… And this tape will contain a variety of subjects that will yield the, our First Nation culture in the Hudson Bay and James Bay lowland area. In this, in this recording will take us back before European contact and also after. That’s the only place when we can talk about the real, the actual exercise in living in the First Nation culture.

One of the things I say that for, it is now 1992. This year is supposed to be celebrated for the arrival of Christopher Columbus and West Indies in Caribbean Sea, in that area. It is now celebrated amongst the white people, amongst the European for their ancestry achievement. For them it is a greatest memory and they respect it. But before the Christopher Columbus sailed, set sail and happened to sail into the North American continent, which he did not expect to find. Accidentally sailed onto this land. There were people who lived in this north and South America, so they tell us. And they found that our First Nation people in Central America were supposedly to be a very civilized people. They have formed a society that is very old and almost compared to the Egyptian society in the same period of time. It is a very mysterious thing really, to find such people live in that part of the country where the climate is suitable, just like across a, around the globe in the same tropical area where the civilization has emerged from. I guess we must understand that it has, it has a major play, the weather has a major play in this history. I have read the white man histories and the white man’s evolution theory, and the reason archaeological findings and scientific discoveries, scientific uncoveries of a kind, and lots of writings of anthropologists who have studied the people around the world. I have been blessed to acquire some very, well enough English language to be able to read it, but I have never been able to get rid of my native accent, which I don’t mind. And now to get back to this idea.

Before I plunge into my story I want to express first, I may have to throw in a few examples in order to relate the time sequence or to try to compare when was this happen and how it was happen, not how, but it’s a strange to bring back the time aspect of my story. And this tape it’s going to be a very mixed tape. It’s going to connect, it’s part of a continuation of a whole series of tapes. The continuation what I mean, I have already introduced these subject of shamanism, which I say repeatedly is a fifty percent or more
make up the First Nation culture. Fifty percent, I mean, because it is a part of spiritual part of First Nation culture. So that’s why it’s so important for one to understand.

The first one, that I have made in this series, which is marked 3000, I have tried to avoid all the spiritual part of the First Nation culture. Because I’m going to see how it sounds like. So it’s very empty, it’s very hollow. Only then I have, when I begin to introduce the total make up for First Nation that I begin to have a substance. And it begins to have a similarities which can be understood by intellectuals who have studied the history of the Nations across the globe, around the globe. And these people especially who have specialized in historical spiritual beliefs across, around the world, they, the person will be able to understand and they will be able to open their mind to understand. But those who do not have that kind of a training, it’s going to be hard for them to understand. That our First Nation Elders that are over seventy-five, they will understand it automatically. No need to express too much. No need to make any scenarios or examples for them to understand because they thoroughly well remembered the background. Their history, they understand it through legends which I explained. There are five legends which cover the lifestyle and life - a total history of humankind, of the First Nation I mean. So it’s there. It contains everything in that five legends. So they know, what it means. No matter how a storyteller, a native person who is storyteller puts his stories, these Elders will always be entertained and sometimes fascinated by it, by some storyteller the way he puts his, his wording. And that’s sometime it’s very entertaining.

And now let us begin. To begin the continuation of the number 3002 to 3003 to 3004, which will also include some other things. They will be fascinating stories and this one I because there will be lots of, a small section of a story. A story that I am going through here, there will be a very short, what do they call them, extract from the main story, all the way up to the highest point, or the peak of the story. Maybe I will tape stories to put in here to make a point, to make a person understand, or to make my point, what I am getting at. What I am doing is, I’m trying to record our history of our First Nations in the Hudson and James Bay lowland areas. I’m trying to record the history about these people only, not the, not the, not the First Nation across Canada or down south in the United States or even South America. No. I am not telling the history across the land. I am telling the history of the James, Hudson Bay and James Bay lowland people, especially people call themselves the Omushkego is the right word. The Cree word, it’s not a, First Nation language. The Cree, the word Cree itself, it’s a mistaken identification, or mistaken verb, or noun. It has turn into a noun. It has turn into a noun to pin-point the First Nations who were living in the James Bay area. And the people who created this word is the French people, the French people, the French missionaries who travel in the area of, from Ottawa to the Mosinee River, or Attawpiskat River. These were the people who make connection from Ottawa River and some of them from Quebec, and that, because of the religion instruction or, exploration, whatever they do that time. It these French people who trying to understand to different dialects of the people in this area have misunderstood the different dialects and were trying to tell them that these people who like Christians. So because the Algonquians have so many dialects, they could not possibly announce, or pronounce or even, or their accent is so bad, to try to talk to the French people and try to explain that these are the people from the James Bay area are
already Christians. That’s what they were trying to tell their French Christians, Frenchman over there from Quebec. And the Quebec French said, “ah, Christian - eay… Christian - eay?” So they all that stuff and it became to be Cree. So it has been thrown back and forth in the same, in that pronunciation, and it finally became Cree. So it created by the confusion of the French people. That is why the word Cree is not, it is not the proper name for the, for the First Nation and Hudson and James Bay area. It is now recognized, it is the wrong, it is the wrong word.

