Hello again. This is Louis Bird and I’m still talking about my main my usual subject. This time is it’s a free flowing thoughts. I am not here to try to impress you my my expert in grammar. I am here to speak to speak about the past the Cree or Omushkegowak history history oral history. And what they were, why why why did they live like they were before the European came in. So this still deals with the pre contact period. I finished in saying we have take a look at the the philosophy of the Omushkegowak within the Hudson and James Bay region. The philosophy understand means why do a people think that way and why do a people live that way. And whatever they have. What if if it’s physical or a spiritual and which makes them have a tradition. I call it tradition. That is what I understand about the philosophy. Whether I’m wrong I don’t mind. I have said before my English grammar is limited because I did not go into English school as a regular yes young people who start in a very early age I did not. I begin to adapt and use the English language as when I was twenty-five years old and for that reason I have never mastered the the dialect of the English language. I always retained my Indian accent which I am not which is not bothers me at all. Now we have talked about people in the past. We talked about what makes them nomads. Why did they settle in one place? What what have happened? What would have make them settle in the one place? If we look at the European people and their according to their history it seems that it seems that you know when the land was getting small because of their population over population in order to live nomad life or to be a gatherers and wanderers upon the land the land must have seemed to be small only in the certain areas the land would have provide so many and therefore the European ancestors or the old people must have fought each other for the for those reasons. They must have fight over the land fight each other from the area they they usually live and provide themself with and because of this according to the history there has been always the war there always so has been the paddles small here and big ones there’s and the continuing paddle against each other which seem to indicate that there was a a natural resource were depleting. They were diminishing. They were used up in one one area. Therefore forced the other people to go into the next area regardless if there’s other tribes using the land. And this alone causes with my my opinion causes the European to settle in the one place and begin to be city living or town’s people or community living people. It does so indicate and said so and also in the middle east. We know these today because of the modern communication today. We had we hear those histories almost everyday in a certain television stations which provide educational programs. We know more about middle east then we did about twenty years ago because the a desert war because of the last war that erupted so briefly in the middle east. We know that the history which tells us that once upon a time the middle east was prosper just like European section. And then finally it was the the natural resources were depleted. And therefore the nation began to drop into a once again in the lower class and the Bedouins the people who were nomads began to dominate the land. The land itself begin to lose its futility because of the misuse of the land. This is what we hear. Well the the region so vast as it is so big as it was there were many
people. There were so many people. Much more over populated than the land can provide and because the lack of a of conservation minded people they lost out. The land did not provide. Only in the areas where there is water the the land remained fertile. Because of the nature of the country and the continent and the tropical areas where the sun can scorch and cook everything living thing when it’s not when it’s fragile that state and when it’s not handled properly by humans and over over grazing of the animals and things like that the sun finish off the remaining of the stems of the living things. We know that. But let’s take a look at the in in North America and South America these two continents because there were no humans no human inhabitants there as we as indicate as indicate in archeological discoveries the land remained fertile such as described in the Jewish history and it’s flowing with milk and honey. Because nobody destroys it. The population was minimum more like none compared to today’s world population explosion. And therefore the Northern the North America and South America were the main main untouched resources natural resources which for the last five, twelve centuries has been has been exploded and explored and used by other nations. Shall we say people who could not live in their own country or or left their country to find other new life other part of the world displaced people from their own country. These are the people who came in to settle. These are the people that found riches of the land which resources which they believed and acted as if they were inexhaustible resources. After five hundred years we see some part of the of a mother mother earth is getting to exhaust its provision or resources. Soon we will find central America to be to be in the same nature as a a middle east where it’s barren and lost its resourcefulness and exhausted natural resource. These are the things that we know. Now getting back to these people who live here before the European came in these were the people who did not who did not have a time period for them to over populate the land and also to to destroy the natural resources or use up all the natural resources that were there. Therefore they were according to their belief the creator, the XX, god who has created things have placed them here to use the land while it’s still vacant while it’s still fresh therefore considered themself the custodians of the lands in North America. Custodians for the creator, custodians for the future purpose. It has done now it has now served that purpose. It has come to end. That is my belief and just because of this purpose for the purpose of whoever created the earth whoever set the continent to to be located as it were it’s just like somebody else how it’s just like somebody with the power and the future planning who have allowed this continent to to exist in the place where the man not yet known for fully understand the nature of the earth. It seemed like then the earth beginning it’s just like a a very a short period of time. It seems like it was just a while back which is a few thousands of years a man began to understand a little bit of the earth and the faster he understands the quicker he destroys the soil here and this abundance in the in the world in the earth’s resources. It seems to indicate that. And what the man can do to stop that. There isn’t much that anybody can do. And that is why when we talk about when the native person the First Nation person talks about the land and its mother earth he means mother earth which he respects and do not destroy he has used the land. And therefore still being proud of themselves that he has lived around the land and never destroy anything that will last or that would be lost forever. And now that we see the changes that are come upon us today we talk about these things. We the First Nation talk about these that at times in just to make a journey back in time where people live on on this land freely without being forced to live on the land against their wish against their will. It doesn’t mean that our First Nation did not enslave themselves. They did but in a different way. But not by massive slavery but some individual who have misuses his power did acquire or make slaves to few people not all. Sometimes at one or two. Some tribes have made slaves to the other tribes because they want to practice in and follow the traditional rituals because
