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January 7, 1992. My name is Louis Bird and I live in Peawanuck Ontario. These are my notes that I may have recorded, I just wanted to remind myself that I have two tapes which I have, introduced what I am, where I was born, and what happened to me when I was, as soon as I was conscience as a being. And from then on, remembering things that happens to me as a young boy. And these, things are things that I have, somewhere, in my, in my, cassette collection. These ones I don't have to repeat myself for that one. But there a few things that I want to, that I want to record here which will remind me in this tape that I am going to number as number 3000. These number 3000 are not going to be organized as a subject matter to the next. These will be a variety of subjects which I do not wish to, of which I wish to remind myself that they are important. But, in this recording, I want, I'm going just to mention them briefly so that I can always remember when I want them because these, these subjects or topics are not in order.

So here we are, I'm going to talk about a little bit of each. This is not to do with, this something to do with the Indian culture, the First Nation, which we like to call ourselves, those of us who live in the most Northern part of the Ontario province. I would, I would really state that we are, we are different, because we live in a different environment, we are different because we live on the salt water body around this Hudson and James Bay area. And just because we live in the body of salt water there are different situations that are not experienced in the communities inland. And these are the things that, that gives distinction or a different cultural histories in the past, and these are the ones that I want to remind myself of. And, and the education system is not so much different then it is, the other part of Ontario. But it is different because we have to deal the land that is different, differently located and the weather pattern is

different, totally, then it is in other communities inland. And, even to the other provinces where other First Nations have, have occupied from the time ever recorded. Different part of Canada, different part across Canada, different tribes we used to say, different part of First Nation occupied the land in a different situation. And for that reason alone it is very hard to pinpoint a common situation which can be recorded and concluded this a total picture of the First Nations culture before the European came in or after the European came in because the vastness of the land is so, is so, different and, and the people who live in it are different because they did not bring their culture here. They grew up with a culture in which the land they grew up with so that is, that is so different to the European culture and the European, history. As some Native leaders said, "we did not bring our culture here. We born with the culture that was here before we ever conscience of being on earth."

We did not bring our culture as far the First Nation concerned, maybe because they didn't write their own language. The history was never written to say we had come from this part of the country to come over to arrive here in so many thousand years ago. Because of this, because of our First Nations across Canada, across North America, apparently did not establish their written language and that is because that we have been having a negative results as soon as the European arrived because the Europeans brought their culture with them. Culture mean a total culture, their spiritual values, their business values, their material values, values that totalled their culture, they brought across with them. And is, and set them out here to exercise them. And we know all this, the history tells us that, the written history of the European.

There's no dispute there and that is true, and I do not disagree with that. I have learned much, I have gained much knowledge by being able to read the English language because there contains the histories and thousands of years of years of human history in other parts of the world, which as given me a lot of pleasure to take a trip down in the history, sort of bring me back so I can look at our own history, our Native, First Native history which is not written. But the only written history about us is our legends, the legends that we have right across Canada. Even to this North American, all of it before the European came in and that I'm aware of. After travelling across this country, Canada. Travelling across from its, from the west, listening to our First Nation. Our people telling us their version of their stories and their legends, I have found

that they are very similar. Except a little variation because of different location of the land. But the concept of everything its very similar. One would expect the same similarities if one travels across Canada and studies these things.

I am sorry to say that if one wants to compare a civilization which been brought down from Europe, which is a very old culture, would find a North American culture to be in the state of, of, probably 2000 years B.C. That is in, that is in material point of view because when European found there were people down here, they found that a very little progress has been made amongst our people. The only metal tools they had apparently was copper which was easily found and exposed on top of the soil, on top of the land. But in the mental development, my understanding, of our First Nation people have the knowledge to live on the land to survive in many, many thousand years, without altering the nature. Without destroying the land to progress to the level of, compared to the European in time structure. So this is the summary of those things that I know of; to summarize a few in a few words like this.

And now, I will pick one subject which I want to remind myself that was there before the European came in and this, these are the things that I want to look at as important subjects. One of those is our forefathers, our ancestors dealing their health. Dealing sickness, shall we say physical health? Our forefathers from time immemorial have practised their medicine from actual herbs and plants and what ever they can muster up to heal their wounds to slow down their disease, or even to cure their disease. And this is my first note to remind myself this was one of the important things.

Our people, before the European brought in their medicine to heal, or to cure, or to maintain the health of the individual or the group of individuals as we know it today, a Doctor or a medical assistant. Our group of people before the European can bring their own medicine, our Elders used their native, locally found, and ways to prepare the medication for their people. So one of those, in our area , we must remember I am talking only in the Hudson and James Bay area, which is very similar right across from James Bay tip down to James Bay and as far as Churchill Manitoba where the Cree speaking people, natives have lived. And into the land and there again it differs again about these things as more inland, as more westward you look into. As far as I can remember now, if I could just mention a few things what they do when they want

to prepare or apply, apply their medical, service to each other. Let's say someone is, is having pneumonia or having cough and have a high fever and all that stuff which was not very common long time ago. Cold all those what we say as flu was as not as tragic as it was after the European came but there was such thing as a cold, they say, which was created by itself. An individual person can create his own flu or cold, common cold, and there was a remedy and the remedy was that you know, a very simple one. Somebody to stay inside and to heat, to keep his heat, keep himself warm and also to drink some liquid that was made from a local, plant, that was called Forever-Green Leaves. Some people called it Labrador Tea. There is another kind that is similar to this Labrador Tea and it is called a Bitter Sweet Leaves. These are smaller version of the Labrador Tea, and these one taste mint-y, they have a mint-y flavour; they act the same way as a medicine for a common cold. And these Labrador Tea, which is very common, and used to be found anywhere within the Hudson and James Bay area, and also inland, our native people used it. It's a very easily obtained plant that can be used, turned into a medicine for the common cold and also for the, shall be say pneumonia. This is, was, most available, abundantly available medicine they can find. But they have to cure it in many different ways, and the same plant can be used for healing a fresh wound or even a deep wound.

