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Hello, hello, am I recording anything? This is testing, testing. Hello, my name is Louis Bird I am from Peawanuck Ontario, which is north in Ontario and I also submit that this noise is very bad. (Pause Break) Now let me try again, this place is always having this fire sirens. Today is October 13, 1999, I am living, I am staying in Winnipeg Manitoba, hold on.

Let me try again. Yesterday I am staying in the city of Winnipeg, in Manitoba, the idea is to come here and try to write my stories or transcribe them into my language, which is the Omushkego language, Omushkego meaning the Cree, Swampy Cree language. Unfortunately, it cannot be done that way for the time being. Now, I came from Northern Ontario on the Southwest coast of Hudson Bay, and in that area, and our tribal name is Omushkego, the original tribe name. But, it has been changed to Cree, Swampy Cree in the English language.

I have collected the stories from 1965, recording them, writing them in manuscript type of thing, because I know the Cree are not going to have our elders long, for long, to tell us about our, our history. But our history unfortunately was not written, it has been passed down to us orally and also in forms of legend and quotation stories and short stories, in this way that was part of our education system. I am trying to record this in timely fashion, I will have to explain a little bit what I do. I have to set aside a little bit of my collection of stories in order to do this. When I was collecting stories I was recording as if I was taking notes or writing down the notes for my self only. And then later on I would record again whenever I remembered the stories as if just temporarily recorded. Sometimes I record as if I am speaking to someone of very nicely listening without any question. Sometimes I record the story as if I am listening to the old person telling me a story and translate it into English, sometimes I do that, whichever way that I could remember the stories, I used to record them, but I never thought about putting them into the proper word as a written story that is the problem. Now, to do that, to try to put this story into

the, into the written story which might work, is a hope that it might be written down. But this one is only to record as an example of the stories.

Now I wish to tell about, I wish to tell about the brief explanation about these stories, the stories that we have from our past, from our ancestors, and our recent ancestors that are passed away for the last 20 years. They have followed the old tradition, they have spoke to us in the stories, they have educated us in stories and practice. That was the old traditional education system, before anybody else came into this continent long time ago, which nobody knows exactly when, our ancestors, our ancestors long time ago used to teach the children by action, by doing practical learning in a day time and it begins very early age. As soon as a child begin to understand the language he begin to hear stories and he begin, he begin to see the action of the parents and therefore learn in the practical manner. There were no schools then, there were no communities, there were no cities, let alone the cities. A society was not existing as a community, the largest society that was sometimes experienced was a large family, maybe a clanship. And the society did not establish the community, it moves because people then have adapted themselves into the land, into, into nature, nature meaning the four season, or even the six season in the, in the, in the old Omushkego land in the Cree land. So this was long time ago, before the European came, sometimes we call this the pre-contact period, today. But in my stories, this is a pre-explanation about the, our past. In that time then, our education system was practical experience. And in the evening or in times where there was a relaxing time, or when there is no time for people to move around, in a cold seasons of the year, January/February, people live, the families live in the mutt house, or a moss house. It was then that children were spoken to in legends and in stories to teach them the life which they going to experience in the future. It was those months, December, part of December, January and February, when the coldest month of the year, people live in the moss house. To more like hibernate, only the eldest will go out because they are the only ones that have the clothing, which they can stand the cold weather. And the children do not usually have the clothes as they have so they cannot therefore stay outside very long, and for that reason sometimes they get bored and then they like to be spoken to, played with too and everything. And in the evening they were told stories, we were, which we call legends. And the all kinds of stories, and these legends then were geared for them to understand something, it was just like reading a text books. And if you memorize a text books it teaches you, and you learn something from it, and the same thing was applied in those days.

So that is how my stories begin and for this brief introduction, I want to explain a little bit more how I eventually find out how to do things. I cannot apply the old system because we don't live like that anymore, we the Omushkego people, the Cree people in Swampy Cree area from the tip of James Bay into the Northwest to as far as York factory, which has been abandoned long time ago. These were the people who live in that Swampy Cree they are known, they are known still today as the Swampy Crees. I am amongst them, I am right in the center of that distance between 800 miles on a coastal area and 200 miles depth into the South to up the Rivers. That is the area of the Swampy Cree people, and this is where all these stories came from. My stories that I tell do not cover other tribe's cultural experiences or their ways of living. Our people who live within 200 miles from the coastal region they are, they call themselves Oji-Cree, they begin to use the Ojibway language. Their life style is different than the coastal region people, the Omushkego people. And the further way south, the true Ojibway speaking people they do have different kind of stories they have their own, and a different culture, and a different geological make up. The land is different, so therefore their lifestyle is different, and for that reason the stories that I tell here only belong to the Omushkego the Cree people along the Swampy area. Today they, they are, they are known as, they are known as James Bay lowland, the area, we shall call it the district, but long time ago it was a territory of the Omushkego.