of their spiritual belief and practices which which led them to destroy or to destroy human life or to take human life purposely in a ceremoniously as a sacrificial offering to their god. That was most of the reason amongst the native had to kill because they believe if we if one kills the human life he extends his life or his friend’s life or his children’s life life. All human on earth have this basic fundamental belief even in the spiritual spiritual instruction there is they say it is said that person who love his own body does not save his soul. We’re all the same our first people in Canada or in North America had the same idea but not as a universal fate. It was to each individual. Each person has his own belief and each person grow up with his own to to establish his own ritual which he will follow during his life. And that’s the difference between the First Nation people spiritual value system and the European people who came upon the land five hundred years ago. And this is what we are we the storytellers are trying to explain. We the people who have studied our past, we the people who are interested in telling stories. We like to bring this out to be recorded at least to be recorded and sometimes in the future when when the First Nation people have have blend with the European societies and culture when there’s no more red skin people proudly stand upon the earth only in books will they be found the story about their background and historical facts about their culture and this is it and this is what the recording is all about. This recording does not aim to convert the modern time the modern people. The modern culture with this continuously and fast rapidly changing due to the new discoveries and techne technological advancement in the modern society. It is not the idea to stop it or to block it or alter in any way. But to let these matters come as they are and record the things that has been for the future generation to look back. If they ever make mistake in this land whatever kind of mistake they may make which they might find themself in need or find themself in danger of their own existence can find some answers in these recordings. Because there are many that are forgotten today. And that is why. This is a real statement. This is not a this is not just a story. This is a statement that I made because I want to make make certain that anyone who listen anyone who get a hold of these recording of collections of stories he will understand he or she will understand why were these things made. After saying that now I will go back to the a simpler matters which I was going to do after exhausting my mind for the time being as a background information and also a pre contact period. Now I am going to touch upon the contact the European contacts between our First Nation and what what happened what happened with the native people as far back as I can understand as far back as I can remember. And as much as I can collect the stories from my own ancestors whether it’s true or false it seems to indicate that it is our own people who quickly changed even though the European came as a few in number the conquering factor was their advancements in in industry be meaning that the European were already knew how to work together and accomplish tasks which cannot which cannot be done without the organization or without a group of parties or a rule to follow. Because our ancestors our First Nation were still free to choose their own life they have not come to this stage for them to organize as organize as organized bodies of bunch of people or a group of people to assign a task to accomplish one thing which cannot be done by one person. In 1600 when the European sailed sailed into the Hudson Bay they found our forefathers our ancestors our First Nation people to be in that in that category. And that is why they call them a primitive simple innocent people and some of the terms they use is savage people savages. Mean at in in a in a let us remind ourself a savage a word savage mean does not necessary been bad or or a negative description for the French people. French people use the savage as respect rather than ridi ridicule. They had the word with respect because they understand the native people to be to be self sufficient in their own in their own lifestyle. Many times did they find that native people were much more accurate and much more
independent and much more self reliant than they were because they didn’t understand
the land. So the savages is the word that was used for them to to describe the First Nation
they found. And the English people who came in they also have their description of the
people which they did not quite understand because the English people were more
interested in finding riches than understanding people which led them in the first place in
five hundred and five hundred and two years ago was 1492 that Christopher Columbus
thought he had found India and called those people Indians. But the Indians over at the
far far middle east were the most respected nation in the world while once they were
became the nation themself or before they were interrupted by the European national
nationalities national powers European powers. And these people who were found here
our forefathers of the First Nation was not an insulting to be classified with the natives
with the natives of India. Nothing was really meant to ridicule the First Nations who
were found or or found to live here when the European came in. It was only later when
the English people and the French people in Europe begin to establish aristocratic type
of stereotypes that they brought this that that ridicule system came about to describe
the First Nation who live in North and South America. It was in twelve to seventeen
century in Europe that people classified themself as aristocrats which means the
landowners and rich people educated people from separate from the peasants peasants
which means poor uneducated and un the not possessors of land which I understand in
the history. So this what makes people begin to look down on our First Nation people
because they did not understand the quality the quality system of the First Nation’s
culture. Another stereotypes that came with the Europeans were the missionaries these
people who had the spiritual leadership a spiritual servant or spiritual leaders. Them like
missionaries they have they were much more intelligent and much more easily
understand the force which carries the First Nation people to be self sufficient and self
reliant. But because of the Europeans were all were constantly fighting each other for the
possession of land and what have you in over there overseas were preoccupied for many
years. And thus the conversion of the First Nation people took a long time before it
begin. And therefore the European who came in did not care whether these these First
Nation were found that were XX it with it didn’t matter whether they were Christian or
not Christian as long as they can provide or being persuaded to gather the fur bearing
animals to make the expedition be paid and which has been cost which has been costed or
to put together by the European leaders or even kings. The expedition was expensive and
it has to be repaid at the cost if the expedition to continue and be fruitful for the
European. That’s their history. I didn’t create these histories. That’s what that’s what is
written. And because of their their constantly constant conflict with each other French
and English and Spanish they take advantage of the people being heathen or paganists.