And there are many ways to prepare them. Some people dry them and pound them into the powder to be used for healing the open wounds after somebody has been scratched, his legs and arms or anything during the summer. They used to have to apply it to the wound and heals the wound very nicely, without any infection. And also they used to have this prepared plant medicine to be boiled and drank which is a very common use for it. If somebody has any coughing or something that related to lung, people used to prescribe it in a drinking, in a liquid form and usually very hot. And this used to remedy the situation, sometimes very quickly and sometimes in a few days. And same thing can be applied with the other plant, which I was talking about, the leaves of the Bitter Sweet Evergreens. We call that in our language [Cree Word(s)] the only way I can describe it as a bitter sweet plant where for evergreens, I would said it for-ever-green-leaves, that is exactly what we are saying. Anyway these can also be made into a medicine but that bittersweet stuff is much more enjoyed as a natural drink as we enjoy tea. And any of this, it can be applied for anyway but two similar plants for leaves. When the

[unclear] for example, when somebody has been over-exposed to the cold, or sudden exposure to the cold, when someone is sweating or really have worked themselves to sweat, and if you stop usually, the function of your body covering, which is your skin, sometimes locks itself in very quickly when you get cold and causes you to have a pneumonia (I think they call that in English) which starts off as a common cold, headache and all that stuff and aching muscles and twitching and even near to similarly to epileptic seizures. This is a very dangerous situation if you get in, if one get himself to that point and that's when you need the first application of medication. It would be common Labrador Tea to be poured or to be drunk in the very hot water. This can alter the further development of this very early stage seizure, which has been created by oneself. And then later on if the thing persists then there other plants that is called, it is called in our language [Cree Word(s)] it is actually a plant that looks like another kind of similar plant. This plant doesn't stand up, it just grows on the ground, it lays on the ground in a string like but a short limb, branches and it looks like a green, its green. And it has a smell of also like a liniment. This a bit stronger then Labrador tea and this also can be boiled directly as it is just break it into pieces and boiled in the hot water. And a person can drink it and usually instantly avoid a further development into pneumonia of the self-created by common cold. Due to being sudden changes in one's body.

And also the same plant I call [Cree Word(s)] what it says it that it's described the act of the plant when it's applied for medicine. [Cree Word(s)] means to heal the wound inside the body, that's what it means. If anybody has sprained his ankle or if somebody have, not necessarily a broken bone, but a [unclear] been suddenly hit by a falling rock or something, usually those seniors very delicate tendons would swell and a person would not be able to move, and usually for a long time. So this plant can be used as powder, applied and sealed into the body area where its wounds are suspected to occur. And usually a repeated application this thing will avoid the permanent damage to the [unclear] or tendon. So, this is the way they use this, and also this same plant which I call the internal or body, inside the body treatment we called [Cree Word(s)] which is actually describe what it does, is that it mean if there is a wound within the leg or arm area, or shoulder or back but not necessary a broken bone. But it does help to use the same thing. And the application is usually by pounding the plant into a semi-powdery stuff, so it

can be applied directly to the skin and be covered on something that is waterproof. The medication itself can shoot itself directly into the body and usually our natives found great relief of the pain if they do that and eventually heal the wound inside.

And it also say that if anyone has been strained or sprained himself by lifting heavy object, in those times, long time ago, sometimes when a man lift a heavy object more then he can handle, it was not his back or spine or muscle sprain that he would overwork. He usually, it is his lung, if he has a weak lung, a person will have a weak lung which strain his lung as he hold the air inside when he want to lift a heavy object or do something that is humanly impossible to lift. Usually then when that happen a person would just simply spit out the blood, as he coughed, he would cough up the blood within from his body and sometimes it's not exactly in the lungs, sometimes its in the [unclear], within the body cavity that would burst out itself and eventually come out from someone's mouth. So they call it, a body strain, that's what they called it. I can't exactly use the right word, but in our language they called it [Cree Word(s)]. [Cree Word(s)] is a similar word as strain or sprain, not necessarily muscle but when the muscle is very strong it would stand the pressure or stress. Usually it's the lung area that gives out because the body, the blood itself has to be rushed into the lung and to replace with the fresh oxygen and all that, in that case whatever it is.

That's what people used to recognize that, so they, if that ever happens, the very first thing the medicine man or a wife, usually act as a nurse for a family and sometimes she was a very, very good doctor. And she would look for these or usually they used to carry these plants with them all of the time. See, not necessarily Labrador tea but this, the inner, the internal body medicine - I think that's exactly how I would describe it as it says. Its [Cree Word(s)], that's what it means. So she would have this already within her possession and she would just pick it out and then prepare the medication as required, prescribe it, or I mean actually, shall we say, process it into be prescribed medication, for the wound. So any way this is the way it has been done. Just by explaining a little bit about medicine amongst our First Nation people before the European supply the medication.