And this where all these stories came from, one thing that we have to remember in also in the stories the language we call Cree today in the modern time, covers a vast distance across Canada. If we say begin from the East, East coast of James Bay, and halfway through the land of Quebec, it touches part of the Inuit country up in the Labrador. And you go west, west across the James Bay, up into Southwest coast of Hudson Bay, and inland across the Nelson River, Churchill River, and into the Lake Winnipeg and past the Manitoba into Saskatchewan, upper, not South and then even to Alberta. So this language covers that distance right across almost, right across Canada. So these were the people we used the same language, it's the same language but it's, it's in different dialect in places. South, no, pardon me, East at the furthest East the East coast of James Bay and a part of Hudson Bay, these people have different accent. For example, as you hear the English language from England and to Canada, and then again you hear it again in the State, they speak different accent, they sound different, the same language. Same thing applied in these people, these people in the East coast of James Bay they speak their own accent, and then again in our West coast of James Bay and Southwest coast of Hudson Bay

speak their own accent. And then as you move west to Manitoba into Saskatchewan and Alberta they have also their own different accent. Only in that middle, in the West coast of James, Southwest coast of James Bay and West coast of James Bay, these people speak differently. If you were to listen, come in to the East coast Cree people they would say we speak like a house on fire, and we say the same way to them. And then if you listen to the west, Western tribes, the Western Cree speaking people, commenting about on the Central part of the Omushkego people they would say we do speak fast, the James Bay and the Hudson Bay Cree, they speak very fast. But if we make any comment of the East coast, the East coast Cree speaking peoples speak fast, and then if we speak, make any comment about the Western part of the Cree speaking people we would say they speak very slow. So whatever it is, the language is the same, only spoken the same differently, sounds differently when you listen. So that is what I am, that's where the stories go, our stories can be carried right across to the four provinces to the West. Our stories can be found East coast, they are there, whichever way they were, whichever way they originate it is in that area, that territory these stories been carried to. We don't say we are the only ones who creates stories, we only say in our language these are the stories have been passed down to us, in long time before any other people came in. So I guess everybody thinks that are we the only people who ever live in this land? We may not. So the Omushkego, the Cree speaking people West coast of James bay, and Southwest coast of James Bay, right up to the Saskatchewan, even Alberta, they are the same speaking people they only sound different. So the stories can be passed and they can stay, they can be remembered, stories can be remembered from across the land. From the South and the North and quickly can flash right across the country. And these were the stories that were kept and these were the stories that I hear when I was young, when I was young boy.

I am now 65 years old, when I was 5 years old I heard these stories, which we call the stories long time before the European came, which sometimes we call legend and oral stories or histories. So that is the introduction of my story, and now for the next 15 minuets or so, I am going to explain about when I say pre-contact period. This is, if we were to measure time the day Christopher Columbus came into the North America, or the West Indies you call them that today, that was 500 years ago. Before that time is when these stories took place in we don't know how far back. Pre-contact period, we do not say that our self that we only say that in English, in English language. But our people, our own Omushkego people, our Cree people

understand there were people here came to visit, but they never talked about it much. There were other, other people who visit in East coast, even sometimes they say from the South. Nobody know for sure where the people came in our own understanding, so these stories which we call legends they were used, they were existing along time before the European came. They have, their cultures were totally so totally different then European, the way our, the way our grandfathers tell us in their oral history, they said the people have lived here long time, that nobody knows exactly where and how they came to be. As we understand today, our first nation people did not develop their writing system, not in the way as we see today, of 1999. They did have a symbolic signs which they use in their time, some signs they put in the ground with the assistance of the Sun Shadows helps to speak, the signals that been put on the ground or even by sticks, or by any other flexible item. They have left the signs for the fellow man to see that they had been there, and it speaks. These were the symbolic languages, but they were not written languages. There life in that territory that I am talking about, on the Southwest coast of Hudson Bay, let us say formerly York Factory of Manitoba and you go Southeast on the shores of the Hudson Bay, Southwest coast of Hudson Bay and into the, into the James Bay, West coast of James Bay, all these areas were occupied by the Cree speaking people. They were actually Omushkego, Omushkego, in our tribal name, and they go onto this East coast of James Bay, and as far as the Hudson Bay where we know today which is called Great Whale River. And to the East to the mountain region, these were the Cree speaking people. And the stories that we hear come from these people, from the West and the East, and we in the Center of the people we have all of those rich stories that cover a vast distance land in which where the Cree speaking people live.

Not necessarily living or lifestyle is the same, as I have said before, they live in a different country, different shape of land. For Example, the Swampy Cree live exactly what it means, in a swampy area, and their lifestyle is different, and their stories are blend with the nature of the land. The animals they lived by with, the animals they use as their food, the animals they use for their clothing, and for their dwelling cover, covers. All this involved, and if we go into the East coast of James Bay, partially of Hudson Bay, we will find people that live in the rocky regions, there are hills, there are high rivers, fast waters, and a rich country for the wild life. They live there, they have all kinds of animals, they have a rich abundance of fish and of rivers, they live, which they use as the highways and everything, which they travel with in each