They use their natural pride and traditional competition they had within them to compete
for themselves to gather the fur and other materials that can be salable or commercial
value from their mother country. This is what I understand. And this is what caused
caused for long time our for our people to be exploited this way. People were sent out to
do exploration were not dumb. They understand the business of European. They
understand the trading business the exchange. They also understand the land value
system which was already established for many thousand years before they came. But
when they found the First Nation here the First Nation were most free people across the
land and across the country across the continent. There was no borders. There was no
provinces. There were no districts. The territory become one and to be exchanged to be
used by the most fit to live on the land. The value systems were totally different then at
the contact period. Later on because of this so they are different to reach the common
understanding between the two cultures remain conflict. The European taking advantage
of these these situation to trick the First Nation to to work for them and when
actually they had time to stop fight each other they agreed the next best thing to do for the land for the land possession was to send out the missionaries to convert the people which by which by then they understand the First Nation people value system stem and also contain 50% of the environment as a spiritual value which is not commercial value. Therefore in order to in order that to distract this belief a conversion has to be made amongst the First Nation. They have to be converted and persuaded to change their spiritual values and therefore they will not be attached to the land so much. The European had this trick other countries before they came here and they apply it to the our First Nation in North America. And it works and their tricks were very precise and methodics because they did not approach people who resisted but they approached the ladies the women who cannot resist anything because of natural curiosity to explore or to submit. And that is the first conquering that took place in time during the during the conversion period. This this story this statement speaks today. All one has to do is find an elder that is over 65 or 85 that has the mixed blood flow in his vein and we can see the history is there. No one has to disbelieve. All we have to do is speak to some some elder ladies who carry the pride of being mixed blood of other culture. You will see what kind of a conquering system the European has and use against the First Nation people to conquer them and this is a very strong statement and that is exactly what I believe. And I don’t know whatever the European did in time when they came in order to possess the land they have used their legal system they have used their spiritual value system to justify their their action. They have used the the traditional traditional practice to justify their their action against the First Nation people. The church is the one that condemned the spiritual value of the native First Nation people. The law is the one that ignores the ignores ignores and and totally totally disregard the First Nation property territory or property system. This all is known. It is known if you listen to the elders intensively or patiently and truly trying to understand. So that’s the results of the contact period. In in the Hudson and James Bay area which begin about 1514 or later on close to 1610 the the European the European people took about sixty years to understand the the First Nation within the Hudson and James Bay area. Because of our the nature of our people which they always very cautious and always XX watch anything that they want they’re not sure of themself. This indications is understood by the European that they were afraid our First Nation were afraid and they were chicken hearted and they would not they were not dangerous which is true in a way but it was not true if you really understand what happened. One thing that we know at this time is that in 1600 to 1815 our our ancestors our our people in North America especially in Canada they were fully practicing their own spiritual value spiritual beliefs and practices. And their spiritual practice was vastly difference than the European value system. It did not connect because those European spiritual power value or a practice was geared for civilization was geared for community living. It was not established for them a nomadic life like our ancestors were during the time and after contact period. And it was this advantage which the European understood finally after two hundred years living with the with the First Nation after they have used them to to accomplish their fur trading business. Once they had well settled and established in North North North America which is Canada the next move is to have the country to posses the country in their legal system. In order to do that the First Nation has to be conquered spiritually and that’s when the conversion period started and that’s when again these the missionaries did not approach to the highly regarded intellectual First Nation leaders but they went after the kids, the children, the women. They approached them and tricked them into conversion. Later on it was a wife and the children who persuaded their elders and leaders and husbands to join the Christianity. Once that accomplish the First Nation people lost 50% of their power and their rights to claim the land therefore lost out into a treaty making. This is the this is my
conclusion to this the whole thing. And then the gradual degradation of the Indian First Nation culture began really after the Christianity came in. All the Cree all the First Nation people who have taken the Christianity were not anymore connected to the land. Their spiritual value upon the land ceased to exist because the missionaries who converted them repeatedly and constantly reminded them the material wealth does not apply to heaven or a spiritual world. In the same time the priests and those missionaries they were using this method to steal to help take and possess the land which belongs to the First Nation which gives them a free mind and a clear conscious to accomplish what they want the material possession for to help with their spiritual practice. God knows how much sin there is if they did it what they did. Which they did really. We now found today our First Nation to have lost these things. Today we begin to understand. But it is too late. You cannot you cannot return or alter the past which has already occurred which has already happened. The consequences will be is to submit ourself and look ahead to try to adjust to the other changes that may come. And that we may train our children to understand these. So that eventually all these things will be forgotten. The only way that person will ever found these things will be to listen to the history of the native people the oral