Now, we have only spoken about two. There are many other ways to treat a small, uncomfortable body healthy. Take for example if a person had eaten, and he has eaten some

food that doesn't agree with his stomach or probably he has eaten something that did not agree with his stomach. And we are describing here now, severe heartburn or gas in the stomach. So in order to remedy that and since there's no corner stores that one can find on the trapline or in the wilderness where he travels. And there was a very quick remedy. There was two kinds. One of them was if a person happened to be in a wooded area where usually creeks and small rivers, we always find the black spruce, or timber close to the larger creek who usually have, a sap, a very fresh sap, seeping out from the tree and in just like a candle melting. And you have a very liquid-y sap that turns into, similar to a tar, but its a very bright colour; and it's very soft. So if somebody found these kinds of things, you know, happen to see it, and when he has that stomach acid, he would just take that small amount of that and put it in his mouth and chew it. More like the first stage of a liquid chewing, that liquid that formed from chewing the sap. Not before and not after it has been liquidated, the first saliva that forms with the contact with the sap in your mouth that which you swallow, you must swallow that one as much as you can. And then the rest of it you must throw the gum, you must throw the sap away because that's not a medicine anymore. And then instantly, instantly you will get rid of your severe heartburn or a gas acid stomach. So that's one. And the second one is, since we live in the Muskeg area, in the James Bay lowland, we have plenty of Tamaracks. No matter where you go you will be slapped around with these trees in the winter and summer. So when you get the very severe stomach acid you will have to take a part of this tamarack tree and then chew it down until you get sap to come out into your mouth and then swallow the liquid. And it will get rid of your stomach acid very quickly. So that's the part of the medication for this acid stomach or heartburn that we prescribe sometimes. So these are the quick remedies that anyone can use in the wilderness, if you have to suffer with the stomach acid. There are so many other small ways of making a small remedy for the minor injuries for someone.

Now, let's go on to the next scenario, similarity, okay. Supposing a person or a kid have accidentally, unaware had a, what do you call it, splinter - when a piece of a wood or some object went into a part of your body: legs, foot, arms, or hands; and usually you can't take it out when you hurry, and it stays in there under, and then it starts to infect the flesh. And then you have the yellow pus and everything and you can't get it out. At that stage of the game, at that state of

development usually it's very agonizing. For the children, they would cry, they can't sleep. So what the mother would do is that if she wants to cure the pain or take out also the decaying area since nobody had soap in those days. Soap. The ordinary washing or face-washing soap would do the job today but in those days seems that our First Nations didn't have any soap. They used a beaver castor, a beaver, you know, castor. As I said before, the mothers always carried bits of pieces of those things just in case. So if the mother happen to have the part of the beaver castor which is usually very dried and a small pouch of her belongings, as a women today carry a purse, and they can carry endless items inside. So, our First Nation mothers did have a pouch or purse which they carry all kinds of stuff for the emergency need. And sometimes the mother would just take a small piece of this beaver castor which is dried-up and soak it. Sometimes they even pound it a bit and put it with other kind of material, usually a rabbit skin, when it's fresh. And you put that beaver castor to cover the wound, which is inside there which you cannot touch. And you will tie it in there and make it wet and you just let it stay there, if it was on yourself or somebody else who has this agony or pain. And what it does is that in a few, in a moment or so, or even in a hour or half-hour or so, or even a few hours after, depends how far the object is and then the person will start to feel a sucking feeling. As if that beaver castor actually sucked something. Then as you feel this painful sucking feeling soon you will have a relief of pain. And that when you must let your doctor know, I mean your father, your mother, who ever is treating you that you now don't have that feeling anymore. And that's when she will open the cover, or the dressing and the object and the yellow stuff that was there will be out into beaver castor. Been sucked, pulled out, and that's when, then again other kinds of material, plants obtain the medicine used to wash the wound. Especially you would have to use Labrador tea being boiled in that liquid would act as iodine or as a liquid sterilizer, to make it not infected again. And then after you are finished that washing you put on this powdered Labrador tea, which has been prepared for that case. And that's it, and the rest of it is healed very nicely.

So, now we know the ways of our First Nation in the simple items which they have used to heal their small wounds, minor wounds and right down to the major treatment. Sometimes even to deal with the incurable disease from within but they have some ways to treat the disease. Now, I have mentioned only three items and there's lots more. In this tape I cannot count them



all. But one of the most important for our First Nation to, the last resort sort of medication, when nothing else works, when the person comes to the state of a near death, or when there's nothing else seems to work. This was, still works today, but more so the last 100 years. But prior to the last 100 years it was easily obtained to have a medicine man who has the power to heal; but these died off along time ago. They cease to exist and operate as soon as Christianity arrived in our area. So, it was simply then a practical medication to be applied to any, to any incident or any time when there's a medication required by our people.

