with that lady. I'd never forgiven her for it. So I went to talk to her one day and told her never to touch her again. I told her that my grandma was old and wouldn't live long. That is the end of the story I saw and can't get out of my mind.

[What to do when trap-rabbit snaring. Ice fishing, sitting up net in wintertime. How to set up martin trap.]

First, we would put little trees around to make a little wigwam. Then you put a bait farther away from trap, at the back of the little wigwam. Then the trap is set. It's really easy to trap martin because they're not really scared of people. People can be running around close by, and they're not really scared. It is harder to trap a beaver in winter than in springtime. What I'm telling you is what I've experienced and what I've killed. I know everything about trapping. There are two different ways to kill a beaver – either by a snare or a trap. When you snare a rabbit, and an owl steals your rabbit, anything leftover you just leave on the snare. So then you make two other snares and make a little wigwam so an owl can go in there and you can snare it. You make two snares, one on each end, and the next morning when you check them, you find the owl dead. One animal that I've never killed in my life is a moose. I don't know how you would kill it or track it. I took a shot at one once but missed it. I came really close, but still missed it. I'm very disappointed in myself for that. It happened in the fall when the moose was out mating.

This is a story about my father. My mother told me he was going to go hunt for ducks. This was just up river from here where we usually went for rice picking. As we were sitting there waiting for him, we saw a huge tree stump. I thought I was seeing things when I saw all these duck heads beneath this big tree stump. I went to tell my mom. All of us were in a canoe so I jumped out of the canoe into the water to show her. I went to the stump and used my dress to keep them in. I grabbed one and broke its neck. They weren't able to fly, so I threw them into the boat and my mom broke the necks. The adult ducks got away from me. The ones that got away were shot down by my father. I killed about six of them with my own hands. He hadn't seen any ducks when he went. My mom was really happy with ducks I had killed.

Everybody got ready to have the meal. We got out of the boat, and started the fire. Everybody was happy that we had killed something. We were fixing up our ducks. Dad took off again in the canoe to get more ducks. Before he left he told us to save him two ducks. He caught a few ducks and brought them home. Everybody was enjoying the meal. The ducks were fat and Mom made stew with flour and bannock. We were grateful we had killed a few ducks. My father asked me to go canoeing with him after the meal. We paddled around, looking for moose tracks. We finally came across some tracks. He didn't want to disturb anything so we just turned around. He turned around and said that he would come back at first daylight. There were two moose tracks.

He told us not to make any noise that evening. He went to set up camp on one of the islands. We came across this area where firefighters had camped. We found some stuff they had left behind like flour and canned things. We took them back with us. We were happy to come across these things because we didn't have much. Even if we had to buy things at a store, we would only take axe, snares, matches, and tea to go out hunting. You would only eat what you killed that day. We left from the Mishkee Reserve – the old settlement – and were on our way to our trap line to spend the winter.

In the morning when he went after the moose he killed both of them. We worked hard to get all the meat to the camp. Mom was making the hide, and smoking and cutting up the meat. Since we were getting ready for winter, we had to smoke everything, even the ducks. The only way it would be good to store was if it was smoked. Mom made a plate or bowl made out of birch bark (Popokoskkamik) to put all the smoked meat in. We used moose intestines and moose bladder to store the fat in. She would blow the bladder up and pour moose fat in it. That's how Indians carried their grease. That's what you do to get food ready for winter. If you didn't do this, all your food would spoil and you probably would have starved in those days.

Also in order for you to catch fish in fall, you had to block off the stream and put two logs where they go in between. You block off one side so they won't get away from you. As we grew bigger, me and my brothers were hardly ever short of food. We helped father with hunting. We set up rabbit snares and fish. It wasn't long after that he passed away, in March 1943. That's the end of that story. Wees kay jac's story is too long to tell here. Tiring. We used to laugh at the stories.