histories, the legends, the incidents, the incidents that were recorded inthe lives of the First Nation before the European contact. The only place these things can be found is by these recordings and by writing by the native person aversioned by the native himself but because there’s no white man there’s no European intellectual person or a writer who can completely and truthfully explain what the First Nation culture was because they never live it. The only person who can explain these things is the person who have lived at least who have lived it at least part of his life but the person who never lived it would never understand. And that is why I stated that these culture is gone. It will never exist again. The spiritual value system is gone and it’s not going to exist anymore. But it is possible to recapture it if one person could understand and record exactly how do you go about getting those things. By the time this task is completed it will take fifteen or twenty years the the results to come and apply and applicable. By that time the European government were all the European the originals of the European countries the leaders will have stamped out of these all the all the things that has been hung there for for the purpose of for the purpose of just to keep peace. There will be some crisis and incidents like Okra crisis two summers ago. There will be many of those. But each time when those First Nation ancestor descendants try this they will always chickened out, they will always because they don’t live it. They will never be able to live it again. And this is my statement. Now that is the contact period results. The gradual decays of the culture. Now the fifth item is what is the first first what is a real First Nation culture. What is, we avoided mention about the the treatment of our ancestors during the contact period the treatment of our First Nations. According to the First Nation today recalls the elders and the elders today they who have heard their grandfathers tells this story. We already mentioned these. These incidents are differ they’re different. They are difference in different part of the country. Like in Hudson and James Bay the exploitation of our people was taking advantage of their pride of being competitive. They were very easy target. They were very easy to persuade them to use that the nature of being competitive all the time. And and they willfully or easily agree to the white man to try to be the best hunters than the next person and therefore resulting over harvesting the the animals in the land and they themselves became to be reliant too much to the European process food rather than obtaining their natural food from the land. That was the that was the first part. That was the physical part but the spiritual part come later which I mean by 19 by 1824 and 1932. The first part was exploitation was the fur trading. The fur trading companies understand that. That is why they didn’t try to Christianize at the beginning. They know that. But our people our ancestors didn’t
understand that. It’s impossible for them to understand because they never live amongst
the European culture. So they always submit to the Europeans our forefathers and our
grandmothers and all that stuff. I have say this before we don’t need to question any
more. We just have to look at our the descendants of our forefathers and
foregrandmothers. It’s easy to to understand whether if it’s right or wrong. But it did
happen. So we already mention about my sixth item was First Nation treatment from the
white man according to the native recall or stories. We already dealt with that very very
precisely and and at least we have covered many. So the next thing is to do is to go back
again to look at the native education. What was the native education and also we will we
will also deal with what is a real First Nation culture. When we when we talk about
the first the real First Nation culture we will include the education system, practical
experience and then we will have to explain about the what make people being nomadic.
We will have to deal with about the the year, the seasons and then again too at the last we
will have to deal with the legends and the oral histories. And these will be will be gone
through again. For the time being we shall rest. In my story I shall use many different
kinds of stories. I shall use quotation, recent incidents and a a third grade what do you
call it the first hand information, second hand information and third hand information that
sort of thing. And when we deal with the period in time we shall use one generation to
the sixth generation to cover 390 years. Beyond 390 years that will be pre contact period
which is not written which is not quite understood. These stories these in that period that
is where the legends apply the native legends would be the only information we can get
from that from that that period and afar back. The important things we will have in
this after contact to the present day will be the recent the recent incidents or events which
occur amongst which happens amongst the European the Omushkegowak in the Hudson
and the James Bay area. They will be the only one that will assist us to understand the
culture and the tradition after the contact period. So we shall deal with that on a on a B
side of this report. We will also speak about shamanism. When we speak about
shamanism we will learn many things and we will use many quotation in that time too to
explain much more to for to be easy for somebody to understand. It would be easier for
us to understand legends which are very old oral histories in time past. Now let’s learn
this.

Hello, hello, it’s me again. This is Louis Bird in Peawanuck. On the A side A side of
this tape which is numbered 2502. On the B side as I promised we shall talk about many
other things. We will we will still talk about what is the real First Nation culture and we
will do we will also deal with the we have to flash back into the after contact period and
how were the First Nation treated by the white man and what’s the results. And then
after doing that we will get back into the what is a real First Nation culture. That will
have that will come under the First Nation education system method. Then we will talk
about practical experience as part of the First Nation education and then we will also
have to deal in the remention about the six seasons of the year in the Hudson and James
Bay area. And finally we will also mention a few legends which will help us to
understand. Now let me start again. The question was in my fifth item what is the real
First Nation what does it mean? If we mean to explain what is what it was before the
European contact or what it is now today. The two period is totally the same it’s totally
different. The time in pre contact was the real First Nation culture. Today 75% of the
real one have already decayed have already been ceased to function. Many traditions that
were before contact period are not exercised anymore. They’re not even understood.