And it has today, especially the young people who wants to establish themselves as a leaders who are speakers or are educators or intellectuals. They try to change all these things. Anything that has to do with Cree, Cree, the word Cree, they turn it into Omushkego, Omushkego. So it means, it’s an adverb, or, or adjective. I think it’s an adjective because it describe the tribe. It’s particularly describe the tribe. And, so it’s a predicate, I think, it’s not an adjective. It’s a, I’m not sure exactly what the word is, it’s from, to talk about this part of speech. Anyway, the Cree itself, it’s a very mixed up permutation from between different dialects of people in Quebec between Ontaio border. And that was in the early exploration, that wasn’t, that was in 1640 when that happened, 1640 or thereabouts anyway. To trade with native people between two areas. So they were trying to expand their Fur Trade into the James Bay area. So they were dealing, they were middleman there. They were the Cree people going as far as a, coast to Ottawa River. And they had, and they had a meeting place there with the Algonquin tribes which are from Quebec. And these they were the one who talk to each other. They were exchanging furs from the French people and also the Dutch people and whatever, and whatever European that was there. So these types, three kinds of Europeans were fighting for furs and that. We understand that. But I don’t have to say that. But the thing is the importance of those things which has been termed very wrongly sometimes. It still stick with us. And it has became the name noun for somebody. It is not true. So the Cree the word Cree, it’s not the really Indian word. It’s not our it is not Omushkego. It means Omushkegowak. So Omushkeg, it means it Muskeg. It’s a bog land, the wetland, the lowland. Where most of the trees grow tamaraks. Tamaraks are related to Muskeg. So that’s the pay, that’s the description of the land where people lived. So they are called Omushkegobak. And, and by mistake, so by difficulty of the common language, the French people established the name Cree. So there’s no such thing. So all these that has to be, has to be, is it worth changing? I don’t know, so use it how it is. So anyways, so much for that. So I’m going to leave that subject. Many things have been wrongly described by the early European and the missionaries and Fur Traders and other explorers. They have misused the words and mis-instruct their own kind, they misinformed them. The thing that they want to present it for their explorations and this is not quite true what they have put in their words and their journals and their diaries, whatever. So we have come to that far. I am going to leave that to you. I’m going to leave it to anyone who wants to listen.

And now I want to go back to our First Nation culture. Which will be continuation the first introduction about the spiritualism or shamanism. Now, I want to, I had remembered this morning one thing that I had wanted to record. The thing is the benefit side of the spiritual belief and practices of our First Nation is, I have, I have not come to describe, I
shall term, the medicine man. I have deal with the shaking tent, field of the shamanism. 
Now I want to tell with a medicine, in the medicine part, on the first tape. The first, which 
is marked 3000, I have begun with describing the remedies, the First Nation home 
remedies for minor injuries or all sorts. But in there I have neglected one thing. I have 
ever mentioned about spiritual part of that practice. Now, it is time to introduce that 
field practice. I have already explained a little bit about the development of shamanism 
and how, what it takes and what is required and, and what, how much faith does it require 
to do that.

And now we are going to touch on one field, another branch of shamanism, which is 
beneficial to the First Nation before contact, before the European came in and a few 
hundred years, maybe two centuries after the European arrive in the Hudson and James 
Bay area, before the Christianity really forced in our, into our First Nations. And this 
time, now I am going to try to explain the medicine man. The medicine, the word 
medicine man that we hear at times. Sometimes, by the authors of the European 
language, the European stock. Anyway, it’s in English. They have attempt to write about 
medicine man. There are some movies, by made by Hollywood that touch on the 
medicine man. They have anthropologist who have tried to explain what this medicine 
man is. But none of those have covered the whole subject and neither would I be able to 
do that, because of limited time.

And now I shall begin. The medicine is another field of the shaman development. The 
spiritual development of spiritual practicing, spiritual belief and practice of, which has 
developed and used by our First Nation. Now the medicine man does not necessarily 
have to have plants and herbs and things like that. He has still, first of all, he has acquired 
shaman character, a standard, or shall we say a degree. He has acquired some degree of 
shaman powers. But he has been gifted to help others and to be able to help others in the 
field of medicine or remedy. So the medicine: The true medicine man do not have to 
have any object, does not to have any plans, or a method which is physical, or something 
like today, a doctors gave you pills for your feet and, you toe, your toenail and your ear 
and those kind of things. And he actually gives you a, a pill or sometimes a liquid form of 
pill and tells you this will get rid of your sore tooth or things like that. What the medicine 
man does is has, he does that really, just to help the person believe, to have a logic to 
who, he has that, but not in the form of the acid pill, no, but he has other ways. Some 
those describe as medicine man in the white man’s world, which ourselves we call them 
the Healers some use to, some don’t need anything at all, all they have to do is a small 
gift. They would receive a small gift from the person who request their assistance. After 
Europeans arrived, when the tobacco was one of the famous items to trade with, as the 
European arrived, this kind of shaman, this kind of medicine man, yes I shall use that 
word to describe him, he usually accept tobacco, not as a payment but as a good gesture -
to means agreement. It means I will do my best, thank you. So that’s not a payment. 
That’s not a payment for the source. He, the shaman, no matter how powerful he may be, 
and the person who is sick and the person who seeks assistance, if he doesn’t believe the 
shaman, he’s not going to receive no benefit from him. Because as it is to all the religious 
practices across the world, around the world, one must have faith, so as the same with our 
First Nations. When the medicine man has the power to heal or to help the sick person,
the first thing he will want to find is, “Is this guy genuine? Does he believe that this can be done?” Or he is very reluctant sometimes because he wants to know whether this guy is very honest or not. When he has satisfied that this person is genuinely needs some help and truly have faith that he can receive some help from him, that’s when he accepted the tobacco or a gift, a symbol, a symbol of faith. That’s all it does. That’s not a payment. That’s not a fee. That’s not a standard payment for some service. Not at this time. It didn’t work that way. So anyway, it is only when a patient have faith in medicine man that he will receive the cure, or the remedy for his sickness. Hold on. [cut in tape]