After we were done with the moose, we left for our trap line, which is about 50 minutes from Pickle Lade. This is where we used to hunt when father was alive. That's where he traveled from to get his supplies for the winter, like bullets, snares, and snare wire. He would travel from our camp to the old settlement to get supplies, even though it was a long way. Rabbit snares looked different then than they do now. We were to check the rabbit snares. Me and two siblings didn't really know how to fix up those rabbit snares. We went to ask our mom, but she said she would go instead, after we took rabbits out of snares. One of the siblings I went with is no longer alive. When we went to check the snares, we saw a rabbit that was still alive, standing on its hind legs. The way the snare was set, it looked like it was standing, but the rabbit was still alive. In those days we used to snare a lot of rabbits, sometimes 50 at once in snares. There were a lot of rabbits in those days. Any other elder would tell you the same story.

Another thing I saw was people making a canoe out of birch bark. My grandma used to make them too. They used to clear the area where they would make the birch bark canoes. It was a lot of work to make them. They put all the canoe materials in the clearing. You have to have help to make a birch bark canoe. My mother had three other helpers. If you only have two people it would take forever to finish. I never saw a man make a canoe. I only saw ladies make canoes, so we were really good at making birch bark canoes. When they came to a portage, they would just put the canoe on their shoulders and just take off. I remember carrying one myself in my younger days.

## Levius Loon

Fall, 2001

In 1930 a dam was built that raised the water four feet. More dams were built from 1947-49, 1950 - 53, 1976 and 1987- 89. Every time the water was raised two feet. The graves started to fall in. The laws are changing about fishing, and our children won't be able to hunt and fish without a license. The water was raised a total of 11 feet. I can tell. They didn't tell anybody. The water level is right to the tree line now. When the cold weather comes in the fall they open the dam on the West end. The water goes to Manitoba. A lot of people need a lot of heat in Winnipeg. In the second week in May in the spring time there is 500 feet of dry lake bed. I have a license for 10,000 pounds of fish. Another fisherman has a license for 13,000 pounds. I think these are the only two commercial licenses out there right now.

People fished commercially. Families used to only eat suckers and the fish they didn't sell. They didn't eat pickerel or whitefish. They brought these to the mines. Commercial fishing was done by everybody. They brought fish to the mines from 1925 - 1960. Local buyers used to buy the fish. People fished commercially in the lake, and they would trap in the winter. In 1974-75 commercial fishing ended. The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation took over. We used to fish ourselves. After they took over, we could do nothing anymore. Nobody had enough money to start commercial fishing. We were told there would be higher prices. The thing that stopped fishing in this area - Lake St. Joe - and not only this area, was the [marketing system].

I don't understand how it was arranged. A man came here and said he would take over. There would be more money for us. This was in 1973. The people waited for a final payment in the wintertime, but never got it. People got no more money from fishing. You'll have to talk to the people who put in the regulations. Here ever since 1975 we never saw any corporation. A lot of people wanted to see something written on paper before they agreed. Here in 1974-75 they voted - they said they would pay more for the fish. I heard only 10 people voted yes, four people voted no. There were 400 people here at that time.

It used to be that airlines had reasonable rates to fly to the fishing grounds but not anymore. Since the roads came in, people come from other areas, reserves, and Winnipeg to live here. Roads are the attraction. They said everything would be cheaper when we got the roads in, but it is way more expensive. Some neighbors from other reserves want to be members here now. When our grandparents were here there were no roads, no stores. People lived on what was here. They came here right after break-up. They came from James Bay for tobacco, tea, snare wires and shells for shotguns. The white people overseas had all kinds of things. When they came here they still wanted them.

Our people didn't need these things. There was no tea, coffee, or cocoa. At that time we would drink the water from boiling a rabbit. When we would catch rabbits we made clothing from the rabbit skin like jackets or hats, and blankets for sleeping. When we would kill a moose or caribou, we used the hide for mitts, boots and the bones for a knife or a needle to sew something. That's the only thing they had for living in this area. A few years after that when the store was built here in Osnaburgh, people would catch mink, otter, fox and skin them. People over there needed fur. I don't know what they made out of it. What we kept here was rabbits. People made blankets from rabbits. People kept for themselves what they didn't sell.