They’re not even thought anymore. We I also mention about the First Nation treatment
from the white according to the native’s own recall. Well what it means is that there
were times the native people tells the story about that we they were instructed to assist
European fur traders and how to fight each other for the fur. They were assigned to be a middle man. They were told to carry the goods into the wintering camp of the trappers and at times there were two companies who came to emerge after the first the first fur traders. These independent fur traders they were opposition to the Hudson Bay Company. When the two companies came to operate in the same region because they fight for the same goods which is the fur bearing animals they have a they have a competing system a system was to to establish the the middle man to establish the outpost operator or or a salesman sort of. A salesman usually carried the items and walk to house to house, district to district to try to show the goods which he tries to sell and get the person to agree to order some more. This was applied amongst the our people. The fur traders the managers of the post hired the person who is understand who is loyal to them to take their goods into their hunting camp of the First Nation’s trappers so that they will they will eagerly trap some more animals because of the treatment they receive from the company. And when the opposition companies came another fur trading company independent fur trading companies there was this conflict of the fur trading. Competition was fierce which even led to the First Nation people to fight each other even to kill each other in the area of the coast to the Hudson and James Bay district. Most of the First Nation which we call Oji-Crees people these were the ones who crisscross the land James Bay and Hudson Bay to deal with the Hudson Bay Company from one post to the other and then later on became to trade with both companies opposition and the Hudson Bay Company which leads to the bloodshed in the area of XX. That was a first recorded and well known incident amongst the First Nation and James Bay and Hudson Bay to to kill each other because of the fur trading companies. And this when this happen that was part of exploitation that came from the fur trading which caused our First Nation to fight each other of those who like to rub shoulders with the white man of those people who wants to be a royal to the white man especially the Hudson Bay company and those who like to to join with the fur other fur trading companies independent fur trading companies which caused them to fight each other. This is where the situation came as we understand it in the white man history or the fur trading log books which describes the royalties the royalists not royalists but those natives who were royal to the Hudson Bay Company they became what they call home guards. Home guards were the ones who take care of the Hudson Bay managers and Hudson Bay post or or served them or serves as a servant and always hang around close to the to the to the Hudson Bay post. They hunt for the company. The gather wood for them. They took care of them and see that they remain their comfort in their houses. And when it’s necessary for them to take the goods out into the hunting ground they did so willingly and they don’t care who they beat along the way. These were the home guards and these were the people who considered themself very close to the white man and these were the families who intermarries with the white people and they were the ones who caused to see today which we have a mixed blood which is so evidence in Peawanuck and all the and all and in the west coast of Hudson Bay west southwest coast of the communities along the coast. This is true. This is this is actually really true. There’s not a bit of a lie in there. And this was the exploitation that we talked about exploitation of our First Nation and in the Hudson and James Bay. And that’s the First Nation treatment from the white man. So we have dealt with that. That was my number six item. And now to go back to the my number five items which is said what is a real First Nation counsel? What is it? Now we got to try to answer that. We are going to talk about it because we are going to blend with many things. The real before contact contact period when our First Nation have their own lives, have their own culture tradition whichever tradition they have in which part of the district because the country, the continent was so big and so vast not all the Nation were similar across Canada across this country. Take for example in the Hudson Bay and James Bay area
our Omushkego First Nation Omushkego which later on to be later to be called Crees they they had different seasons. They had six seasons to practice with to practice their culture to carry on their migrating life to carry on their nomadic life they have six seasons. And in this six seasons they have they require the land which doesn’t require any fence or or a border lines because the border lines could not be respected anyway the way their nomadic system work. It is more like applicable to say the the survival of the fittest. The most fittest people, the most well healthy people were able to choose and go to the most richest resources area of the land. And those who are weak were had the second value system of the land because they could not travel far. They could not travel a long distance within within the six seasons of the year. The healthy ones can and much more resourceful and much more beneficial for their activities. They can get to the riches of the land which can provide them with all through six seasons or not necessary to stay in one place but to move along with the animals and fish which they use to for their traditional value system. So the education applies there because of their culture tradition tradition which I understand means the activities that carried on for for decade or for lifetime. Tradition of the such group then existed to some period of time. So the education is there. The education is to teach the next next group of generation how this group has survived on the land and how they operate and how they move around. And the next one the next young ones follow the example. They begin as the young as the young people as six year olds as they as they be able to speak they absorb their parents, they listen to their elders, they listen to their grandparents, they listen to their, they receive education from all relatives, uncles, aunts, older sisters, brother-in-laws, sister-in-laws and grandfathers and other parent’s grandfathers and other native, other other uncles and aunts from the mother’s side or father’s side. All these experiences are put together and they receive them all. As they grow into a into a teenage age and they’re all guided by these experienced people in life. And they also have a spiritual value system which was existed then before the period of contact they also received their spiritual instruction which will make them which will make them durable and in in the harsh land which they live. Because of this spiritual education gives them power, gives them physical power and to overcome all the ordinary human physiques, ordinary human body which cannot stand they can overcome that by the spiritual practice and by the spiritual beliefs. This is what makes the the Omushkego education so different from from the European. So they learn by practical experience. They did not read textbooks. They didn’t have to because they didn’t read in their language. So they learn the children learn as soon as they can remember as soon as they can communicate by speech. As