Now, I'm going to talk about this, last resort medication, and this can be obtained from the skunk. That's to heal anything almost, no matter what kind of disease it will be it will heal. Even if one has asthma type of thing of coughing, or a bronchial disease even if it developed instantly or if it has been accumulated over the years. And the medication has not worked any the other kind. And this is the last kind of medicine that can be applied. Now, to prepare the medication is something else... [*Telephone rings - tape stops -*]

Please excuse the interruption, every time when I want to do this there's always something that distracts and disrupts me when I wan to do my recording. And now, to get back to the medicine that I was talking about. That is to resort to a skunk, you know, the animal who has a striped back, and has a foul smell for his defence? Yes, the thing that he releases, it releases when it's afraid for its defence, the very thing - that awful smell that we cannot stand. It's the very thing that can cure all kinds of diseases. But unfortunately the only way that it can be taken is to inhale but not the one that has been discharged from the animal. It's the liquid that's in it that has not been yet discharged. Apparently, the one that stays in the animal before it has been activated, it is a very powerful medicine. But once it has been released outside from its container or from the animal it is not. It is not any more medicine but it is [Cree Word(s)] it can blind you or it can make you insane or it can temporary stunt you and very annoying after it gets to your hair or your body. You have to truly struggle to get rid of the smell. And that's what happens when it has been released. But when it has not been released from the body of the animal, on purpose for a self-defence, this liquid stuff, its a very strong medicine. It has been used for ages, or since time immemorial amongst the native people. And it is still applied today by some of the elders, they are still using it. It has worked on many kinds of disease. It has worked for a

disease like small pox or chicken pox or any pneumonia. It has worked also for anything infected from the wounds. But, I am sorry to say I do not have all the prescription or a direction, instruction, I do not have them all, but I do understand only two ways that has been prepared to use. One of them is that you could take this thing internally by mixing it in water, in liquid. Or if there is any way that you could put the stuff into a foodstuff and able to swallow if quickly, that's one way of taking it. A very small amount of meat or something and put one drop or two into the meat of this stuff and swallow it and wash it down with water as fast as you can. This will get rid of almost any disease that is inside you which has caused you to have a suffering or anything.

Take for example the allergies or anything like what makes you cough or a similar attacks as asthma. This has known to cure the stuff, not by swallowing the liquid but by inhaling the smell. Just inhaling, maybe once or twice a day. And that seems to help for someone who uses it. But the question is: Is it true? But people who have used it have trusted and believed in it and it has worked for them. The only thing is if you take it inside, if you take it internally, or as you drink a drop of it, it will stay. The smell will come out on the pores of your skin for about three days or maybe longer if you take more. But when you have taken it, there's no more disease, except that smell. So whatever is contained in that liquid it must be powerful to kill anything, germ, bacteria, what ever it is. But it doesn't seem to kill the human, even if you take it internally. So that is the last medicine that can be prescribed to anyone if you have internal injury. And if you were to have injured yourself inside and you get infection inside you, or behind or within the cavity of your body that is the medicine to take. Or if you have pneumonia and that makes you believe that you won't survive, you take the stuff and it will help you. This maybe if you have faith in it, people who use it have strong faith in it. And it seems to work. And the other kind of medicine that can be used and from the area, where the people have lived is, I have mentioned this once, it's a beaver castor. Beaver castor, I have described this before to take out the splinter or a yellow pus, wherever you have yellow pus in your body; but not necessarily the pimples but any foreign matter that has got inside your skin and started to infect it and have yellow pus. This is the thing to use. And the beaver castor as been used to treat the inflammation of the muscles or any meat in your body. It seems to work. So these are the

animals, the two animals that can be used and for medication. But there is still others, a lot of stuff that can be found. Plants, herbs anything like that can be turned into a medicine for the local people in our area, in the Hudson and James Bay costal region. I shall have to dig up a bit more thoughts before I can continue, so we shall wait for them. [tape stops]

I have one plant, that I have heard so much about, to use to kill a pain especially for toothache. So it is called [Cree Word(s)]; the name in our language. [Cree Word(s)] means sweet-seashell, yea, like a seashell but you have to say seashell - [Cree Word(s)]. It is called, it has something to do with a shell but it is just the name of it. It is a plant that looks like a, almost like a Catstail - something that grows in the lake, water area, or a shallow area or even a deep area of the lake. You see those things grow up there on the lake and you can smell them. They also have a mint-y- liniment smell, but you don't take the plant, the whole thing, you take the plant roots - the roots only. You take the roots and squash them into a liquid state and you could put that liquid state into the cavity of your teeth and the pain will be gone forever. Until your teeth fall out, that's how great this painkiller is. So we shall talk about that on the other side. My tape recording, my tape is almost on the end now on the A-side. Now I have to turn this around and then we will listen on the other side.

[End of Side A]