When they first came in here the miners came to start the mine here in Central Patricia just south of where Pickle Crow Mine was. That's how they started to block the water here at the east end. See, the first thing they had to do was haul equipment that they wanted to use to build a mine here. What they did was put the dam here at the east end of Lake St. Joe to raise the water about four feet. Mostly why they did that is because they needed more water to haul equipment to the mine here at Central Patricia. See, there used to be a boat that came here from Hudson to Dog Hole Bay here in Lake St. Joe. They made a portage here at the west end to Lac Seul. There is a little river that goes into Lac Seul from Lake St. Joe, so when the water comes up here I think the water pumps up in that river because they don't have enough water to go through there. So, they put some kind of a steam engine in the falls there. Then the engine could pull the big boat over the portage so that it comes right from Hudson to Dog Hole Bay. That's the first thing they did.

The other thing they did was to raise the water a few more feet to put a generator here at Rat Rapids for the mine to get the power they needed. That's why they put the dam at the east end here. I think they took that generator out in 1974 so now all the power comes in from Ear Falls. They have to make a line from Pickle Lake all the way to Ear Falls to get the power out. They took the generator out here when they put that line in.

It's different now than it used to be at the time when the generator plant was at the rapids here. Before, the power never stopped because the water was moving steady in summer and winter time. But now, maybe every month the power is out two days sometimes. I think they lose some of the stuff in the store because they don't have a back-up generator. Young people, they don't cook for a couple of days and people don't eat for a couple of days because they don't know how to make a fire. They should make a fire and cook something nice over the fire. Things are different. The way I see it, more and more nowadays man wants to take over more and more. He wants to take over everything and it's not going to work. I think in 1950 they make a road from Savant Lake right up to Pickle Lake. That's when the boat stopped from Hudson to Dog Hole Lake, because the trucks started running. Everything was real cheap - groceries were real cheap before the road got here. A can of milk about 19 cents, and a pack of cigarettes was 25 cents. See, things were really cheap that time. Ever since that road came here the price of stuff went up. Cigarettes went up to 35 cents for a smaller pack, 40 cents bigger ones. Big change from old days. Things are going faster than the old days. Price of things going up fast. We used to hear that when the road came up here, things would be cheap, but we haven't seen that.

At that time when they raised the water in 1975, the people were commercial fishing and the only people doing the fishing in the summer time here were the trappers here in Lake St. Joe. In 1987 when they raised the water again, that's the time when we had our own commercial fishing license for ourselves. I know we just did a little commercial fishing in the wintertime and in the summertime. What happened is that when the lake was frozen over, from the middle of November, we would go right away and set the nets to catch fish for ourselves. See, the water just continued to go down, draining down to the west. We have to move the nets all the time because the water goes down all the time. In the old days you used to set the net and leave it there for a long time but now we have to move it every week because the water is going down. It's different now than it was in the old days. I think we spend more time working on the nets in the wintertime because we have to move them.

It didn't happen right away. Ever since 1957 when they built another dam at the west end, that's when the water started to come up in the summer time. It comes right to the tree line and starts going down in the fall when they open the dam to move the water to the west. Water comes up and the water comes down. Up in the summer and down in the winter - ever since 1957. The people need more water down there for some reason. I never went over there. There must be some reason why they let the water go there in the wintertime.

Now after break-up in May, the seagulls start nesting on the small islands on Lake St. Joe and other birds start nesting on Lake St. Joe. When the water comes up, the nests get washed away. I think all the ducks nesting on the water all die every summer, ever since 1957. The other thing that happens is a lot of beaver are dying in the wintertime because a lot of beaver are way out there on the ground because the water goes down. They don't have anything to eat and some just starve to death and some just freeze - ever since 1957. The people that are living here in these houses, they used to stay here in the summer time. They used to stay here in the wintertime. My grandfather was trapping in Lake St. Joe, and that's where my trapping line is for my sons and daughters and sons-in-law. They still have their trapping line on Lake St. Joe.

See, the people here in this community, it won't cause much trouble to them, but those of us trapping on Lake St. Joe lose our living because half of those animals we are supposed to get when we trap, they will just die because the water goes down. We still use ducks for eating, and here in Lake St Joe, our nets just wash out in the summer in late May and June. So the other thing we lose is the pike that spawn along the shore. We see a lot of them along the shore there spawning. Here at this time, in the second week of September, the pike are spawning. In the springtime, their eggs are just dying every year and we lose a lot of pike. We use pike for eating and a few people will ask for pike and there are still a few, but that's another thing we lost, ever since 1957. Before that there used to be a lot of muskrats, and the mosses would grow along the shore. People would catch up to 400 muskrats. There used to be a lot of muskrats, but now, I think I sent three or four muskrats to the auction this year. There are no more muskrats. Years ago the muskrat sold for about \$3.50, and later for about \$3.00 so when people had 400 they made more, and things were cheaper then. Now, if I go to the auction I get about \$6.50, and I sold about 4, so that's how much I made this year. I was born on Lake St. Joe on the east end, I lived all my life on Lake St. Joe. I will always live here. There's no other place I can go, so I will face these problems all my life.