soon as they can see they learn, they watch everyday. As they grow they begin to understand and ask more question. And the questions they ask sometimes cannot be answered orally or instantly because of the questions they ask sometimes it’s impossible to explain and sometimes it’s a bit difficult to make them understand because the language was limited to express the situation in lifetime. And therefore there comes the legends. That’s where the legends come in handy. The legends and the oral histories of their time, the recent histories, the recent incidents, quotations, these were the quotation come very handy. Sometimes the young people ask questions which is sometimes not necessary forbidden but has to be answered in a proper time for the young people. It can be answered in the legend. It can be introduced by the legend and it can be introduced by the quotations of recent history. So that’s what show the Indian culture was. And that is how it works the education works that way. And the and the best educators in time past then they were the elders. They’re the most experienced of the group. The middle age people also have the life experience those who have already raised children but not yet come into the stage to be classified elders because in time past you would have to be about 65 or at least 75 to be considered an elder. An elder in time
past was supposed to to have naturally white haired, gray or even to have some function XX to the living and the harshness of the land and living in harshness of land so for so many years obtain a wisdom and a knowledge and a life experience. And these elders were then valued highly in time. They were the most experienced teachers. They’re the most valuable teachers for that culture. And and these people in their education system they cover many things. They have a moral teaching a morality. They practice morality and they they learn to respect the environment. Environment I mean whatever contains on earth where they stand, where they live be it the be it the water, atmosphere, the weather, the very air they breathed, the animals, the fish, the water, who live in the water, the land which provide life as rivers and lakes, in which of them they all named, they all know these areas and they got names of each of them. But the names did not stick because the language was not written. The names changes as generation changes. The rivers changes their name as generation changes or the new incidents that occurred in the area provide another name. Even the people themself they change their name maybe three times in their lifetime if they live to be 65 and over. The reason is that you know people are well known from their activities, from their achievement or from their outstanding achievement so they change their names that way. Men and women had the same thing. Children had the names because of the incidents that occurred during their birth or after after they became to be a a youngsters or once they became a teenagers. They changed their name. There was no such thing as family name and there was no such thing as two names but one name. And all these things served its purpose because anybody that has an incident with this negative value a person could have changed his name because of that. And his his negative effect or misconduct can be forgotten because his name has changed. In order to save a person’s dignity this name changing was applicable then not it was not much valuable to identify a person it was not necessary because people were so free they didn’t have to have an identification card or identification number or to be recorded exactly what they made a mistake in lifetime but they will always live for the future the next day which will be hopefully will be better. So their system was very nice. And their moral rules and their rules to follow. Let’s say let’s say that you know the moral the morality for the reason of morality to live rightfully the righteousness living. They have they have basics points most of them are very valuable very important. Some of them are less important but still followed and respected. They have these points which similar to the to the ten commandments of the Jewish people. They have the law that says you should not kill a person with with no reason. They have the law that says you should not steal anything that belongs to man. They have a law that says you should respect the elders and your parents. They have the law that says you should not want somebody that has this possession, his wife or his his camp, his boat, his canoe, his whatever. They have the law that says you must respect somebody’s hunting ground where it means where he have assign himself to hunt you must show respect to this person by most by contacting him before you venture out in this selected trap line. These were the rules. These were like like a a policies. Some of them they were just like a law but our First Nation did not have any law enforcement because of their laws stem from nature. The nature became enforcement. They have now we come to the spiritual part of this thing to make to make it applicable to make it understandable why the native people didn’t need to have a police force. They even though they have rules and commandments whatever this the laws they follow. Because they live in a nomadic life they have a counter action for the person who breaks the law or breaks the moral codes or or go against the the the rules. And there was this system which I which I mentioned before the elders were given the were were providing expertise they were providing advice and from their were their wisdom was respected and also they were also used as judges and they were also used as a law enforcement body
which means that if the young or if an elder if a person breaks these righteous laws for
the good living if he purposely break them in front of the people usually the elders were
cursed the man not necessary condemn him to death but curse him nevertheless that he
must pay what he has done wrong in front of people. And it did usually happen. Cursing
had exist amongst any nation of the earth and it’s automatically existed amongst the
nation. As if to say in the family if the father gets really disappointed or get really mad f
his children the wrongdoings sometimes he would condemn them, he would stated that
for this for their lack of respect of what he has provided he would say, “This purpose you
must face the consequence of what you have done because you did not listen.” That is
not a curse. That is a statement made to make the person understand even if he can get
away with it today you will find out later. And this is true. It is applicable. It has
happened. It still happen today. So the elders were given this power to practice. The
elders especially the very elders their word was something like a power like a law
enforcement or judgment statement or sentence is giving. And all these
traditionally used these tradition that been used amongst the First Nation before contact
after the conversion they have been condemned. After the fur trading companies came to
exploit our people these things ceased to have function. We now live at the end of a a
dream. We now live at the end which we don’t even know what they were. We don’t
believe them anymore. So that is the real legend. That is the real First Nation culture.
That’s the way it was. And one other thing that I mentioned before is when the
youngsters asked questions which is not answerable ever in the time when they asked
because everything has to be answerable in a proper time. When the youngsters ask
questions which cannot be answered at the moment usually can be provided by legends.