season, according to the season, four season of the year. They move by that, and so is the Swampy Cree people, even if they don't have any high mountains or high hills, they still follow the season or, the season or, forces, whatever we want to call it. The seasons is a determining factor, they have to move with the season, they move into the open areas in summer when it's warm, and they go inland when there is lots of wood and some other kind of a food provision that they can get in the winter time. So they migrate with the season, so as those people out into the East, the Cree speaking people. And if we move out into the Manitoba region where the Swampy Cree people, we still find the same way, they follow the seasonal moving. They move with the season, in the spring season they have to move to the certain places where they can find the food they eat, or to go meet the migratory birds which they eat in the early summer. And then they stay in the open in summer time and then in the fall they move inland again, and then they move into a place where they know they are going to find fish where they migrate during the winter, always. As I speak I may, I may say something that is involved in the total First Nation culture in our area, because I see migration is repeated here, migration. Because fish migrate seasonally, the white fish, the brook trout, even to the lesser fish, I should not call them lesser, I should say any kind of fish that was important for these people. And also the geese the Canada geese, the snow geese, the other geese, and ducks, they come in the early summer, and they stay for a while and they move into their own places. And our people, our Omushkego people our Cree speaking people, move wherever these birds are for their food, they move with them, they follow them, they meet them, they go meet them where they go, they go live close by them. And when they leave the area, so the people also move inland every year, every winter, every spring they move. Some yes, some people adapt them self into the land which they have, get to know exactly how they can move, they can live, without going inland.

These were the people who know how to use the land in the coastal areas, and they live there year round. And this situation applies around the Bay, there were people who can stay close to the coastal region, and there were those who move inland. This was happen ever since the people ever live in this land, they lived there even without anybody's else. And they all did contact with each other from time to time, they contact with the other tribes from South, they trade, yes, they trade. They trade items, as in object, sometimes temporary food items when they meet, yes, we will come that many other things about other tribes, other than the Cree speaking people. This was a long time before the European came, and these people did not have to, they

did not have to live one place, and therefore denied himself to establish the communities, I mean the permanent communities. They have temporary villages wherever they happen to be in during one season. For example, in summer, they do live in a village, their being there became a village temporary, maybe for two months, and then after that they move inland individually, each family moves his own territory, so therefore the village does not exist anymore. So the largest group can live together is by the clanship. For example, if there is a family that extended have his sons and daughters live enough to get married, they usually live together, use the same land, follow the same procedure in season of movement, they begin clan. So they are the largest society that were existed then. But as we, as we study our history, the history of Canada or North America we have not seen any place for our people to have established a community.

The Archaeologists have not found any old cities yet, or any communities that would have been stayed for all year round, when so many years, no, but there were some human activities that been found by Archaeologists which is very old. But they have not found anything that is older than more than 2000 years, maybe 3000. But I'm not, I'm just guessing I do not, this not my expertise to talk about the European finding, my effort is to try to keep track of our people history, oral history. So for this I explain that we did live the way we have been told the way they live, brought us to think, to understand why they did not do this, what makes them as they were and as they had been for the last few decade they had been moved, they had moved now into the community.

So that's jumping too far ahead, let us go back to before the European came, how did those people live, what do they have? Do they have a religion? And that is another, a very complicated subject to try to say they have spiritual beliefs. But it is very important to know. At the beginning when we want to tell a story about our ,any, almost any first nation culture no matter where across North America, we are not dealing only with the very is, the very small area which is in the Swampy Cree people live. We don't talk about the prairie people, we don't talk about the mountain region people, we do not talk about the east coast people. We are talking to the very narrow stretch of land where people existed which were, which are now know today as a Cree speaking people, and they call themselves Omushkego. And it is where I live, it is where I bought up in the center of that Omushkego place, Omeske, Swampy Cree area, and the stories I hear come from there. So we have, we have heard, I have experience when I was young which we call the stories legends, and some of this are called short stories. Some of them are called

mysteries, some of them are called Wetigo stories, some of them are called, some of them are called the actual happenings but they were so old, nobody knows who, who they told. But these were supposedly the oral histories, these ones, but the legends are the same, they are also oral histories but it is so far back nobody can remember who, which family is related to these.

But the legends are not, they don't stay in one century they stay, move up the closest, the closest time they come up is 500 years ago. If you go too close then you begin to, they are not, they are not legends anymore. Once you begin to hear different things in these stories you are not talking the modern time. For example, if I were to tell the story about the characters in the legends, and if I said they use steel axe, they use steel cups, silver and everything, that will be wrong, I will not be speaking the original stuff. I will be a liar. But to keep the way it was been passed down to us will be the authentic thing. And the characters that we use in that, in these legends are not real, but what happened to them was real long time ago. Not exactly, it has been exaggerated little bit, some part of it, it has been mixed with spiritual stuff, which we call the Mitewiwin. Most people don't believe this stuff, most, many people don't believe these things ever did exist, did happen. So they are there, even though no matter whether you don't believe it or not, they are there, they are still there, they can still be enjoyed if you want to listen if you want to be enter, entertained by them. While we still living, while we still have some people who remember the old stories, we are fortunate to hear them. I am much blessed by remembering some of them, and able to recite them as they were, as they did when I was young. So that is the legends, I am still talking about long time ago, and these legends are contained words that we do not understand today. If we were to use the real, if we were to recite them as they were long time ago, no, we would no, they would not make any sense. Because our people do not listen like that anymore, they do not live as our people live 500 years ago, they do not eat as our people eat 500 years ago, they do not hunt as our people hunt 500 years ago, and therefore they did not dress the way we dress today, 500 years ago, they do not speak today as they speak, our ancestors 500 years ago, and most of all they do not, they do not practice spiritual values as they did 500 years ago. But most of the stuff that was used long time ago, practice by our ancestors 500 years ago is still valuable.