And now I am going to, I am going to, compare this, or most of us understand where we can recall easily. I am going to recall the passage of the New Testament of the Christ church. Of the Christ himself who has stated, which is recorded in the New Testament. It is said that when the good lord walked on earth amongst the Israelites, the people bring their sick to his feet. Some people come in to ask to be healed. Sometimes he walks to the sick. And the first time, sometimes he will ask, “Do you have faith to receive the healing?” When a person show his honesty and his faith, he would give the healing. He will do the miracle. And when he granted the wishes of the century, centurion who ask him for his charitable service to heal, he sent him his way. He says, “Your faith has the answer.” We know all this by reading the New Testament. And so the same thing applied to our ancestors, our First Nations. Those who are gifted to act as the healers or providers of remedies for disease; for the sickness, and for those who had the gift to help the sick, the crippled and all that disadvantaged people. Or shall we say those who are disabled because of the communicated disease or inherited disease. There were such people. There were such people, which as termed today as medicine man, because we wanted to describe the First Nation sort of medication. With the very limited knowledge of those people, which we are now not existed anymore. Very few. Having said that, I want to tell a small story that is very short.

This happens around, from 1900 to 1920, in that period. I am not sure exactly if that is the period, but it’s very close there. There was a man that was sick or had developed a sore in one of his legs, joint on the knee, the joint on that knee. He had developed a pain and therefore he could not walk. So he stayed, stayed on his seat. He could not get up. And, I don’t know why this person did not use crutches. That I don’t understand, I do not understand that. But apparently he was very painfully sick at times and for some reason I did not hear whether he had, he had chance to use the crutches. The one that you can use on both arms. Or maybe he didn’t need them. Somehow for two years or so he was unable to walk and then finally he happened to meet a person who has a gift as a healer. And supposedly, they say it’s true, he was a person who was, we call a gifted medicine man. Not necessary practicing the same trade, but he usually was called on to perform such service. Anyway it happened for this medicine man to pass by, to go by that area. And the man who was crippled approach him, not to ask him for healing but just to tell him his incapability or disability which hinders him to fully support his family. And the man who was listening who was a medicine man was an older person. And he understand the griefs that this old man was expressing to him. He understand the feeling what the disability can bring to individual and also hardship to individual’s family. Having this, a sad situation in front of him, he had this sympathy to the man, he has sympathy towards
the man. And as he was gifted as, a being a shaman and considered a medicine man, he considered this idea. So he asked the man who was disabled, he said, “Do you wish to get well?” And the disabled man says, “Yes, I do. It is very discouraging to be like this.” And his voice and his honesty rings to the ears of this sympathetic man. So he went home, the medicine man went home to consider the man. Somehow there was a time to ask questions or investigate a bit more the honesty of this person who is disabled.

Finally, a few days later, or a day later, he visit the sick person again, this medicine man. So he talks to him for just a short while, and he says, “Where do you usually go when you go outside?” (This was a summer time) And he says, “Where do you usually go when you go out?” So the disabled man says, “When it’s nice day, when its beautiful day I usually sit out in the open and do my work out there.” And the medicine man said, “Where do you live in winter time?” So the disabled man pointed to the direction where he spent his winter. And then again the medicine man said, “Is there a particular place that you would go in the winter time?” So the disabled man says, “Yes, there is a tree there. There is a tree there that I usually go sit beside and I would crawl there on my knee, one good knee and then push myself towards the tree and then I sit there.” And this was, this was the time that, where ever he was staying, where he usually stay in the wintertime. I don’t know for sure exactly what season it was. But apparently, there was a tree standing there where this disabled person use to lean against the tree sitting there. Anyway that’s what he pointed at.

So the man says, “Can you crawl over there? Could you push yourself through there? And then I want you to sit just beside it.” So the man, the disabled man push himself towards the tree and sit there as usual position. And the medicine man stand beside him and he says, “Lift your hand up beside the tree. See how far it was going to reach.” So he measured the distance of the man’s arm. And so he says, he didn’t say anything, he just begin to cut the tree, a stick more like. I don’t know if it was dry wood or not, but he make it into white shape. And he cut the tree right in the link of an arm of a man and he drove the stick right into the tree that was standing. Probably about, approximately about two feet or a foot and a half length. And he drives this wedge into the tree as firmly as possible and let it stay there. And he tested his weight, his arm. Tested it if it would move downwards or move. It still very sore. So he said to the sick man, the disabled man, “Come here the usual time when you do. And every time when you come, come and sit here. And each time when you want to get up, hold on to this stick and pull yourself up with your own power. And stand on your leg for a short while. As long as it comfortable enough for you to stand. And then again sit down. And you can take yourself back to your home. And while you do that, and each time that you do this, you must wish to be able to walk. And a year from now, if you repeat what I say, you will walk.”

