Hello, hello let us begin, then the last time I was, the last I mean at the other side of this tape I was talking about the survival of fittest so anyway I say the term is applied in our, in the time past. It is only the Shaman power that, that completes the life of the person, if you wish to be, but not necessary its not what they call mandatory. You can live without one but you still have to have some. You could have a basic need, they are basic things which do not, which do not fall into the description of the Shaman, they are extra things there that one can have developed or develop as he grows up. So we would deal with those some of the time.

Now I was talking about this person Moses Kostachin I have listened to at times by using comics or being comedian. It is very, it is a very good way to, to tell a story, and beside entertain the youngsters. So he’s one of them and then the other one is in Winisk area, and there was, Abraham Hunter.

Abraham Hunter did not talk about shamanism, he didn’t, he didn’t talk about this kind of stuff, but he did quote a few series of, five out of five legends, only one where its make fun, only where its, where there is jokes and things to make you laugh. And then Mr. Hunter used to talk about mostly about hunting, and the land where the animals can be found, and where you could survive and how to do it, and what best of the season can you do these things. So he was very good on that, and a very, very few times, I mean a very, very few things that he, he would use, to mention the shamanistic thing. But he did quote a few things that sometimes that was funny and explain what it was and that’s about it. But he didn’t have to speak much, this old guy. I think he knows more than he had let me to understand him.

He used to enjoy to be out in the bush all the time. Being as an elder he was already seventy or eighty, he was still camping out by the river, by the, by the bay, all by
himself. He had his wife living, but was to stay there by the weeks, and what he was
doing was fishing, gill net fishing at the tide water, and then maybe perhaps shot a few
ducks for his own food and he was very old, he was not a very fast walker then, but he
was totally enjoy himself out there. I, foolish kid, used to go disturb him. I used to sit
with him when he hunted for a duck, you know sit by lake. He can sit there for one hour
without a duck, and when the duck actually come he would kill, he would just have it, he
would really a meal out of it. That me I could never sit in more than ten minutes or any
place as a young person, but he can sit there for hours maybe he maybe two three ducks
in those three, three hours, but make a good meal out of it. He eats right there, he makes a
fire and he roast the duck in the open fire and that’s it nothing else. But he of course, he
has a small pail, very small, one cup and that’s what he put it in the open fire and make a
little tea, just plain tea, that’s it.

He was a strange man but he always carry the hard packed biscuits you know
those wild biscuits and they used to be around and they’re very hard and he always have
a piece of it or maybe half of it, and he was a very fascinating man. He doesn’t have to
speak you just feel him, you feel him that he’s something, and he doesn’t say much, but
he just laugh. He would laugh on something, he would just giggle off and, he’ll fun with
the young, young people. You know just enjoying them, but he did speak to the, amongst
the elders. If he meets the elders he just simply blend with them, and he knows exactly
what they’re talking about and sometimes he’s much more than what they talk about. He
was a very, very interesting man.

I spent some night with him on his a very small tent, and one small stove and not
much more, just one a little, a little box that looks like a trunk but it’s very small its only
ten by, eight by eight by twelve. Whatever is in there I don’t know. I never saw him open
a box, and then he has only one gray blanket nothing else, and his parka and his jacket.
There is no sets of clothes just the one he wears, and that’s it, and this is really know how
to live in the bush and he wash his clothes when it’s nice, and he wears the parka on top,
and pants, and when he finish underwear after it dries he put them on, and then he wash
his pants, sometimes parka. Parka is not, it’s not like a parkas we got now, it’s not
insulated, it’s just the plain canvas, a white canvas, but under there is usually a long coat
and then the shirt, and usually he has underwear and pants no shorts or briefs and that’s
the way he dress. Oh, of course he has hip waders and then the a short rubber boots. Anyway this all his possession out there.

He didn’t have much more at his own home, he didn’t have a home actually. His home was out there in the bush, where he spent the winter camp, but the Winisk to him was just a summer, summer resort. He doesn’t have a house he just have one large teepee, and he usually have a one brand new tent that he put beside and that’s where he stores, stores some of his stuff. These people never have much stuff. So anyway he was one of the persons I listened to and I have learned a lot from him.

He talks about you know the survival skills, he talks about the land where, where can you look and why you should camp there and you should camp there at what, what time of the season. Where would you look in the fall to find some animal, and all this stuff. And in summer, where would you find the caribou during the summer, and it was fascinating to tell me that sometimes you will find the caribou right in the open tide water, eating the seaweeds and he says sometimes you could sit out there amongst the rocks, just sit there when it’s hot, when there’s humid, when there’s lots of flies. Says you will be surprised you know how close the caribou can get up to you, and that was the teaching he knows about because he lives mostly coastal area between Fort Severn.