Many teachings that were there, that was used in those days, they are still as valuable as they were, and still other applicable if we can be, if they can be studied and applied. What I am mean to, what I mean to say is that if we weren't to study the stories, the oral histories. Not the

legends, the oral histories, we would learn, we would learn that there were some regulations about everything. For example, in the land of the Omushkego, the Cree speaking people, there were conservation rules, but there were no laws, they were not written. There were moral laws, they were connected with the spiritual values. But we will not speak about the spiritual stuff for now we will just speak material things so we will be able to understand. And we will be able to listen. For that purpose we will exclude the spiritual stuff, for now, until later. The moral laws were, that were though to the upcoming generation, were emphasize, to follow the regulations that were applicable in those days, and in that period in time. And in that land there were conservation practices in terms of animal use and besides that, the reason why these regulation were forced is by nature. For example, if you were told not to shoot ten geese when we have to cover 100 miles, what will happen when you shoot ten geese which are 8 pound each. Practical use, practically is that you will not be able travel, even if you have five people, they will have to carry those things, you are not supposed to destroy or spoil anything like that, that is one law, one rule that is very strict. So when you young you were told not to shoot, or not to kill anything that is, you don't eat only what you need, only what you can preserve. So for this reason, if you are to shoot for example ten geese and you want to cover still long distance, what you have to do is you stop to moving, you are stopping, you delaying the moving because that careless act. And then, and then you will be forced to sit and stay in one place, and preserve the food it will not be destroyed. You will have to dry the meat even make it into a powder, to make it light so you can carry. And everything has to be done, even the bones were told not to leave it laying around. Even the bones you are told to use, take something that is there, only the hard shell of the bones, even that you told not just to throw around. For the respect to the animal you were told to put it aside. Maybe sometimes you have to bury it, maybe sometimes you have to hang it. When you really want to practice the cultural belief, that means that if you want to make sure the respect of the animal, you will have to do that. So that's the cost of not listening if you do not listen to this, 'don't overkill', you will stop the movement for no reason. If you can find the same animals where you are going why kill them here, so that was very ridged.

That is just one example, people have rules, people practice regulation that is one, a little story that exposes our ancestors did practice the conservation, and also they have rules. So that is a small part, and we have already talked about the old days, our ancestors the Omushkego, the

Cree speaking people in the Swampy land, Swamp, James Bay lowland, they have seasonal movement, they leave their wintering ground where they have stayed during the winter. The spring season for us start April 20, and that season keeps until May 20 or the end of May, it depends. And that is what we call spring, because everything is just move on top of the surface, the water springs up on top of the ice, soon everything else starts to move. The migration bird come in and they do their spring mating, spring season. Fish come out in the spring they move, they start a move again. The frogs come out, they do, also them also they mate, this everything springs up alive again, and so is the human. So they have abundance of food to be able to go wherever they want. This time in the spring season is open, just like a leaves that grow, that opens up for the spring, flowers open, leaves grow, the buds open and they bring out this the leaves, and the trees. Even the evergreens, even the spruce trees they begin to sprout out their, the next growth. So everything in the land is absorbed well and it's fallowed, and so is humans, they move away from their wintering ground and they go into the short visit area which they called Spring guttering, or early summer feast days take place. And in that also humans also get married, so the spring season is always the new, something new happens, some exiting. Life is a pleasurable for a time being. So this where the action that kept practice for many centuries before the European came and this is where all those legends emerged from, and created and perfected during the cold winter months in the moss house. The elders who study their life, who try to find the ways to teach their children found the time to perfect their stories which will teach the youngsters to outline the life for them to come, to experience the life in their future. These stories were made for that, they were geared for that, and that is what the use and advocacy of these stories which we will call legends.

I could go on more for more detail about the past, to explain what our ancestors have went through in time passed before other nation came in on the land. I am not trying to make up the stories I am just repeating the stories that I have heard from our deceased ancestors. I was blessed to see some, not many, and I was blessed to speak to some, to ask question in this nature, to ask them to tell me what it has been a long time, long time ago before the European came. Thank you for listening I think my tape recording come to an end, I will turn this tape around and continue to record some more, we will keep the same subject, a minute now.

Hello, hello, this is Louis Bird again. This is side B of the first recording. The date is October 13, 1999. In the other side of this tape recording we talked about the First Nation people

which we know of the Cree speaking people. And they call themselves Omushkego, I prefer the word Omushkego because it's actual tribal name. At the end of the recording we spoke about the way people move, and the way they live, the way they adapt themselves into the land before the European came in. And we also talked about the way they utilize the seasons of the year, their movement. We talked about all nature, it's regeneration in the spring time and all the animals that move, the movement of the animals. We haven't talked about the big game animal, but we talked about the migrating birds, the fish, the frogs, these we have mentioned. And then we speak about the people who live there, which makes them follow the seasons, which makes them to migrate and why they do that is, will be good to talk about.