There are five legends in the Omushkegowak region or territory which are very
outstanding and all five contains of those things that I have mentioned which applies
more like the rules to maintain the righteousness to to practice the righteousness to
practice to keep morality amongst the people. The moral codes I think you could call
that. Because there are they help people to maintain the right things in life the good life.
There is a standardization of life because of those things. They were very useful. So
that’s part of the that is part of the education system of the First Nation people. It was not
written even to XX it was not written in papers or in textbooks that we must teach the the
curriculum was practice not written not read but practice and experience experience with
it. So the application of legends and oral in oral recent histories were applied in some
questions of the young people. They provide the answer which saves the parent from
actually expressing unpleasant answers. They can use the legends to answer the
questions from their youngsters or from the young people they they happen to encounter
in such such a such matter. When the subject matter is too personal or not suitable to
mention in front of other people so the legends can do that. The legend they are our
stories they are legends in parts where they where this can be answered and open up the
subject. The legends open up the forbidden subject amongst those First Nation and that is
why the legends were so important and that is why the oral history was so important and
because they are not written they were flexible, they are applicable in everyday life for
the good of the people to maintain the righteousness to follow the path of righteousness
they say and to recognize the great spirit where its First First Nation elders recognize and
absorb the creator’s work which sometimes they they call a great spirit. None of this
what I am saying is all that nice. There were many a negative aspect in the life of the
First Nation before the European came in. Because of the spiritual practice was so free
for anyone to obtain if they want to there were no there were no enforcement there was
no there were no force that could stop a person to misuse the powers he acquires through
shamanism. So each individual who acquires shaman power has the free will to misuse
or to use properly. It is seems that it seems to say exactly the same as a Jewish religion
says the god had give free will to men to choose the right and wrong. In our in our First Nation of of oral history there are many such stories. That is why there was no rules to follow there was no actually enforcement they were rules provided. But there were there was no enforcement there was no there was no actual judgment to punish a person from one person or from the institution were not set up that way but the institution rather existed by nature and by the great spirit. Because the native people value the creation related to the spiritual life therefore more honestly direct kind of directly worshipped the the great spirit. They respect the creation rather than adore the creation. This is what has been passed on to us when we listen to the elders when they speak to us when we were young. I remember my grandfather says, “Our forefathers did not bow down to the idols.” They not not in the James Bay and Hudson Bay area but there were some who did that but not all. They have never form any any any figures or any any sculpture that they would set up someplace and worship it. They have never done that because they were migrating people there was no time to carry around the object to worship it but they worship the nature the creation, the atmosphere, the sun, the day. They worshipped god through them through his creation. So no need there was no need to make any object or any idol to worship. This is this is the way we have been told in the past by our ancestors. Now I shall rest.

I have had a very short rest. I like to continue telling the story about the forefathers of the First Nation Cree in the Hudson Bay and James Bay area. There are many things that I could cover in this story in this information story. This is an information story. This is not the history. Bits and pieces of history is thrown in for for the purpose to prepare. This taping is more like introduction to do the stories that will come yet. As as for myself I wanted to to record or tape record series of of legends series I means I mean one legend to be tape recorded in one version that is which is five different version of one one Indian legend. The purpose is that to categorize these these legends categorize I mean one legend can be categorized as a young for the young audience, teenage teenagers, the young married couple, the young parents, the middle aged people and the people over 50 or 60 thereabouts when they come to terms to face the the declining years of their life. These things. And after that also to have another another version which which we usually appreciated by the amongst the elders truly elders which I mean from 65 and up. When we as for an example when I was young boy I used to listen to our elders who were already over 65. Sometimes there would be about two to three mostly three maybe over would sit down together and and recite the the legends which they which they have not all of them heard for their group age. Sitting down there with them or being around there playing around there as a kid myself if there is any 100% of knowledge or information from the legend I would say I probably have understood 1% of a 100% of the of the conversation that was carried on between the elders because I was too young. So that is why these legends have the different version different category different shall we say level of understanding. And all and all the five legends that we have that I have heard in my young days they all apply the same way and they are used the same. If anyone could just carry on from day one from each month and you take one legend and try to use it all five different version in in during the from the beginning to the end I am sure it would take him about a month to finish that. That is if he wants to do it correctly correctly and have the right audience. But who can find the right audience in one month. No that’s impossible. And therefore that was not possible to be done. And it’s the same thing with the other legends which are five and therefore these five legends that were used by the Omushkego people in the Hudson and James Bay area these were used and applied in the education system for from one from day one to one one season up to the the last day of the one round of one winter seasons which I mean if in one group if one area applies only