So the disabled man listen to the man listened to the man. He do believe the man must be honest. Even the disabled man was not sure. So he, he obeyed the instruction, he obeyed the prescription that was given to him for hope that he will walk again. So each time when there is an opportunity for him to get out and sit outside, he would go to this tree where the stick has been driven in, and he would sit there, the thing about what he was
told. He would get a hold of this stick that stuck out from the tree. And pull himself out and stand there.

Six months pass at least to one season, three seasons have passed. He found himself that he was not having pain when he get up. When he stand himself up from that peg. From the tree, from the stick that has been driven to the tree. He noticed the changes. His knee joint not as hurt as it use to be. And by the end at that season, just about the time when the medicine man had said when the season became the annual round, one cycle of the season. One day he came out again, he was better now. Gradually, towards the end of the year, he was much better and he was able to stand comfortably by holding the stick. As soon as one year was come about, he was able to walk away from the tree without pain. Through his belief he was healed. And he believed it was the faith to the man who had told him a simple thing, a simple gesture so that he would be able to walk again. That’s the end of the story.

This story shows us the medicine man himself does not perform miracles all the time, but make a person to have faith within himself. All he has to do is instruct. He does have a medical knowledge. He does have, he does understand that the faith does many things. He does understand a human’s will will change things, and this is what he apply. Because he know the kind of disease the disabled person has was not inherited. It has developed gradually from the living condition or over, over action of the person, which led him to have a disease. And therefore to understand such disability takes a long time to cure. One has to have a wish and hope and continuous faith to receive the benefit. And through their spiritual belief this could have been considered a miracle. That is the part of our ancestor’s spiritual belief and practices. We have a right to question it. Each one of us can ask, “Was that a miracle? Was that evil deed? Was is evil to do that?” So it’s up to us to decide. We can say that all the things that our First Nations have done during their independence, during their independently surviving on the land, they did have gifted things in their life. Which makes them survive on the land.

And therefore that is the reason I say their spiritual value system was not far off to the similarities to the European spiritual beliefs. Probably it has been, it did not, probably their spiritual practice did not apply as a group or in society. Maybe their spirituality did not use it to dominate the groups as a story tells in the European history and the several first civilized world where people have a hundred gods and kings, has to retreat and fast to satisfy their gods. Our ancestors may not have come to that state of development but remain as they were because they have the first big, large area to practice their own individual spiritual practices. That’s the only conclusion I can think of. Once again I say I’m not reviving or trying to resurrect our forefathers, our First Nation spiritual belief and practices. But I do state here, questioning, “what it truly evil what they did?” So it is up to individual to find these and that is also it is important for our next generation to understand our history, the background of their ancestry. Whenever they face some criticism because of their nationality, they will have this knowledge of history which they can rely on to retain their dignity. And that is my hope. That is one of the reason I want to record these, the history of the First Nation mostly aware have erased from mostly in the Hudson and James Bay lowland. There are many stories that are similar to the one that I
have just finished. I have tried to avoid the names because it has happened recently. I have tried to avoid the names so that the descendants of these groups were not beat and pointed at. So they can remain and retain their pride and respect, that is the part which I promised to tell the story that will include our ancestor’s spiritual practice and beliefs.

[ pause – 12 seconds]

And that was one way of telling, or, telling the story or the history of our ancestors, our First Nation ancestors. The use and application of their spirit beliefs and practices which today is termed as shamanism, which also has been classified as paganism. Where there is, which the Christianity has believed it was an evil. It belong to the devil’s world. Well, I repeatedly say even our present Christian leaders understand the mistake that has been done towards the First Nation. I have personally accepted their apology. I am sure our First Nation have also accepted their apology and that there’s not much, that there won’t be too much hostility towards the religious leaders and those who have been leaders in the time when the mistreatment was applied to our natives. Thank you.

[ pause – 5 seconds]

And now I want to change a bit of a tune here. For the last few minutes of this tape recording has been very, too much dramatization I think. But I want, that’s the only way I could express it. From this time on, again it will be a free flow of, of a recording. I was going to introduce something else, the reason why I say that, I have mentioned there are many stories that related to express or outline the activities of when our First Nation ancestors have practiced their own true cultural life. It seems that we have such a limited time with these recording, I could not jam everything in here which won’t make much sense if I do that. Oh yes, I do remember one important, a little things that I may have to include in this topic. And that has to be done on the “B” side of this tape. Because there are quite a few topics that I just remember that related to the same subject that I have just finished in the story, the same line of history, the same line of cultural history. So I shall do that on the other side because the tape on this side is almost come to an end. I’m sorry there has been too much disturbances in the background, but this is my home. There’s not much I can do. So we shall turn the tape to the other side.