Let me get back to the time when I say when we talked about the people themselves. When they get together early in the spring, early summer, early summer in that part of the, that part of the country is the end of May, or the first two weeks of June. After that, these people will go back wherever they can find the food. The most important thing that makes those people move is the food. We must remember they are not farmers, they are not agricultural people, they do not farm, they do not grow anything in the ground. And it's easy to understand because in that area the seasons are short. The warm days begin only in June, and sometimes the ground thaws only about a foot down, maybe 6 inches. So for that reason, to grow something, for example as potato, it would take a, it would be a very small potatoes and so is the other plants, the other food items, vegetables. So people more like adapt themselves to the nature of land, the weather, the seasons, year by year, centuries, thousand years. So they adapt themselves as they see, as they see fit and as they accustomed. For them to set up a community, and to establish the community, organize community, and organize many institution that it requires. No, that was not possible because of the land, because of the nature of land, because the nature of force and all that stuff.

So in a spring time people get together for a little while, together in a certain place, in our area in Southwest coast of James Bay, Southwest coast of Hudson Bay they are about five major rivers that flow into the Hudson Bay all together its six, six or seven all together. To speak about only the West coast of James Bay and Southwest coast of James Bay we are talking about Moosonee River, Albany, Attawapiskat, Winisk, Fort Severn, York Factory, along with the Nelson River. These are the rivers that flow into the Hudson Bay, West coast of James Bay and the Southwest coast of Hudson Bay, that's the area that we are talking about. And those rivers,

within 100 miles inland, the Swampy Cree, or the Cree speaking people use that land. And they interconnect it from the tip of James Bay into the York Factory people exchange, they travel, they visit each other just like the way we visit from one city to the other, by walking, by boat, by any means. But there was no motorized vehicle anything, no hand made, no man made highways or travel ways, only the major ways, rivers, the Bay itself do not provide much of a transportation except when the ice has cleared the area, but even then when it has been cleared by ice the Bay is dangerous to travel. So these people understand this for many years, I cannot say how many years they did that, we know for sure they have used that land, they live on that land at least 500 years before the European came. The stories that time we don't know, but this is the way we lived in those days. When they come from the wintering ground where has spent the winter, they hunt and they get a little bit of preserved food and then they go. They are eager to go and go and meet each other at the mouth of these rivers, at the mouth of the rivers that I have mentioned, or sometimes halfway through there is a junction of the rivers and as they meet, sometimes there is a fair sized lakes or halfway to these 200 miles rivers sometimes there is a lakes and they meet there, and they plan to go meet someplace else. So these were the temporary villages and they are there still today, they can be found those, even archaeologists was to look, they will find those human objects which have been used in those days. And therefore it was in that period in the early part of June that people used to get together for temporary as long as their food provision last they can stay together, they can exchange the [unclear], exchange marriages, they can exchange anything what they want. They visit each other for two weeks, or maybe a week and a half, and after that they know that there is a food, their provision is gone and they have to leave. They have to spread again, they have to go a distance from each other so they can find where they can hunt to survive during the summer. Those people who came from upland, or inland, or the river system they know the land very well so sometimes they go back up north, they go back up the river because they know that this would be fish, they know something else to eat maybe a big game animals and small game. Those who decide to stay close to the regions of the Bay, they find places where they temporary live in communities, small like village, sometimes maybe five families, sometimes ten families at the most. And there are those places still exist today, where they live in summer. So they did co-operate with each other then and there were reasons for that too, there were other reasons why they have to live together during

the summer. And this is a different story, we will not go to that this time, we will maintain the way these people live and what they do? What do they find? Why do they move there?

One reason that we can say they go into the open areas so they can get away from them the flies, the mosquitoes, the horse flies, and the black flies, and later the sand flies. So in the open country when there is wind, usually you do not, you are not surrounded with flies, use this unless they behind you, where the wind is, so you be temporary relief from that. And sometimes when you live in a coastal area, there are days, seasons that are very quickly change. If you get up in the morning with about 35 degrees centigrade, by the afternoon of two o'clock you will have a freezing weather. So the flies will not be around, the horse flies will be gone, and the mosquitoes will not be very active, and the black flies will not be around. So for that reason these people have a reason to move there, or to live there, and those who go into their inland they also have a system. They know why they go there even though they live in the river, they have a place to get away from flies. And that is to say, when the leaves, like the willows, poplar trees, and the other kinds of poplar trees that are, that are tall and very nice, they, this is where these people live. They live amongst these poplar trees where there is a thick tall ones. That's where they camp and for some reason, the mosquitoes are not too many there, even the horse flies, they don't like to stay under this, what they call, balcony of trees, or under grow, under, under these leaves. For some reason, there is cold ways, and for other reason, whatever the reason is the mosquitoes are not too many there. And people can live in there, they can have their camp and they have certain kinds of a plant they burn which repels the mosquitoes. I personally do not know that, the what kind of plant they use, I know any kind of smoke will sort of dull, the activity of the mosquitoes and the other flies.