There were a lot of graves along Lake St. Joe. There were a lot of people living along Lake St. Joe. A couple of summers ago the band council told me to put the markers where the graveyards used to be. I think I found about 13 places where the graveyards used to be. The one I'm really concerned about is my grandfather and his wife, I think she was my grandmother. They were buried here along Lake St. Joe. When they raised the water in 1976, some of the hills just fell into the lake quite quickly because when the water goes into the soil, it goes soft real quick. Some of the hills would fall in. A couple of years later when they raised the water in 1976, I was walking along the shore just east of my trap where they buried my grandmother. I saw something lying there by the hill, something white where the graves used to be, and I realized these were the bones along the shore. You see, I was really quite upset when I saw this. I came here to the reserve and told people what I saw. They said I should take people over there to see what happened. That's all they said. Ever since then I always saw them, because the bones were just lying there. I had to go that way to go to my traps. I just went by there lots of times. There was another hill behind that where the graves used to be. In 1987 they raised the

water again. Another hill, that was behind the hill where the graves were, fell into the water and covered the bones. You didn't see bones anymore because they were covered by the hill. The thing is, someday they're going to come out again because the sand just keeps moving farther down the lake. So they're going to be seen again.

There's a woman who lives here who mentioned something about the graves one time. I think her uncle said that when they were [raising the level of] Lake St. Joe, he never went there again because he didn't want to see the graves. I didn't want to see the bones when I went there. I didn't want to see the bones lying on the ground, or floating in the water, but I had to go there back and forth to Lake St. Joe because I had to do the trapping and I had to do the trapping to make a living. There's no other job I can do. Here when I do commercial fishing in Lake St. Joe in 1975, I was working with the mining people here, staking claims and ore drilling. I think I worked for the mine till about 1985. I used to go work someplace in summertime and trap in the wintertime. At that time in 1985 I was injured in the back and couldn't work anymore. Just a couple of months later, I got my back wired so I can work. I can do a little bit of trapping with snow machines. The doctor told me they wired my back together again. If the spine bust some place and I got paralyzed, this won't help me much, but it will help to avoid getting paralyzed. I'm getting older – I'm 60. That's what's been happening here.

[The flu epidemic] was, I think in 1934; I was not even born at that time. I was born in 1941. But that was the time when my grandfather died, my father's father. I think what happened is a lot of people were dying at that time. About ten people died at one time. People died of some kind of flu. I heard my grandfather, his cousin, I think. They used to tell us about what happened when a lot of people were dying. He was working for Hudson's Bay to get some stuff from here to Ignace at that time. They met a doctor over there, someplace there, and a minister. I think he talked to them and what he was saying was he was asking about a place where people were lying and dying. I think they were still lying in their small cabins at that time. They were all over. They couldn't move anybody. They were just about dying, too.

That doctor said that flu was not a good thing and they didn't want to spread it all over. He was asking if he knew of someone who would work with him to burn the bodies so it wouldn't spread. That's what I was thinking about. My grandfather died of that flu but now you see a lot of people that were dying of that flu, their bones and bodies are washed up to the lake. What happened to that water? Where did that sickness go? I think somebody mentioned this to the government people one time. They shouldn't let those graveyards wash out to the lake, because a lot of people were washed out to the lake and they didn't want that flu to spread. I think they burned about ten bodies in one day just north of the CN track.