[END OF TAPE, SIDE A, 1 of 2]

[Time remaining - 70 seconds]
…about our First Nation spiritual aspect of their culture which are suppose to be beneficial to human kind, to their kind. And now I want to continue on what does a medicine man do. Whether I’m using the right term. Another part of this country within Canada which is big and many different tribes of First Nations in a different part of the region is different ways of doing things and different names is applied. If the medicine man, if the term medicine man means different then what I describe when I use the word medicine man, I am, I must be pardoned, or I must apologize for using such word in the wrong way. But that’s the only word I could use for now. If the medicine man is truly deal with medicine or medication or remedy, I want to tell the story in the beneficial part of it. I know a lot of it is negative. But that is not what I want to tell, because many stories that we hear about, we seldom do we hear the good side of a story. And that’s what I want to express here, not the bad side.

Some of our ancestors in the Hudson and James Bay lowland, in the past, this before the European came in, even after they came in. According to my calculation, the first white man who ever winterized within this bay region, it was in 1610. The Captain was named Captain Button and he spent the winter in Churchill River, Churchill, at the mouth of Churchill River. I have been there. I have seen the area where he spent the winter. That was the first white man who spent the winter. But that does not mean that that was the first white man to come. We know that. That is why we have the Hudson and James Bay, because those men sailed into the bay with our knowledge, with historical knowledge, but it was the first man, first Captain, first ship that spent the winter in within the Hudson Bay. According to the history. According to the, Hudson Bay publication magazine called Beaver that’s where I have seen this story.  

And now, it’s not important. It’s just an extra information that will, help us to approximate time frame of my stories. So when I say before contact, I mean before the Hudson sailed into the bay, mostly before the Fur Trading was established. The actual fur trade. And also, when I say after contact, I mean from 1600 to 1824. There is two hundred years elapsed there, I mean duration. Two centuries of time our ancestors in the Hudson and James Bay area were not forced to accept the Christianity. And therefore they practice their spiritual belief and practices even though they were trading with the Fur Trading companies. And it was roughly around 1824 to 1832 that the three major
Christian denominations begin to actually convert our First Nation within the Hudson and James Bay area, according to their history book. It is not my history. According to the white man history book, within, in Canada. Anybody can find these, who looks for them. And to look for the history in the Hudson and James Bay conversion. You will find the date.

Anyway, getting back to this, our ancestors before contact, how they use to practice their medicine, or medication, or remedies. This is what I’m getting at. This was, this was still existed, just before 18, 1900. Somewhere around 1815 or 1875 there was some people, there was some Elders who was still using this remedy. If one, somebody gets sick, especially the disease called, I don’t know what to call it, it must have been a stroke, whatever. This disease use be cause by someone having a sudden cold, a sudden exposure to extreme cold. And they use to have this similar to seizure. Sometimes look exactly like epilepsy. But not that severe. These people did not have a foam coming out from their mouth. They did not twitch up and down, but they did have a movement similar to that, but not as severe. And they remain conscious, partially, but they have very, they have the excruciating pain, and very frightened. So our people use to have this treatment. If they don’t have anything else to use, if it, usually this happens during the winter. It usually happen to the man, or even women. And that kind of disease, there was hardly any remedy during the winter because our area is full, it’s so, is so flat and there’s no trees and there’s very limited number of, of medicine, of plants that can be used as medicine during the winter because everything is covered. And for that reason, in the wintertime, that’s the worst time for somebody to get sick like this. The only remedy they say was the “heat.” If you can catch the moment of where there is time to remedy the situation, if one person exposed suddenly to extreme cold, which sometimes they call it a chill. I think that’s what they call that. In our language it called, Pa-kii-paniew. And it’s very dangerous for anybody, a man or a woman, especially women. So the only, the only emergency remedy was to apply heat to an individual to quickly put in the bed and put a heating device around him/her, or her. Usually if there is any stone. Stone is an object that can carry the heat close to the body. But usually it is on the feet section that a person should be, should be applied to heat most, because the blood seems to rush into the upper body when somebody gets cold, the remaining core of human body. And the Elders used to know that, the blood doesn’t go down, all the way down to the legs and only working section is the topside of the body. And usually it was the head that was hurt and that’s why the person gets such severe symptoms of epileptic. So they understand this. So what they did was they apply the heat to the body, very quickly, anyway they can. If they can hold, if they can’t find the stone, they dig up for the sand and they use the sand. If the camp is located on the sand ridges, they dig the top moss and make a fire on the sand, and the sand that is heated, they put it under the patient, especially on his feet part. And then they hold the patient in there with a heavy cover and also put cold water in the top of the skull or around the head. Not ice water, but cold, gradually. And if the, if the symptom or twitching existed, it still existed, they would just gradually apply more, more heat by giving medicinal drinks to the person, which is called Labrador Tea. Or, if they have what they call a Ground spruce, it’s the only way I can name this thing, but is, it is a very medicinal thing.
So they boil this plant, very strong liquid, and make a patient drink it. Hot as he can swallow. As much as he can swallow, not to burn, but enough. A person will try it first. If a person, a healthy person can swallow the hot water then he would put some into the patient’s mouth. And this liquid act as an internal heat. It goes all through the body and it relaxes the muscles and I suppose also that the blood seems to flow easier. And usually that’s when the patient stop twitching and passed out as if, in a total exhaustion. But the people who are attending would have to stay close by, to make sure the person doesn’t kick the blankets away or us, or repeated the sudden cold, or chill. So they have to make sure this thing doesn’t happen. And, but usually that’s all it takes. Sometimes it takes only twelve hours to heal a person who has such an accident. They consider that emergency measurement, or they can call it an accident for their patient. But the treatment is the only emergency measures. Sometimes when the person has passed this critical point, usually have already catch pneumonia or part of his body has been damaged. And that is a long story and I will not be able to explain that. Because I want to come to the point what I want to say. Sometimes when this extreme emergency measure fails to, to do any benefit to the patient and the patient do not respond, his body, its body do not respond, the person would stay in coma. He would not be able to remember if it’s really just serious. He would be laying just there as if dead, actually not dead, but live and the heart still pulse and breath but cannot come to conscious. This is where the native people understand if such person remain that way, it will remain for long time. They lets die or it can come to, come out from the coma, but found itself cannot speak sometimes. Sometimes cannot walk. Or numb on one side. Because it has been apparently a stroke. But the people understand that something has happened in the head.