So these people knew how to live in the time past. We can visualize them, they didn't have no clothes very much as we have today. In summer time they relax, they don't have to wear any heavy clothes, so they only cover themselves in the center area, and women have a very light skirt, and the kids can have the same. So they have to have a place where they won't be bothered by so many mosquitoes, so they have a system, they find the place where they can stay so they can get away from the flies. And those people who live out into the open tundra, let us say around the coastal region of the Hudson Bay and James Bay, they have other reason to do that, long time ago, we don't know how long ago. There were some tribes came in sometimes to attack the Omushkego or the Cree speaking people, they have their own reason, I will not try to

explain that for now, we will just continue to speak about these the Cree speaking people in the West coast and Southwest coast of Hudson Bay. That strip of land, which we call today Swampy area, James Bay lowland, these are the people we are talking about. So they live there for that reason, early spring they get together where they held feast and where they have games, where they have many other things activities for temporary. And as they go back into their places as I explain some of them up the river, some of them on the coastal areas, and they have that reason to do that. Some of the people enjoy having the migratory birds, they are the ones that move to the coastal region because some migratory birds such as Canada geese, they usually have a place which they molt, where they change feathers. And in that area, there are about 3 places in that Southwest coast of Hudson Bay where they molt, and that place, particular place, you cannot walk there, the ground is so soft there is a few maybe 2 inch diameter of grass grows maybe about 2 inch high. And around it it's soft moss, very soft if you'd stepping off when there is a little island of the grass you will sink up to your knee or you maybe deeper, some people have been caught in there and they die, they couldn't get out, some similar thing to the quick sand I think, but they have died because they get stuck, they couldn't get out. And that's where the Canada geese, molt and they used to have a lot of ponds that are large and they can drink from there and all that stuff. They raise their young there too if they could, but usually, the family of Canada geese do not go into the whole bunch of other geese, they have their own place, they have their own way, they have nest, and they have the in pairs that take care of the young ones. But those, I guess you call them, its something like the geese who do not yet mature, they are bachelor geese, a male and female, they don't nest right away, they usually wait maybe two years before they start to mate. Last year geese they don't mate, so they usually go in there and some very old geese they do not mate anymore, so they have this whole bunch of them that go into the certain place; the molt. And there are those places, and the native of the land, of the area know exactly where they are, so what they do is they live close by there, close by those molting places. And its just like having a goose farm or a farm, you go there a little ways when you want to eat and take a few, or enough for you to eat, but they don't chase them away, these geese will stay there until again they fly. So that's conservation and that's their style, so they follow that, and there are times in the same time they were, they were there are in summertime there are caribou that usually spent around the coastal area they do not necessarily live or stay as a herd of caribous. The females who run his own way and find a place where she will have her calf and

she stay there, she don't go far, so just stay close by there in that one area particular area where there is enough food, until her little ones begin to be half grown, and then she joins the herd. So the many people don't follow these ones, not if it's absolutely necessary. Sometimes you are forced to hunt those, yes, because they may need clothing or they may need food, so they have to kill them, they have to hunt them. But they are those that do not mate, again, one year old caribous they do not mate, the old bull do not mate anymore, and the old female do not. So it is this one that live in herds, small herds maybe six to seven, not more than forty. So they wander, they go into the open tundra inland maybe fifteen, twenty miles from the Bay, they find those places and that is where they live, and if its too hard, if there is too many, too many, too many days hot they start to get, for some reason they have to go down to the sea. So they go out into the sea and then they eat sea weeds, a special kind of sea weeds that they eat, some elders have understood that these caribous they need salt, whatever the reason. So they eat those leaves that contain salt water, so they stay there when it is hot and they go up into the land again, whenever its too hot they go down into the bay and eat those special kinds of sea weeds. There may be a reason, but our eldest have not explained why, they may have no why, but one of the reasons they have explains that because of the horse flies.

There is two kinds of flies that are very vicious, three kinds I mean, there are horse flies I think they are called, they got yellow legs, they look almost like a bumble bee, they are about that size. And then there is the half size, they do not have yellow legs, but they have a brown legs and they look almost the same like this big horse flies, and they, they can bite, take a chunk of skin off you. And so there is another small one, they call it mini horse fly, and they are very very, they can actually really stick their head into the skin, and are very painful when it bites you, and the caribous are bothered by these. Sometimes there are so many into the caribou herds that you can actually see the cloud of them and the caribous will take off with the full speed, leave them behind temporarily. But those flies, they seem to appear from no where, where do they come from? We don't know that, the same way as we don't know those house flies came from, the house flies who lay the eggs in fresh rotting meat and all that stuff, or anything. Where do they come from? Wherever your kill an animal in the open fresh is there, you didn't skin or anything. These things will just appear in no time, a whole bunch of them, one of them is the nature. Anyway, the Omushkego people understood these things, so they live by these rules, they are like laws that force you to act in such a way, so they live like that, small things. You

live with the mosquito, there is not much in there, because you have thousands of them around you, you won't live peacefully, they even kill. So there is a way to do that, there is a way to avoid them or try at least stay away from them, or even a small repel action, smoke them or something else. I have unfortunately never heard any man made liquid or substance that can be put on to human skin to avoid them from biting, I have not, not myself. But I have seen many different kind of plants and moss that are used to burn which of these when it's smoked actually hate or repel the mosquito, that I could never really understand. But they say there is certain things that you can actually use as rebel for the mosquitoes.

Anyway, these are the small things that are real, they are practical things, they are real, they are substance, there are no spirit connected to those things, but there is. If we were to go into the spirituality of those first nation, our ancestors, that's when the story begin to be complicated, but we have tried to avoid that for now. There will be time, it will come, and it will come to be exposed in the reciting of legends, all stories, short stories, wihtiko stories, any other name stories. These things are always emerge, if I try to tell a wish to use them. But for this purpose I will not try to blend them, because this recording is preparing us to listen the wholeness of the Omushkego history, in time of before the European came.