Now, let's begin again about this painkiller which I have called in translation, Seashell, it just sounds that way. When I say [Cree Word(s)], I am talking about a seashell or I'm talking about similar shell-like matter but actually it is not, it is just a plant. The plant that grows in the muskeg or in the ponds and even a deep, deep pond, which is about 2 or 3 feet deep sometimes. But these things grow there on the lake, on small ponds, on the muskeg, even on the land, the muskeg land really bog area. That's where you usually find them, especially in the thick bush. And you don't find those along the coastal area, you find them within a hundred miles from the coastal region and these are the famous painkillers. This painkiller is especially very good for the tooth decay. Especially when you have a tooth decay that is painfully excruciating pain because there is a hole in it and the meat goes in it and whenever you get cold you get, when the cold air hits the hole, and that's when its painful, and this kind of pain and that's where that thing

comes handy. What they do is that they took the very small roots at the bottom and then they just take a small part of the root and squash it into a liquid state and that small liquid state and that's what they pick and put it into a hole. As a result, if anybody uses it, the pain that you feel in your tooth is much more painful when you put the stuff in. But the thing is it just knocks you out. It puts you to sleep and sometimes people sleep a bit longer, some of them who haven't sleep for sometime because they have a tooth ache they would sleep a few hours, some kids sleep all night. When they get up, no more pain. And they never experience, never feel any pain anymore for that particular tooth until it falls out. So apparently this medicine is a very strong painkiller. It kills the roots of the nerves I guess. And it doesn't bother a person after, but that's the only place that I know for sure where it is very useful, where it is most effective. But they say it can also apply to anyplace in the body if there is any pain. The only thing is, I don't know, does it heal? I don't know. I guess it just kill the nerves, but it doesn't heal. So that is one of the painkillers that native people have.

There is another plant. I cannot say where anyone can find this, but I have been informed by one of the trappers in Manitoba region, a place called Gillam. There was a man, a native person who was a trapper. I happened to run into him when we were working in Gillam, Manitoba. We sat down together and we talked about many things about nature and our people's medication, and our people's hunting style and all those things. So we touched subject of medication, native medicine, I mean just literally a medicine, not shamanism. It different thing, I'm not talking about a medicine man who has magical powers. I'm talking about a true practical medicine that can be used from the plants, the herbs, the things, whatever\_the, our forefathers have used. It's a very practical thing. A mother can use it, grandmothers were experts, and our father can do that, and also the children can learn as they grow up. These are the practical things; they are not mystic things. The mystic things is different matter altogether but involved just the same.

Anyway, these the hearth medicine or the plants or animals which are came from the animal parts, they were useful amongst the people who came from this area in the northern Ontario area, Hudson and James Bay region, or lowland, if you wish to call. There are many others, there are many plants that have been used to use as a remedy for some minor injuries,

minor disease, minor discomfort, there are many others. And the same thing applies with the, which is always popular amongst people, is the acid stomach or heartburn that we want to call at different times, different types of things that can be used to cure the stuff to stop the nuisance of an acid stomach. But they say most of the time the native people didn't have time to have an acid stomach because they always move around. Somehow our native people have adjusted to this system to be able to take in a lot of fat. Cause I have seen my mother literally drink the fat, a little bit of fat from the cooking, the cooking pot, and finish off the meal with that and so does the elders that I saw. So it seems like our native people in those days when I was young boy, they were still geared to have those kinds of intakes, their digestive system was very strong and different. But today we don't have that.

Now, I am not going to stray off the subject because I want to keep track of my subject, which is the medication. How else can you do that? So, I was talking about the man that I met in Manitoba who was telling me some kind of a plant or a vegetable that grows in their area, which is The Pas, Manitoba area at the northern tip of Lake Winnipeg, in that area. They have found out that this such plant for years, thousands of years, I guess, that this plant could help the women, who are young, or as mature women, who has monthly period by in a sense has stopped, that is without being pregnant. But used as a nature of the Native people that I'm, sometimes a woman when exposed to extreme cold weather and when she has her period, the flow had stopped. It seemed to stop. And then each month, she won't have it if there is no treatment. And many times the women has died from it because they didn't tell their mother or father or relatives, the young women especially. And sometimes they have died out of it because every month this [unclear] stuff which has turned itself into a [unclear] matter inside their body or reproductive organ. It increases each time, especially when the flow stop when it's in a highest state. So the whole area of the womb is affected and it forms a small ball and then again the next month, it accumulated bigger and then after a few months it gets so big that it literally kill a person.

That used to be the worst thing that a woman can have. So seems native people have these things and are aware of those things and somehow they probably have found out the way to cure or treat such thing. So they have found this plant that seems to work perfectly well. And it

is in the ground and has to be dug up, and has to be made into a liquid medicine. So what they do, is take this plant, however the preparation process, I don't know, I have forgotten exactly how it was prepared, but it has to be taken internally by a person. Say for example, the young girl or lady have noticed that her flow has stopped because of extreme cold exposure or some other reason which was frequently happened at that time because our foremothers, like our grandmothers at that time, they didn't have a proper clothing. They didn't have any warm clothes to cover their body or even their mid-section, so it was very easy for them to get affected by a sudden cold, a sudden change of body heat. Somehow mechanically the body reacted this way, which is very bad for a person, a female. So anyway, as soon as a person realized that she has lost the flow, because of the sudden cold, she usually report it to the mother, or grandmother, or a friend, who was a female, or whatever. And to try to find out how to do this, to get help, because a women herself cannot do it herself. One method is to warm up the lady, put her in the bed and cover her with a lot of stuff and put something like a hot water bottle heating, it's something like that. But people didn't have rubber or anything so they used to use stones. Making the stones hot by the fire and then roll them with the blanket, and put them under the woman's back and feet so to make sure the woman is heated quickly. She would be the whole body to be warm. Usually after few hours the flow would begin again and this was the only quick medicine for them. But they finally find out about this plant, somehow. If anybody can have it, anybody find it, he or she was always instructed to pick it up and store it away in a dry state. But it can be soaked and made to react just the same as if it was fresh. So this plant, it's suppose to be put in the water along with everything else, whatever, whatever necessary and make the woman to drink it soon as she finds out her flow has stopped. That is, if she's not pregnant, that is, if she knows she's not pregnant. So she would drink the stuff, in five minutes in tasting, this man that I was talking to he says "in five minutes," the flow will go on again, normally as it was before and the woman will have avoid the danger of having accumulated the monthly flow. Anyway, that is another Native medication.