But sometimes a person can recover very easily. So anyways to come to the point, when all these have failed. When the emergency application has failed and the patient is still in, in the critical condition, sometimes there is a medicine man. Sometimes there is a shaman or I like to call him as a shaman because he is specialized in helping the sick people who has found out, has find out themselves that he can help somebody. He can help somebody where everybody else failed. So sometimes there’s such person. So he’s called in to do his stuff more like. Because if the emergency case, because there is a critical time there where the every known remedy has failed, that’s when this person is called in. So the person that he is called, that he invited or called in to do the, his bit, usually he has a preparation for it, because he’s known to have done it and he has some, shall we say, a medicine bag. We can say an object that he associate with his profession.

Anyway, anyway to say, to say the least, in our area, Hudson Bay and James Bay lowland, I have heard the stories about the man or even the woman who has been gifted to heal the sick, even to the person who has come to believe that nothing else can be done. This person usually come, called in to perform his magic, whatever it is. What he does is, he sits beside the sick after he has been explained all the efforts what has been made for the person to, to try to revive, or to try to remedy the disease, or whatever it cause. After he has all the information, then he understands what has been done and the reason is that he does not have to try it himself. So the only thing that he would have is his own medicine. Whatever he has. Some medicine man have carried these symbolic things like a plants and herbs and whatever. Or even an objects. Sometimes it’s a piece of
bone or sometimes a piece of something which they usually just a symbolize their action. So I will only use one example. Some, mostly it use to be a favourite for a medicine man to do. It is to use a rattle. It’s a rattle, rattle, it’s described in many ways. It can be made from many objects. It’s usually from the, some powerful shaman. They use the rattle for the human bone. That was in a time passed. Before the European came. But after a while, later on, they use animal bones. The rattle, usually, is made out of beaver skull, sometimes it’s a otter skull, sometimes it’s a mink, martin, even weasel, it depends. The smaller it get, that doesn’t mean the medicine man has less power. The bigger it get that doesn’t mean he’s a powerful medicine man, no. I guess the level of this skill does not measured by the size of any object. The size of an object that is associate with it is not a degree of a medicine man. Anyway, to come to the point is that some people use a rattle and they sing, that’s all they do. They have a song which unfortunately our people have forgotten even to hum, to harmonize these tunes which the medicine man sing when he rattles his rattle. So this is the way that they help the sick person. For some reason, more often, they can help the sick person that where everything else have failed. Sometime the sick person would recover totally. And that’s very extraordinary. Sometimes the sick person recover partially. Which is better than giving up.

Now, getting back to this rattle business, the object they symbolizes their capabilities, those medicine man. Some people use the shorter blade of animal. I don’t know how they do that, but they do. How they, how they arrange this shoulder blade of the animal to make it into rattle, I don’t know. I have not quite catch exactly the method they use, but they use this. They use the medicine man would use this shoulder blade to rattle as he sings. Be it for the healing purpose or for simply requesting the help to the Great Spirit in time of need. This is something that I don’t understand. I didn’t quite, I don’t quite remember, but it will come to me some other time. That is why I always like to have a tape recorder close by me. But unfortunately, there are times I have clear picture of everything that I hear long time ago, and I am in the bush, I am in the wilderness and I have nothing with me that I can use to record. Sometimes not even a piece of paper to write on. Because when I go into the bush, I like to be free. I don’t carry those things. I just simply just want to enjoy be out in the bush, in the wilderness. So anyway, that’s my personal story. That’s not the idea. I just wanted to say, unfortunately, they are so many times I remember the very good part of the story and I don’t have a chance to record. It’s very unfortunate. Unfortunately, I have not acquired enough white man education that I could have learned that they use to call shorthand writing. My language which requires forty-eight alphabet, it’s almost impossible to make that kind of thing unless I develop my own. But I haven’t got, I have even had the time to develop my own shorthand writing system. But I usually applied when it’s necessary, only when I sit around, not outside. Anyway, so much for me. I don’t want to do that.