Now, we have dealt with the unpleasantly, the unpleasantness of the Omushkego life, of the Cree speaking people life, the land in which they live and why do they move, why do they migrate, why do they keep on moving with the season. Now let us look again in a different point of view. Let us now talk about how they eat, these people who live here before other nations came. So we know that they eat meat, the meat eaters, they eat fish, they eat a foods, they eat foods in summer from the month of July to October. They can eat berries, these berries play a big part for them during the summer, whatever the food brings to the human digestion system, it actually work for those people also. They love to eat those berries, and if I may, I may try to name them a few; there is most favorite berries for them on the coastal region is the blueberries, sometimes we call them blueberries, and we call them ourselves Canada Gooseberries. But they are the most abundant in the month of August. Sometimes when the season has been favorable, when the season has not been frost in June too much or even July, when the season has been moderately wet, not too dry, these berries will grow very beautifully. And our native people love to eat them and so is the rest of the animals. Then they have, then we have the next abundance are cranberries, they can grow, the blueberries can grow almost anywhere, but not so abundantly

inland, they do grow inland but abundantly they grow in the coastal region. Around the cranberries grow much better inland, especially around the river system, the creeks where the river is, where the river banks dry and hanging and that's where the cranberries will grow. Abundantly, especially where there is the old campgrounds where people have lived or where animals have lived, and these things will grow very nicely. Fertilizer, natural fertilize land, so anyway, and, and then we have also the next. In a short period in summer we have the berries, which we call them Headberries, human head, or any kind of head. We call them mishtikwanimina, and because they look like a head, they not exactly a skull or a head, but they had they look the same shape as raspberries, but they are orange in color, more like yellow. And they are very juicy, and they grow at the end of July and part of August. They, ripe they, they ripe very stop at when they ripe they spoil very quickly. All kinds of animals like to eat those, any kind, I don't know about moose or harrow but the bears, the wolves, the foxes and all the small animals they like them, and the birds, yes, they love them. Crows like them, and the bears they just couldn't help themselves they get sick by it, sometimes you can hear the bear just groaning and groaning all, all night because he eat too much. So these berries are very juicy and they very very very nice the human love them, and they also get sick if you eat too many. And then the next ones are abundantly is, now let me see now, depends on where. The coastal areas sometimes you find the Gooseberries, the ones that we call them in English Gooseberries. They are like transparent berries and they, they some sort of a pale or haze color there are some but not many. And then we have another berries which are called Muskeg berries we have those in Muskeg, and not abundantly, but they are enough. The partridge like to eat them, the sharp tail grouse and ptarmigans, they like to eat those and so is the other birds like the Canada geese, and ducks and all that stuff. They like to eat those, and so other ones, all migrating birds they like to eat those and so and other birds that I have mentioned. But Canada geese and Snow geese, they love to eat those blueberries. When they come they just simply scrape them by the mouthful, and in no time at all they can clean them, and sometimes humans eat hate them for that, because they compete, and they are much faster than the human hands.

Anyway, and then there is other berries that we have is what we know I think is raspberries, we have especially where there is, fertilized ground there the humans have camped or any other place like that they grow abundantly, but not lot. And we also found them naturally in the rivers and someplace where there is a deep gully of willows and many different kind of

trees, they grow there. And then we have what they call the Moose berries, we got those in the river system, they are red and they are very juicy also, and they are not sweet but they are very juicy. And the moose like them for sure, and so is many other birds, animals, I don't know about animals, moose eat them anyway. Maybe, maybe Caribous eat them also, but we know the fox eat them, we know the wolf eat them, we know those animals eat them, the small animals too, and the ravens, and the crows, and all those, and the Canada jays and the small birds. And then we have also the raspberries, we have some raspberries on the coastal region, West coast of James Bay, Southwest coast of Hudson Bay, right around the Bay they grow on the ridges of the old beaches, they grow there. Sometimes they grow very nice, but they not very big, and so again the birds like to eat them, the ducks, the geese, and all that and so humans. And then we have another berries that grow in Muskeg in the tundra, they call them Askimina, we call them the ground berries, Aski is a ground. So they grow there and they are black, and when they're ripe they are very juicy, they're sweet. I guess you can call them black currents if you want to call them that but they are not, they naturally grow over there. Sometimes they are abundant, sometimes they are so many, and again the bears love those, and so is Canada geese and ducks and everything, and humans just love them. And then there is also we have, abundantly, we don't have that many, the raspberries, yes they grow, they grow a little but in the place and I mean, not the raspberries. They look like raspberries, they look like the raspberries but we call them Eyeberries, eyes, your eyes. Because they have sort of a like a raspberry shape of those individual round things but they usually only about ten, and they are very sweet. So we have a name for them they are eyeberries or shkiinshikomina they are very sweet, they are very nice and they the geese eat them off too whenever they grow, and so is the rest of the animals. So humans love them but they are not that many. So these are the things that native people use as a fruit during the short summer seasons, they compete with animals, birds, mammals. So that's what they eat, but the only other vegetable, the vegetable plant they eat is a rhubarb, they are certain kinds of rhubarb that are actually good for eating. But they are not all that, some of them they are not eatable, and some say they been known to poison or hurt people, so they don't eat those.