# The Mensokaneck, Bushmen

## Abraham Masakeyash

Translated by Mary Masakeyash.  
February, 2002

My Mom told me another story about Mensokaneck. It happened when she was young. There was an elder who was no ordinary man. He had the powers of a medicine man. He was magical or mystical. He knew where people were hiding behind the hills, and he also knew where the nets were. When he went to check the nets, all of the sudden a shot hit him right in the ribs. His boat tipped over, and when he leaned over his hand hit the water, but didn't sink. It was like the water had turned to stone. The shot had penetrated through his jacket and shirt. There was a big hole in his shirt from all of those pellets. When he opened his shirt you could see all those pellets. The pellets had not penetrated his skin, but had collected in his shirt, which he had tucked into his pants. He had his pants tied with rope. It was the Mensokaneck that did that. They shot two people after that when they couldn't kill this medicine man. All of this happened when Sandy Lawson was store manager in Cat Lake.

This group of people whose relatives were shot went after these Mensokaneck for a long way. They were going to shoot them. When they caught up to them, it was getting dark. The relatives took a shot at them and hit the one sitting in the middle in the leg. There was another group of people living on the other side of Obowangoang, where Mensokaneck went. They went after those Mensokaneck as well. They chased after them, but the Mensokaneck turned back because they knew that other people were coming. They ran off into the bush, and they took their injured too. Everybody went back to their camp, and the Mensokaneck regrouped. There were a lot of them. This person with powers had a comb. He sent it over to where he knew they'd come out of the bush. He was ready for them this time. There were about twenty Mensokaneck who came back to where this powerful person was. They said that they would shoot at them this time. He used the bowl to see what they were doing. Two were left behind. One stayed behind to look after the Mensokaneck that was shot in the leg. When the Mensokaneck went to attack the people, all of the sudden a whole bunch of guys jumped up. They were not real men. They were the teeth of the comb – that's how many there were. The Mensokaneck were attacked by those human looking things. The Mensokaneck took off, running as fast as they could. At that time, there were hardly any young men in the camp, just elderly. The young men were getting supplies from Hudson, which was far away.



## Eva Skunk

One of my sisters and I loved going hunting, and we used to use grandma's canoe. My sister's name was Mary and we used to go by ourselves to set up some traps. Our parents were about to go back to Pickle Lake and we were going to set up traps before we left for Pickle. We were going to Kozeabee (by Bow River). They left me behind. They made a rack to put up moose meat. We saw human tracks, and thought this guy Joseph must be Mensokaneck (people who travel all over like to scare people, steal for things). They left me at a river near a portage. I was looking after a whole bunch of kids. We carried our canoe up to the other side of the portage. It looked really nice in that area.

So Joseph came after us, but he was just in the way, not helping us. Mary told him to go back. He was making our work harder, always tripping over stuff. We told him to go back to where the kids were sitting to watch them, so that nobody could take off with them. When we got to the other side I made fire, skinned some beaver and cooked a few things. While I was sitting there I could hear someone yelling and screaming down river. It was my sister and somebody else down river. My sister and somebody were coming down river, shooting the rapids. That person in the back of the canoe made sure they hit all the big rapids. She jumped in the water and didn't come out till they were through it.

We stayed at that portage for two days. We went to check on our moose meat. Then we got up and broke camp and got ready to leave. This is where I got really scared. We were being chased by Mensokaneck. I wasn't scared for myself, but for the children. I felt sorry for them because they were scared. I had heard stories about these people which said that they would throw small babies in the lake and drown them. We called these people Mensokaneck because we don't know where they are. When we went to take our traps on our way out, I felt really uneasy. There was something creepy about the bush that day. So we continued on and came out of the bush to a big lake with an island in the middle. That's where we went to spend the night. We didn't hear anything when we were there. It's really scary being chased by other people. We only had one canoe, two paddles, two dogs, and the children. We spent night there on the island, and it was nice and calm.

Then we went out paddling for awhile and got hit by something or someone around the corner of the island. Someone had gone to set a trap for muskrat. I was at the camp with my sister and the kids. We were talking about rushing to the place where we were supposed to meet Wasakeesiks. So we finished and took off in the morning. The river we followed was really windy. You could hear paddling behind us, right on our tail. We were traveling as fast as we could.

It was almost sunset when we came out of the river to another big lake. It was still quite a ways to where we were supposed to meet the other people, so we had to set up camp. I tried to cook our supper before nightfall so I could feed the kids before bed. When we set up camp, I made sure to tie up the two dogs at end of the tent so they could hear people coming from behind. These kids, Simon and Mary, told the dogs to bite whoever came near the tent. I asked them why they were talking to the dog. In the middle of the night I was really startled when my sister started crying and yelling because she thought someone was coming. The tent was really shaking because somebody was right outside.