All these plants that I am talking about, I don't think the white man understand. I don't think the modern Doctors or Scientists have ever tried to find out what is the stuff, or substance to act as a medicine. Probably there is nothing at all, probably it's all just faith. Having a faith is

something that you do. Most of the things that we know it is, anyway, seeing that I am not a scientist and seeing that I am not a medical Doctor by the recognized European medical doctor I don't have much power to explain what I think. But I do have a story to tell, and these are the stories that I told. I want to retain this topic. I do not want to venture out to another kind of topic because there is so much yet that I could say about a native medicine. Shall we say a First Nation health service or health or remedies? Shall I stop for now?

Now, lets go again. This is a Native medicine or remedies for a small or minor discomfort for the human body. And first I'm going to have to explain about our Native or First Nation in the James Bay lowland. I have said before our ancestors used to eat meat mostly, fish and then sometimes, it used to happen in the stories like the many stories that I have, it tells the story about a person who is glutton, shall we say, who love to eat. And always eat a lot. And this kind of person usually is very annoying amongst the people because as we understand our First Nation, they did not store anything. They were gathers, they were migrators and they follow along the animals and they never had a chance to store food. They never process food. So they pick animals to eat, fish to eat, and at times these animals naturally have a fat in their body. Sometimes a person will emerge from a family who will usually stuff themselves with all the food that is nice especially the fat. So these kind of persons over-do it, they call them, there is a word, there is name for it, for somebody who just eat and eat and can't stop themselves. It is a habit of somebody. These people do not get hurt when they eat because they can take in any amount of food with them and they just grow and grow. And usually, sometimes they don't get fat because they move around too. But there was such a person, there are such a person that cannot take a food that much because they grow up to eat the regularly, I mean less regularly maybe one meal a day, and they don't have a big stomach. Or some of them they eat a little at lunch or the evening maybe, they may eat a small amount so they have naturally a small stomach. Especially, those who work hard or just don't have time to enjoy a meal as we do today. And so these are the people who are careful what they eat, they do not stuff themselves with all the fat stuff or anything that has a lot of grease in it. So the grease for them has, can be very negative in their system. And usually these people really get hurt when they over-eat grease which is unavoidable sometimes if you are fed from a stranger or your friend who only has the

greasy stuff. You must try your best to eat in front of him but later on you would suffer if you are allergic to this too much grease or fat. So it has happened, the native people know this, they know you have to balance the grease or fat that you have eaten.

And that is the reason they use to pick berries. So in the fall, in the August when all kinds of berries are ripe and they used to pick a lot of cranberries. Cranberries are the least sweet stuff in the berry area, in the berry foods and all that stuff, natural foods; they are not very sweet. But they can be used as the alternative type during the winter. And besides that, they act as the balancer when people have only greasy animals or fatty animals to have for their diet. So the Native people always make those, they always process those cranberries because they don't get over-ripe, they don't break easy, they can be frozen, they can be kept as a frozen vegetables just like a green peas or any other. So they did that, they always have those things with their camp in the wintertime. So when ever a person has over-eaten the greasy food or fat and they have that excess fat in their stomach, grease which makes them headache and feel awful. And used to eat a cranberry sauce that is made and they would eat that. It would neutralize their discomfort, so these berries are very useful. I think we all recognise, any nationality may recognize that stuff, that tiny berry.

And there are other berries that have been used for some other remedies. But these I cannot remember exactly how they work and when do you use them. And there are many other ways to treat people, remedies for many other things. These are the practical things, these are not the mystic things. Probably later on I am going to touch on - about the mystic healing which is so many in the story. But these are the things that are not involved here; this is the ordinary practical remedies that our Native used in time past.

So yes, I have give a little credit to our simple Labrador Tea. How it is useful for everyday life amongst our First Nation in the past. It still works today, it works for me and it works for people who use it or have faith in it. When I was young man, when I was trained to be a hunter and trapper, there were times when I would have to travel a lot by walking. Sometimes I would get up maybe three in the morning to cover a distance where I would have to visit my traps and I have to walk probably 16 hours a day. After walking eight hours it's hard enough for the body and even if you don't eat good enough. And sometimes by eight hours in a day you are