What I want to do is to tell you the realities of what I’m talking about. I do not wish to talk to this recording to always dramatize what I am saying. I want to be normal. I want to speak normally. I want to speak normally as if someone sitting there with me as if I am doing the actual making notes in my mind. This is what, that is what, that is what in this tape recorder. One of the things that I like to emphasize that I’m sorry that I don’t have is that I have never went to the training; to train speaking, or to train the voice. To train my
voice for recording, I never do that. Somehow tape recording seems to bring out my shortcomings. I don’t hear myself. Only when I listen to the tape recording, I want to smash it laughs. So I shall continue anyway. I just have to ignore my negativeness. I just hope to concentrate on the real things that I want to remember and record. I will go on again with the same topic as much as I can.

Now this part, I will talk about our ancestor’s capability because of their spiritual beliefs and practices. This is, this also is not actually a spiritual, you don’t have to be a shaman to acquire it. I am sure I have said that in some of those other tapes. Our ancestors have developed their capabilities through this spiritual belief and practices. For example, this is real, this is not scenario. I have seen the Elders long time ago when I was young. And I was so mystified and I was so, mystified, I mean awesome. Their capability, there physical ability to travel during the seasons, say during summer and during the winter. I have watched the Elders walk on the land during the summer. In the typical land that we live in which is truly described as a muskeg, bog land and the ground so wet, when one steps in it you sink to the ankle deep. And when you pull your feet off the muskeg, the suction is very strong. And if a person is not trained, or not experienced enough to walk on such ground, cannot make the distance. Otherwise his strength will be exhausted very soon. But the professional First Nation, can walk hours, or during the day all day without much rest. I have seen that. What I have, what I have been instructed by the Elders is that there is a way of walking on muskeg. Before you, before you pull your feet off the muskeg, you have to sort of twist your foot to release the suction of the ground. And therefore you can minimize your strength or your effort, therefore provide you to continue walking.

One of the instruction that I have received from your Elders, that is it is much easier for someone to carry a weight on his back and do not feel so much of the suction as they pull their feet from the muskeg. And this is what I saw when I was young. I seen two old men who can cover eight mile distance through the muskeg, occasionally on the high ground and do not stop even though they carry the weight. For example, geese which they have killed in a distance from their home, or a tent, or from their camp. I walked there as a young person with them. And for example, Canada geese are about eight to ten pounds, depends the size. And during that period in summer when geese, water fowls are moving, when they change feathers. As soon as they lost the old feathers, the new one begin to rooted in their skin, there is lots of water in them. And this time they weigh much more than their ordinary weight when they fly. And I have seen the Elders carry twenty Canada geese on their back walking through the muskeg. And they do not seem to hold them down. They remain in constant speed. Same movement. One muskeg after the other. Occasionally walking on hard ground. When I was young, then when I follow these Elders, I would cover probably three miles distance and I would be totally exhausted. Even if I don’t carry Canada geese. Even if I only carry five. But for them, they sweat alright, but the thing is they don’t show any pain. And they don’t show any slow speed. They are the same speed. And that’s what mystifies me. How do they do it? But when I asked the Elder, one of them, they said, “It’s a practice that you have to develop at the early age. So since you develop the, you get in the habit of walking and you get in the habit of ignoring the tiredness and the mind does the rest. The mind has said that you are going to get to your camp regardless of the obstacle.” And they do this. So sometimes I ask question, I
say, “How did they ever develop such thing? Such strength. Such durable strength.” The only answer I get from them is, “Practice makes perfect. The required skill.” And that’s all the answer I get. So if we were to calculate the weight of one Canada goose that weighs about ten pounds and two or two, twenty of them, that would give us the approximate total weight. So, according to my calculation, I could be wrong, that will, the weight, the total weight of the geese could be about one hundred and fifty pounds. That is after it has been packed. But usually what they do is, the Elders, is they take the guts out and carry only meat and the feathers. They also take the feather away, of plenty of those geese. Partially of the wing feathers been taken off. And the guts been taken out. They would probably have reduced about five pounds each. Five pounds, at least maybe. Maybe less, maybe more than, maybe, maybe less than five pounds. They could weigh about eight pounds each. And twenty of them that will give us one hundred and sixty pounds. So people, to carry this amount of weight in their bag for the distance of eight miles or more. That would take a very strong person to do that. But these people do not run, they walk. To carry one hundred and sixty pounds weight on your back on a solid ground it is not too bad. When you have to go into the soft bog and muskeg, and you have to pull the suction from your feet, from the muskeg, that is also extra effort. Plus carrying the extra weight on your back. So this was something I noticed amongst the Elders, but they were so durable. They have acquired this, they have practice and have acquired skill how to do this. So this is a practical thing. This is no mysticism about it. But the thing is, these people have trained themselves to be able to do that. Compared these people of today. Compare these Elders that I’m talking about during 1945 to 1954/55. It was that time that I saw these Elders do that. Elders, I mean, they were probably about fifty-five. They were naturally Elders, but they were Elders that time. So that’s one thing that I have noticed about the, our recent Elders that passed away.