He’s a fascinating old man, and then his wife, Sara, that’s different story. Sara also used to independently go fishing. When the old man is not fishing there the old lady would go out there now when there are now plenty of fish. But the old lady, old man would be in the village then, and the old lady would be camping out there with us, my mother and, and her. And that is the really entertaining, to us because she can tell the legends, all five if she wants to and then she can tell us her life story which is also very fascinating and then the what I call recent histories you know after European contact, that she heard stories because she originally came from Cape Henrietta Maria, and she knows that area, and she hears the stories that happens to so many time, so many different things that happens to her. She was very, very vividly has memory, her memory was so clear, as of watching the cinema stuff tell a movie. That’s the way it sounded like when she tells us a story. Our minds runs so clear that when she tells us a story, but sometimes, so detail makes us fall asleep.
Now we have Sara, Sara Hunter, and she specializes in telling us the, the raids that were experience in Cape Henrietta Maria area, between Sutton River and Lake River, between that area. She used to tell us stories many times that people were raided by other tribes. I think that she was the only one that I ever have mentioned about Inuit because she used to say we didn’t, nobody knows where those people came from, how they sneak in to the area to come all of a sudden appear in the, in the Tundra and not detected before, because the Omushkego people always scanned their attention towards land and these people are not shown in the, in the shaman radar system, and so they appear all of the sudden from the bay. So Sara was saying that it could have been the Inuit peoples she says cause she never saw the Inuit people until 1955, but she could not say well these were the kind of people that I’m talking, no she didn’t say that.

But the story goes back from other, other part that what she was saying was, was could be very true, because she was saying, maybe the Inuit people came from the ice and just walk onto the shore and walla! people were there. So it is very very close to the truth what she was guessing. So Sara tell us many stories, she told us, what I call recent histories.

The oral histories I don’t know which one is a oral history, to me, legends are oral history and also the recent happenings, after the European came, which is only four hundred years ago. But to my understanding, to the explanation of the elders that I have talked to, I have always ask, why do we call the stories legends? Why is it? So they say they are very old stories, they cannot be recorded, we don’t know who and who, what was his name the person that happens to this incident or this funny situation, or extraordinary story. It is, the name is forgotten, so it is put into the Wiisaakechaahk sort of, if its that category of story, or if its belongs to the Chakaapesh story. So that’s how those story tellers do. So anything under five hundred years is not a legend.

So that’s why I have decided to divide a legend and the recent history, which I call under five hundred years from today. Because after five hundred years when the stories begin to be more than five hundred years, names and relatives are not exactly connected to the story, so which saves the innocence of the relatives. It is it’s very, it is very similar to the modern histories, the modern history now has, has developed, not to blame who tell a story very much, but it is now still applicable if you want to still a real
life that, to protect the innocent you don’t have to, you change the name. Now you don’t use the same name as the person. It is I think whether it’s the law or if it’s the regulation that’s supposed to apply, but in our time, in our, in our past, in our history it is applied it was applicable the same way. So that is why the legends have no names, but except to play the character of Wiisaakechaaahk and Chakaapesh, and other characters that play there.

Now, having saying this you know let’s go back to the Sara, Sara Hunter who so fascinating to tell us possibilities, connection with the, with the, abandoned Henry Hudson, is it, who was cast of from his ship. She was mentioning about this thing. There were many signs that were strange in that area, in those past years, where she don’t know how long ago, and she says there were weird things that experienced in that area, that cannot be said its true, and cannot be said its not true. But stories there, so that’s one of the reason that I, I was so fascinated by him. It is not, it is not only it is not to me she told the story, she told the story to me fascinated me most. It through his son, the son her son that lives still today, his name is John Michel Hunter.

John Michel Hunter quoted her mother saying one time, that in a past she tells a story to her son, Sara. I saying this way, way in the past that people can remember, at one time as usually people camp in the, in the open Tundra, in summer to avoid the mosquitoes and flies whatever and also for easy lookout for the raiders. In one evening, at the end of June, people used to hear the ice that, that bang each other and make the hollow sound, very clearly, when the condition is right. But this time it was particularly different, she says, so it was said in the story. That people actually heard the thunder, sort of but with a clear sky and then in the evening, it was towards evening and after sunset when the light could be seen, you could actually see the flash of something out there in the open, amongst the ice, that there was something. So this was a very strange story, but Sara must have said there were many things that native people the Omushkegos’ have witness, the white people fighting each other in the ship, in their ship, but not necessarily know which, where, who were they, because the native people, Omushkego didn’t know between the English, Dutch, and the French, they did not know that. So when they see these things happen, it was something that is kept one to himself, the mystery those powerful white men they do things. So they have this powerful, powerful stuff which
they call fire stick, or fire power, which they use supposedly larger than them fire sticks, which us in the sailing boats. So these are the terrible stories, terrifying stories for us, so they’re imprinted in our mind that does the kind of fear the native people have in those days, which they so easily succumb by the white man’s, the culture. That’s my opinion!