so tired even though you got the will to travel you could force your body with the will to travel to walk on the deep snow and to keep moving so you won't get so cold, especially in the winter. Even then by the eight hours time, your legs, the bones were just sore. Just like anybody else who run or walk. And to remedy the temporary, temporary remedy for such a time as it is in our area, we have plenty of Labrador tea. So when one gets to that stage, you just have to stop and dig up those Labrador Tea and take plenty of them and if you have a tea pot then you can hold a least a pint or maybe more then a pint or a quart. So you can fill your water in it and stuff as many as you can with those Labrador tea and make it very strong, very strong tea. And that liquid itself, it comes from the leaves and even part of the stem. Then you would drink this water when it is hot not exactly very hot, but you would drink it like a hot coffee. If you have any chance that you may have some sugar, it's easier to put sugar in it, kills the bitter taste. Then you drink as much as you want, as much as you can hold and then wait for a while. We used to, young men were instructed to rest and make a fire and warm themselves up and drink that, drink that liquid. Surely after half hour all your fatigue, all your muscle aches would disappear. At least for the time being. It would provide you strength for another three hours. Probably another eight hours more from the time you started again. And that's how these Labrador tea works on the people who have faith in it. I don't know if its really a medicine but maybe because somebody has to do something to keep him going because in those days people have to go home to bring the food whatever they have gotten, their one days travel. Maybe their home family needs some food and they have to make it home and regardless how they feel, they have to make it home to provide a meal for their children. So they have to have this, a pip or a boost from the Labrador Tea. It has served, the Labrador Tea has served our people a long time ago, it still does today.

So it's the same thing with the other kind, which I have called a Minty-Flavoured-Evergreen-Leaf. It is the same nature of the Labrador Tea, but only it has a very small leaves and it has a minty flavour. It's better to drink that then it is straight Labrador Tea because Labrador Tea has bitter taste. So, I think I have, yes I still have to expand on that ordinary Labrador Tea. I just want to say that the preparation for the Labrador Tea for healing the wounds or washing the wounds, first you boil the same way you boil the Labrador Tea, and the liquid

that has been boiled with the plant with the leaves that act as a sterile. You wash the wound with that and after you wash it, then you can put the stitching in, if you need to put a stitch in. A stitch, I mean is Native people used to have animal sinew and then they would stitch the wound and make one knot or two knots of this sinew, animal sinew. Before they stitch they have to wash it and after stitching, after the blood has stopped flowing, and then they would process this Labrador Tea into a flour, more like a powder. It looks like a flour mill, [unclear] flour, not as fine but it is a bit course more like a salt. And then, at this stage they use grease, if you have any grease or something that we call animal grease, you apply that with the stuff to hold it together and you put it over the wound and you put the dressing over it, and this stays there. The processed remedy stuff, which is Labrador Tea, stays in the wound. You don't wash it, only if it begins to infect again inside. Then you have to take it off and wash it and release the stitch to let out the infected area inside and wash it again, tighten the stitch, and do the same over again. And if it doesn't get any infection, you leave the dry stuff on there and it falls off itself as it heals. You don't have to wash it again. And that is the process of healing with the natural plants in the area.

Now, I wanted continue this small remedies for body discomfort. Whatever causes a minor injury on somebody's body. First of all, I have to say there is a time when people have to travel, usually in the wintertime. That's when the Native people travel a lot, with the snowshoes on the snow. And sometimes when people don't have much of they don't have any abundance in hand, they don't have proper clothing. Sometimes on their feet they don't have proper stockings on, under their moccasins, and as they walk with the snowshoes, sometimes they would have a blister on the small toe or on the second small toe, usually where you tie your snowshoe on the foot. Where your shoe laces, your snowshoes laces touching your feet, sometimes you got a blister because you walked eight hours, ten hours a day. When you have the small flesh in there where the strings always touch and rub, it's a very, very extricating pain if you walk. And what you do if that happens, if you happen to kill any kind of partridge grouse partridge, or if you happen to kill ptarmigan, or sharp-tail grouse, or even if you have a rabbit skin. You take the rabbit skin especially the arms and cut them off in certain lengths with the hair on and the flesh and make it wet and put it over the open flesh and put it on there and you can walk without pain

after that. And you leave it there but you have to keep on soaking it so it won't dry up on top of you because it will strip the flesh again. So you have to keep on putting wet, making it wet, so it will help to heal the skin over again. So that's one way to do.

And if you want to use the partridge you could take the primary sac of the partridge which is, put there first [unclear] or whatever it is that they eat, they first [unclear] section, right on top of their chest. Between the mouth and the chest before it gets in, there is a little sac there where they keep these things, where they keep the twigs whatever it is, berries, where they eat or little buds. Buds, I mean that's a plant, eh? They keep it in there to be thawed out, after it has thawed out it start to go into the second stomach where it begin to do a digest, before it actually begin, where they break down the material that turns into a food. And this sac itself, the first stomach, is the one that is very good to be used as a replacement of the scraped skin of any body, of any part of your body. And it can act as a skin and it will help to grow a new skin over the old open flesh, open wound but it has to be kept moist. Never have to be taken off but kept moist from the top and the final dressing on top just to hold it in place. So this is the way that people used to treat themselves. And the frostbites, if it's on your feet, a small frostbite on your feet, the same thing can be applied. Only if its a deep frost bite you really have to use some other cleansing material or a medical plant that has to be turned into a cleansing liquid. You have to keep on that one. It requires a bit more nursing. And this is the medical service that was used amongst the Native people in the James Bay lowland. There are many others, but I must stop for now.