I was more worried about the kids than anything. We tied ourselves all together so all four of us would be dragged along if somebody took one of us. That's what people used to do when the Mensokaneck were around. The only person who wasn't chained was Joseph, but he put his bullets in his rifle. There was a lot of commotion inside the tent, but we were all in the tent. So we got ready to take off. We knew they were behind us, so we went down the river and came to a shallow stream with rapids, and we had to walk alongside the boat with the kids in the boat. When we got to the other end we had to stop and skin the otter we had. We threw the otter over when people were coming and said, "You guys can have this, you must be hungry. We don't eat otter," I told them. The lake we were on had ice on it and there was an iceberg pushed against where we were. All of a sudden the iceberg cracked in half so we could go through. There were people right behind us still, so we just took our chances and paddled right between, because it was closing again. We made it to the other end. There was no way those other people could make it out there. It was closing in behind us and there was one up ahead of us and we got stuck too.

We didn't set up the tent, but instead just used tree branches to sleep on. We knew if we went on they would catch up with us in the night. I couldn't sleep, and didn't want to be staying on the shore area because it was too windy. I wanted to go sleep in the bush. We couldn't see who was trying to kill us anyway. The next morning, the iceberg that wouldn't let us through was on the other side of the lake, so my sister and I carried the boat over the port. When we were halfway over the portage, I heard rocks being thrown at us. I was scared, and I felt electricity go up my spine.

We met Joseph again, and he said he wouldn't leave the kids by themselves. He had already made a fire and some tea but had no time to cook or have tea. We threw everything into the canoe, and we wanted to get out of there fast. I was really scared because we couldn't find one of the children. We ran around looking for her but she was nowhere to be found. I gave Joseph hell because he should have looked after her. Finally we found her. She had just wandered off and followed a rabbit trail. She was lying on her stomach, and when I asked her what was wrong she said that she had dirtied her pants. She was wearing a sleeper and couldn't say [\*\*?]. "Just get in the canoe and I'll fix you after," I said. Mary cleaned her up while I got in the canoe.

It was very scary being followed by the people. We finished setting up camp on the other side of the lake, and this is where we noticed something different about Joseph. He went back to where we had come from. Everything turned quiet after he turned back. Later in the night they came back, but dogs chased them away. The only thing we could hear was the paddles after they jumped in their canoes. It was really scary that night. I wasn't scared for myself, just for the children.

We finally met up with the people we were supposed to meet. I was real amazed at one of my relatives (not alive anymore). Those people were still behind us that were chasing us. We all tried to decide where to go, and decided to go to the island on the other side of the lake. When we came to another portage, we were getting tired and couldn't decide where to spend the night. We could hear somebody calling from across the river, waving their hands and whistling. People were chasing after us. I asked my sister what we were going to do. We made a fire and cooked food for the kids. We never left them by themselves, we went everywhere together. We were standing around by the shoreline, and it was really nice.

All of a sudden we could hear something that sounded like a motor. We didn't tell anyone what we heard because we didn't want to excite them anymore than they already were. I asked Joseph if he could hear what I was hearing. Finally we could hear it clearly, and it was a motor

coming up the river. We said don't let them know we're here, it might be Mensokaneck, and sure enough they came around the point. There were at least five boats, and the one that was driving out in front had the motor.

The one driving the boat was David Wassakeesik. As soon as he saw us he jumped out of the canoe and asked us if we had just gotten there. We said that we had been there for a while, and that the boat was already on the other side of the portage. He was really excited at that point. Somebody had shot at them but missed. He told us he was being chased after as well. I guess he was with this guy named Jamie Wassakeesik when he got shot at. He pointed up toward the hill where the shots had come from. All five canoes were going to shoot rapids. He said that they should all stay together in case someone tips over. We were supposed to wait in the bush with the kids.