And I have observed today the young people who are much powerful looking young men. These people cannot walk. Those who have never have any training or have develop skill how to walk. They cannot even walk in the distance which I have mentioned, let alone carry the weight. That is how fast and how our recently we have lost the ability to function in the wilderness. Where our forefathers or grandfathers have mastered how to live, how to survive on land. So this is not mysticism. This is the true, my own observation. The facts that I have seen, the changes that happen today to our First Nation people. The more we mingle with the European culture, the more we lost our ancestor’s mastery of the land. And that is very sad to see. And now, that would be enough for that part of the story.

In saying so, I have listened to my Uncle, which he was much older than I am. Probably very close to the age of my own father, who has talked about people, our people in the coastal region, especially in Winisk area, who were able to carry two to three hundred pounds in their bag. And carry those things of seventy-five miles. But they don’t make it one shot, they make in two days time. Carrying two to three hundred pounds in their bag. The reason I, we are, I am so certain about it, in those days, the flour would be traded between Hudson Bay Company in this coastal region, they use to have one hundred pound bags. And one hundred pounds is, it’s not much for the native person to carry in
nice ground, in the good ground. But three hundred pounds or two hundred pounds is, it’s a bit more than human strength. But these people, after the nineteen hundred, they were still able to carry this weight in a distance that we can’t make it today, even with our own body. And that is how recently, our, our First Nation people physical strength begin dwindling down. They didn’t have any muscle, they didn’t exercise, they didn’t have any weight lifting exercise or any other gimmicks that is used to retain the muscle tone. They did not. The only skill they had was the skill that was developed from the childhood into the manhood, which they, which has carried them through their lifetime. Although this has nothing to do with mysticism or shamanism to our people, there were other gifted things which they had which we do not have today. When I asked some Elders about these changes, one Elder tell me, he says, “These durable strength come with the training and skill and practice and skill, plus faith. Plus faith in one person. Faith,” he says, “to believe that you can do it.” In other words, “The will power.”

Now I am going to tell a story which relates to the will power. Which is extraordinary, [pause – 7 seconds] which is extraordinary for today’s world.

Now here is story. The story is about the person who have, who have done this recently. I must say about forty years ago. This one old man. He passed away; he died already. And this happens in our old settlement, between old settlement of Winisk and Fort Severn. The distance is one hundred and twenty miles along the coastal area, but the actual old days, moccasin trail would be about one hundred and thirty miles distance, by the moccasin trail. One hundred and thirty miles distance. This man go to the next village to get something. I really don’t know what he went to get, but it was important to them. Apparently he was noticed to a have fast, he walks very fast. The people knew that. He can walk, he can travel fast on his own two feet. Whether he was running, that was what I don’t know. Anyways, he went to Fort Severn at a distance of one hundred and thirty miles which give him total of two hundred and sixty miles travel. It took him only, roughly, thirty-six hours. Travels, I don’t know how many hours in the day, but he was gone only two nights. And the following afternoon he arrived back into the Winisk settlement with the object that he was supposed to go and get. And confirmed by the Hudson Bay Company that he actually came to the store on the second day that he left the Winisk settlement.

So this is what I am talking about. This man has a will power. He has a will himself to travel the way he has developed himself. And he was known to have achieved extraordinary feats in traveling distance which ordinary man, which ordinary people could not cover the distance in short, short time. We don’t know, I don’t know myself, and the Elders who lived that time could not explain how this man could be so extraordinary. Some people say he had acquired some shaman power that actually helped him to accomplish such thing which is almost impossible by ordinary human. Some old man told me what he thinks about this guy. He says, “He had developed what he calls the Will. The will power.” I do understand the will power. We all have, all of us, all humans have the will power when you need it, sometimes unexpectedly. Some people we notice they became heroes in front of us. Because they have took action which is almost in-
humanly possible. But this is what it’s called. A forceful will power to accomplish the deed that could not be accomplished by the ordinary person, or the ordinary time.

So this was what this man achieve. So many time, he was recognized one of those kinds. Some tell us that he has, he was he had acquired shaman power and that was part of his acquirement which he has applied during his lifetime. I have more stories about this old man, because I have lived to see him. But to me, I didn’t see any difference, he was just ordinary old man. I never saw anything extraordinary about him. He was always the same old man to mind his own business. He’s not the person who’s outstanding, or even talkative, or even openly participate with the social activities. Because he’s always on his own. He’s always going to the wilderness into the bush. He daily activities until the day he died. And this was the man that I remember vividly that man truly can walk fast. No one in my lifetime, that I can see can walk and cover a distance in a short time. Not only once that I notice. Twice I noticed that that old man did the things that he described, that he became famous of. So that’s another part. That’s not a mystical part of the people. We shall continue this subject later.

[pause – 10 seconds]

The next tape will be a free-flowing subject also. There will be overlapping subjects. The way I have described. It will continue the same way, but there will be some stories that will show us the same topic.

[END OF SIDE B, 2 of 2]