And then again, some kind of a plant that native people have in summer time is, mushrooms, there are mushrooms, there is all kinds of mushrooms there's some grow in the trees, some grow in the ground, and some grow out into the tundra region area and even right

close to the Bay some of them. But some of those are not eatable, they hurt the human stomach, or even kill some. So they learn to avoid those, and only people who know the country well or have lived long, they know which ones that are eatable. The young people are always strongly advised not to touch them because they could poison them self. So they were told not to touch anything, bring the stuff home if you find, so even if they look the same as the eatable ones. So there is a plant they eat, so only of those plants like a mushroom and then rhubarb sort of plant, and then there is something else that they eat which grows in, underwater. This plant, it's called in our name in our language waaskatamin, waaskatamin, that's what they call it but the chiefs like, how should I say, it's just like a potato it taste, it look, it cuts like a potato but it's shaped like a, it's long, sometimes it's about a foot long, shapes like a, how do I say? Anyway, it's long and it's round maybe two inch diameter three inch diameter, but sometimes a foot long, maybe more. And people eat that, they cook it in a certain way, they just don't eat it raw. They cook it with the, with the something else, but that is eatable, the people love that. When the people found the lake or someplace where it is abundant they don't touch the trees, they just eat that, that's what they eat and they are very healthy for some reason. So some people have learned to eat it for some reason, I really don't know, it's gives a good health I think. I really don't know what it is and I have to listen to the elders again, if I can find them and then they might be a way to explain why they were used, how were they used.

So these are the things our people eat according to our history, according to oral history, they are not many plants that were eatable, I mean to actually chew and swallow or cook, these were the only ones I could remember at the moment, but there were other things that we used as tea, as we used tea. There is a small plants that they call in our territory, in the Hudson Bay and James Bay lowland, they call it wiisakepakose, wiisakepakwa, I don't know why they call that sour, sour taste in there, why do they call that. But it's more like a mint, it's more like a bitter mint, you could feel it when you drink it, it's minty and a bit of bitter in it. And that is very, it's very enjoy, people like to drink that, even after the tea they sometimes they prefer to drink that. And then there is a Labrador plant, Labrador plant leaf, the leaf, the leaf is about an inch and a half long and it depends on what size it is. But the one that I talk about the first one is a bitter taste, that, the leaves only about three quarters of an inch at the most, maybe half an inch, they are more like a needle, spruce needle, cypress type of thing, but they are plants. But the one Labrador these are about an inch and a half, some of them are shorter and they are very green on

top, and inside they are yellow, so these are Labrador tea they call it. But this Labrador plant can be used as a medicine, if one person walks all day into water and everything you the end of the day you feel so tired, your legs are sore, bones are sore, or whatever it is. You boil these, boil them pack into the pot and boil them and boil them, the first, throw away the first part, batch, and then re boil with the fresh water and that water that you second batch or water, that's what you drink. Drink it when it's hot, half hour later, you get sweat, no more bone aches, no more sore bones. And so is when you get the muscle aches they go away after you drink that stuff. So that's one plant that's used as a tea, as a drinking stuff and also as medicine.

So these are the things that existed there for thousands of years, and people have used it. There are other things that were used as medicine, but in this, and this, the first introduction to the stories, to what are going to be talked about is the purpose of the first recording. To mention a few things that will help us understand, in the next recording we will now introduce the idea of spiritual connection of something. That may take more than one tape, but it is necessary for us to understand. If we excluded that, we would have denied ourselves of total understanding of the first nation culture. Particularly in that Swampy Cree area, we would deny ourselves forever, because today 1999, there are only so few elders who know these things. They do not practice anymore, they know them the story, but they do not even use the stories as they were a long time ago. So we will go into that when we talked about the Cree culture before the European came, we will include then the spiritual connection, spiritual relationship with the material world. We may even have time to try to discuss so that to explain how do the people acquire, to connect the material world into a spirit world. That is a complicated subject, it is not applicable today I personally think it is not. But it is still talked about by the first nations across the land, There are those who believe it still exist, those who are actually practice it, and there are those who believe and practice it, and there are those who believe and do not practice it. There are those who understand and do not practice it, there are those who practice something which they do not understand, it happens all over. So we will try to tackle that subject, we should not, we should not deny ourselves any parts of it, and then we will have at least believe we have bring out the totality, the total ness of the first nation culture. We will not let anything stand in our way to talk about this then, that does mean we will deny anything that is there besides what we are talking about, the only way to enjoy it, if we wish to enjoy it or understand it or just to hear it, so we shall do that. I have now finished by introduction to my, to my stories, which things I am going

to talked about, and we will have tape recordings to listen to. And these, the recordings that I will to listen only touches the wholeness of everything, they are more like only talking briefly of each subject. In each subject can be detailed discussed and turned over and upside down, and inside out, if we really want to understand what everything means. But one thing I must warn, when we start to blend the spiritual understanding and value of this culture, we may not want to believe anything, we may even not want to hear this stories or this tape recording, but it will be there. It is only up to the individual who wants to listen, nobody is going to be forced to listen and nobody is going to be forced to try to believe. And not even to understand, but just to hear, that is all the meanings of these recordings. It's a history that happened a long time ago, it's happened, it's not there anymore. We always read the history of our European culture, regardless what it was and what happened, how awful it was, we still read it. We can do the same with this, cultural history of the first nations, only a small fraction of the land. And thank you for listening my name is Louis Bird.