The rapids the canoes were going to shoot were really rough. He gave me one rifle to take with us to the other side. By the time we got to the other end of the portage, one of the guys was already at the end of the rapids. We met up with him on the other side. We made a fire and tea, so I had some tea. I didn't want to stay there long. He told us to stay in one spot. I guess the elderly person that was there had said that they were not going to spend the night there. He told us he was taking everyone to a small island with no trees, so that we would have a better view if they came over.

We took off again. The boat had only an eight horsepower motor. There were six of us in a train. We were traveling so slowly, it was as if we were just paddling to some small island. It was getting to be sundown. We were just sitting and we saw something coming out of the point, and then we heard somebody yelling from the portage where we had come from. There were people out there, and they were making a lot of noise. It was Charlie Wassakeesik and his family; that's where he set up camp. Charlie's family could hear children playing and wanted to go to the island. Charlie asked his family if they wanted to go to the island and they said yes. He rushed his family to get ready, and put everything into the canoe. He felt uneasy about staying there for the night. He was having a hard time convincing his wife he heard something and wanted to leave. It was getting late. When he was rushing his kids to get ready to leave, his wife was complaining, "I don't know why he always does this. Every time he's mad at me he talks to me in English." Charlie's daughter said it wasn't her he was talking to, it was the kids. "Mom," she said, "you don't understand English, so why would he talk to you in English?"

Our grandmother (Mom's mom) was still alive at that time. David was talking to Charlie. He said he wouldn't set up a tent except one for Mom. Only she and the kids would sleep inside the tent, and the rest would sleep in the open. Everybody was told to go to bed early, as soon as we were done with the evening meal. David said that those guys would be here by dawn, and David didn't feel like going to sleep because he was told they were coming. I was sitting around with Christine, Mary, and Ida Wasakeesik. We tied a dog in each of the four directions. While we were waiting, we could hear people talking in the middle of the night from the direction they had come from.

David told us to come where he was sitting, and then he lit up his pipe and told us to sit down. He asked his daughter Christine to get him a clean bowl, and she got him a nice round clean bowl. He poured some water in it and made sure there was nothing floating in the water, because it had to be clean. He asked us to look into the bowl so we could see where we had come from, just like on T.V. We looked into the bowl and saw a picture of where we came from. The river looked like a maze, and I saw two little things, two black things moving towards the river, each on one side of the lake. There were two streams there, and that's where they were

heading. This was at first dawn. David knew those guys would set up camp and wait for us to go by. He wondered how he could get all the people by them, because both sides were closed off. He knew that they were only three people in a canoe. He was going to go as a group with everybody. I had no idea that they were just three people on a canoe, so it was no wonder I was scared.

They call that thing they do in the bowl Keesabee. Mary says she saw Isaac Masakayash do it too. This elder, Charlie Wasakeesik, knew which route to take so the group wouldn't have to go by these people. He saw a little stream in the bowl that we could take and come out at the other side of the river. This old man knew they hadn't come to that place yet, and that's why he chose that route. We all traveled together as a group and set up camp upstream. We got away from them at that time, but it was a very scary experience to try and get away from the Mensokaneck. I guess they got tired of waiting for us and went down river towards Mud Lake. When they looked into the bowl, they saw that they had gone towards Mud Lake. They knew that the people there were more powerful, so those three that went there wouldn't make it. That was the last time we ever traveled in that area. We made it back to Pickle Lake that time in one piece. David and that old man Charlie knew those guys in Mud Lake. [Translator' note: It was James Masakeyash, her dad, and a few others.] These men already knew that those guys were on their way. James also knew what was happening to the group. Even Joseph agreed that James was a very powerful person. He knew things nobody else knew. That is what happened at that time. It was really scary when you were being chased by Mensokaneck.

## Johnny Derouin

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I don't know if she would appreciate me telling her story like that, but -- she might get me for copyright. Because this might have been a personal occurrence for her, like she said that actually happened long ago, when she was a baby, or in her younger years. Apparently, her village got attacked by what Floyd calls there in his book as bushmen, but we call the *unsoheim*. They got attacked, and apparently she got wiped out back then, but she was reincarnated, she's born again, and she believes this all happened to her because she's got the scars on her head to prove it from her previous engagement from years and years ago. That's why I told you I didn't feel like telling the story, because its a kind of strange story, but I guess she believes its true, and I think a lot of the people that she's told the story to believe its also true, believe that it could happen