And now, we're going to talk about other kinds of body wounds of an individual amongst our First Nation in the James Bay lowland. They always find a way to ease the pain at least, maybe not always accomplished a total healing process of the major wounds. Now, I am going to talk about burns. Burns are unavoidable because we, the people who are in a mobile state always have to create fire either to cook or to keep yourself warm. And there are times that accidents can happen. Sometimes you're boiling water and it seems that we had pots and the boiling water can be spilled over your fingers, or your arm, and your feet. They are the vulnerable areas of the boiling water or even sometimes your face. Sometimes it has happened, some people are travelling in the wilderness and they get caught in a forest fire. And sometimes

they have to fight their way out of it and they would have a burned area in their body, probably their legs, maybe the arm, the face. So this open flesh is very, very excruciating pain. In order to have some soothing application, our ancestors have found a way to make a paste like sort of thing to make the wound be soothing a bit instead of continuous pain. So what they use is that they pick out the same thing, a tree sap. A very liquid-y tree sap and they would take that and heat it a bit and put some more grease, whatever grease: beaver, goose, or whatever, they will mix that with, something else, I forget what it was, and it turns into a paste, and this paste is the one that is applied over the wound, a burning wound. And it can heal very, very easily, and without any, any rashes, or I mean without any pain, so much discomfort.

And it can be changed, it can be, another plants can be processed into this same medical purpose, and it can be used as an ointment. To treat the burning flesh, even if it is a very deep burning it can be treated the same way. So, the sap of any tree, not necessarily a particular tree, but any tree that has an open exposed sap that seeps out from the tree, that is the kind of stuff that is used. Some of the people have used material from the fish. Some of us may understand a fish, a fresh fish has a air bubble inside, in that air bubble itself is what they use. They heat that somehow, by fire, by heat, and the stuff becomes liquid and they put something else in it, which I believe was the same kind of stuff as the sap, the tree sap. And a little bit more grease, I am not sure what kind of particular grease they used but the paste is made out of it. And that can be used to remedy, remedy the wound. So, these are the things that people use when they need to treat the wound of any person.

And now, we shall go to another kind of medical treatment amongst the First Nation. Now we shall continue to the next procedure. Now let's talk about the usual annoyance amongst our people which they have experienced. Usually, there is a person or sometimes a group of people would have a rash. They would have a rash on their hands or some part of their body. A rash is what I mean I will describe this thing: it starts with the blister sort of thing. The kind that develop where you rub your body somewhere so much, your hand, your feet and then you have a blister. Water under the skin and usually after it burst and you get sick when the skin comes off, that sort of thing. As the people turned out to be for some reason or another, they would probably have an allergy to something, water or blood, or any other substance. Or they have it in

their system or they may have it inherited, whatever reason they have that. But some people whenever they have an open wound or a little scratch in their hand it's, it usually run off. It goes on and on, jump to the other section of your hand or your feet and this is very annoying. And it stays there if you don't treat it.

So usually where the people get to have that, one person or a group of families one person experience it, they usually treat it. They usually treat it as soon as they see that it does not want to go away. So what they do is they get those, we have a tree called the Spruce trees, which we know that they are down south. They are all over those kind of trees, you know. They are very good for many things, paper, and we got lots of those in this James Bay lowlands. And we also have a timber, we call them, timbers are trees that are bigger, usually bigger, about 40 feet high, probably 18 inches in diameter at the bottom. But not those, probably they can be used also, but mostly those kinds of spruce trees that used to have a lot of nuts, seeds like, they are very abundant; grow right at the top of the tree. You can actually see them hanging there like a berry, just like a grapes. They are blue and dark in colour and they are very sticky, they have lots of sap in them. And this is what the Native people take out. They take those things out and they usually boil them. They boil them and the water they use to wash the wounds, you know, with this persisting blisters that happens to someone's hands. And they wash that with that thing, maybe three times a day and sometimes they even turn these nuts, break them apart and put them into, squash them into the small piece of rag and cover the wound as wet, and put a bit of lard or liquid or grease with it, just to hold it, just to keep it moist. So they put it over the wound maybe as long as they see, as long as it is required. If they see the changes, if they see that it begin to heal, soon, sometimes in three days they can tell that it works and it does heal these kinds of bothersome skin rashes. As long as it doesn't go deeper then the skin. So they usually heal those very quickly. Using those spruce nuts, sounds crazy to say nuts but it is, it's the only way that I can call it. They are very, they are not the dry one, they are the very, very thick and full of sap. So that's what it is used. They can be boiled or they can be taken as there are squashed and meshed, entered into a paste they can be used for a deep wound. Even a burn can be cured that way. Now, we have talked about another thing.

Now the last, the last that I want to talk about Iodine. Iodine is very easy to obtain and it can be turned into a very quick Iodine. If one cuts his finger or even a minor cut, not a big cut, not if you cut off your hand, but if you cut your hand or finger then the blood flow and you can't stop it and you can't stop it even if you put a dressing to it. What you do, you find those fine new willows, that are long and narrow and very flexible and they look red in colour. They are very fine stringy things and they stand very straight and any place on the rivers or lakes they grow. You find those and take them. You take them all apart and you take all the inner part and as soon as you get that thing exposed you put it in your mouth and chew it with your teeth and the sap and the saliva that works in your mouth, that's what you pull into the open wound where the blood is flowing. It will act just like Iodine. It will just turn into white and the flow of blood will stop. And that's when you begin to treat that. It can also work with the other kind of trees, I think it is the Tamarack. Some part of the Tamarack, you could use that has a Iodine. So that's about the end of this topic about local medicine or the First Nation treatment for health. Shall we call it, "Health Service among the First Nation".

I have not finished this topic; I shall do it again later in the other tape. Thank you very much for listening.