The four seasons are used for that fourth season or distinguished that’s four season of the year. These four seasons will come to an end by the time all five legends can be expressed to the different groups of people or the audience. But in the James Bay and Hudson Bay lowland we have six seasons in the year. Six two short season one of them is a spring breakup season and again on the frozen shall we say a XX. It’s a month that close all lakes and rivers that’s what it that’s what it means XX. So that’s the short period. It’s a period when no man can go nobody can travel on ice or water so you are simply put in one place and if you’re not prepared for that period you’re really stuck. That is why most people prepare themself for that short season so they can pass time. So it usually if the culture education applies in that certain period of time. If if it’s if it’s for the young people, if it’s for the young men the young men would be shown how to make their snowshoes to prepare or to look for the to look for the trees that will provide them a good snowshoe frames and then they are taught they are walked around with their fathers or grandfathers showing them where to look to look for the right tree to make a good pair of snowshoes. If you go in farther inland from the Bay you go in at least 80 miles 80 to 120 miles inland you will find variety of trees that will provide you snowshoes. If you are living in a coastal region you will have only one choice of stick, trees, to provide you with snowshoes that is tamarack. Tamaracks are the middle class durable sticks but the finest and most long lasting snowshoes if you care for them would be a birch a white birch. And the lowest and the most fragile sticks that you can make snowshoes out of is a timber. The timbers that are standing close to the river banks. A certain kind not the very old ones but the new new kind of middle aged type of tree. You there are there are such trees that that can be spotted by the experienced elders experienced old man experienced person who knows how to look for them. And these trees can be made snowshoes out of very easily especially a person who is skilled in using these woods but the person who just begin you do not succeed right away. But the only problem about those trees is that they are very fragile. They break easy, they are very light but they break very easy. Anybody who makes snowshoes out of these river side timbers is you might as well make lots many pairs for the winter or for your for your duration of activity. But if you want to make all snowshoe sticks out like that if you don’t know who how to use snowshoes. You must know how to use the snowshoes, how to wear. So this thing is a training. So it as this it was that time in the season that the elders and fathers and grandfathers would take their youngsters I mean young boys youth especially the 16 teenage boys to show them where to look for the snowshoe material. It was in these times also the parents the mothers will show their their daughters a young girls teenagers how to care for themself physically and where to go for anything that they might need and when to do things they might need. That they should collect herbs and plants that they may use them for the medical purposes and that’s that’s native medicine meaning that you know to collect the plants such as Labrador tea and willows and tamarack, special tamaracks that use for for healing and many other items. We cannot deal deal with those things at this moment. But these are the time that a special season which is very outstanding and also very important for the the native culture education. So we’ve been talking about native culture education that is why I throw in this this story. It’s not a story. It’s more like the information. So I have told you about the six season, six season of the Omushkego in the Hudson and James Bay area. There are six season two of them which are short in each year. During the ice break and also during the freeze up period. There is in in between. They are in between. It’s just like the spring the first day of spring according to the white man is in April somewhere around there and the spring is when it begins to thaw out and they don’t mention about the ice break because it’s not important to them. But to a native Indian who live who use the river system for their livelihood it is very important. It’s a very outstanding period for them. The spring
begins when the snow begins to thaw very very slushily when the rivers when the little creeks are beginning to to begin to form water ponds around it then before the water runs that’s the beginning of the spring springtime for the Indian for the native period. During that period of time usually about the last week of April sometimes the first the first week of May, that’s the time. And whatever happens according to the weather that’s the beginning of the season and then until the ice cleared off the main river. So that is the season of the breakup season. But the spring spring weather can begin in April, April 20th or thereabouts and the spring weather will remain cold after the icebreak. We would still experience snowfalls and all that stuff and freeze it, freezes, freezing nights until late in the 28th of June. That’s when the the that’s when the leaves begin to to spurt out or bud out. And many things there are so many things that during the month of April or March where the native people can see and show the indication of the kind of a season what they gonna have in the month ahead just by looking at the nature, looking at the willows. The willows will tell you that in the in the about the end of March or somewhere around April the willows will tell you the spring season will come soon if the buds the buds of the willows brings out the fluffy cotton type of thing. They call these in our name XX. They come them puppies. They are really a little elongated things that come out from the bud and they stay there like a little fluffy things like a cotton but very short stem very short hairs. And these things come out and they show you that it will be springtime soon but they come out at a certain period. That’s an indication of the duration of the spring or duration of the spring break. So you see these are the culture education which are out in the wilderness which cannot be experienced of today’s world of white man education system. That every every child should sit in a different classroom to read textbooks and know about everything. No, this is cannot be done in an Indian culture education. It has to be experienced. That is why I said practical experience is required from the for the native for the First Nation education to be mastered and if you don’t do that you’re not you are not going to survive at the beginning. You must then have to be. I recommend to the people today that they should remain in the class and finish high school and go on to the skilled trainings and career career training and then after that they can go back to the culture training with their with the other old XX and also much more understanding by books. They can experiment on their own effort. That’s my suggestion my suggestion. That’s the only way that can be useful. If any native kids wants to go back to the nature they must go through the education to white mans first because the white man education it’s all written down. At least they will know all those things in papers in the written form and then later on when they get older when they are mature and they will they will carry these knowledge from the textbooks and they will experiment them when they are adult. That would be all right. But if the young children go to school to high school and drop out the school and never quite get all the necessary understanding from textbooks they are lost in the middle of limbo. One culture to the other in the middle. They don’t belong to any culture then. They cannot survive either of them and that’s what I mean they’re caught in the middle of the limbo. So that’s my opinion and I’d like to finish by saying that thank you for listening for example to my stories. My name is Louise Bird, Peawanuck, Ontario. Thank you.