So anyway, listening the elders this way makes me, makes me decide, I will be able to make a comment and say this is what I think, so not at this time I will not to make too many comments at the beginning of this tape, but I will just try to say that these are the people that I have heard telling us a story that have has happened after contact of the European and before.

And now another person I have listened to in the Winisk area was, was name Joseph Gull. We used to live with Joseph Gull, just down from Peawanuck here, or a little ways, there is a little place called Neapiskaw, it’s a, it’s a, it is very obvious as you go down on the south side of the river, where you see the limestone, limestone cliff, very small one, the last one before Winisk. I guess not very last one, but there is a little, a little, very low one in Fox Nose Point, Fox Nose Point. And there’s one very low, maybe four feet high, on the north side, but here this is south side and the place is called Neapiskaw, that’s exactly where it is, at the point of the stones, limestone. And that is also on the island where the missionaries built the cabin to base their logging operation.

So this is where this Joseph Gull have lived his, have lived his life out, as long as he can, before his wife get too sick. And we used to stay with them sometimes, long time ago when I was a little boy, perhaps five or maybe four, I just barely remember first time when we lived together with them in that place. And then I think we lived with them maybe three times, altogether, and I always remember I used to visit those old people in the evening when my mother could not tell us a story. And I used to visit these two people, they didn’t have no children. So Ellen would tell us a story and we would, sometimes we fall asleep there in their home, but they wake us up you know just before they go to bed, they would see us home, not far away from their the askiikan, in moss house and it was very comfortable there, and both of them used to tell us a story, they help each other, cause Ellen forget some part of it Joseph would just jump in and correct him or a sister, and Joseph himself would tell us a story, not telling us a story but Ellen a story, and we would be entertained that way, but Joseph did use much legends, only when
there is humor in it. Ellen used to tell us legends where she thinks would applicable for our interest, and she was very, very smart. And now these are the elders that I have listened to in Winisk area.

And beside my most high regard elder that I have listened to is David Sutherland, my grandmother’s older brother, my grandmother Maggie Pennishish, because this man can interpret the, the legends. He would tell us a story first and then he would interpret the legends why is it delivered this way, and it was very educational, and he was also who tells us about, give us the hint about the shamanism is developed in a, in a in the old days and also amongst the young people in the them days. But he was also the one that tell us these things are not applicable because the life change today and that was 1945 and he lives till, up to 1963 but during that time it was, during construction camp in Winisk it was chaotic life, we never actually able to sit down with him because as a young man I used to work in the camp, and every evening I come home in summer time maybe ten, and no time, no time to go visit him.

So we missed out on him for about ten years, maybe eight years, and while he was still existing. And that was during the time where Father Marais, brother Alex Kyle used to recorded him because that’s the time when the recording machine came out, those big bulky things “Phillips,” “Phillips,” I think they call it, company that made them. They were big square boxes, they were so big and it was maybe 1957 that the small one came but they were not, they were not as good as today’s recording stuff. And at that time I was not interested in recording anything or keeping stories, that was just for my entertainment, but it was only 1970 that I begin that we are going to loose these things and I wanted have good memory of them and recall every body that has tell me the story and why.

So here it is, and that’s the reason why I do that now. I think I have name all the elders that I have listen to in Winisk that I consider them the first elders that I know and then a recent ones you know after the next group where Michael Patrick is one of, one of the elders that I really love, I, I might use that word because I actually loved the guy, I, I just couldn’t ever get used to him because he has a fascinating way of entertaining you and tell you the story and educate you at the same. But him and I got along well in 1970 that I was able to read English language fairly, quite well and I used to read the history,
and he sits there and I translate them and then I used to have a, an Old Testament that I
used to able to read partially because it was very old terminology in there and I used to
tell him what this Old Testament said and he was fascinated. And then I used to tell him
about the also because I have went to, have a crash course in Elliot Lake in out in grade
ten and have studied quite a bit of few things and all that, and I told him about the
structure of the government of Canada and also the government of other countries. These
things fascinate him, because he was, he was a council member and he wanted to know as
much as he can. And we get along fine, he tells me the old, culture education, and how to,
how he receives his education through his father, and he tells me the names that told him
story with strange stories because he live another forty years before I came to being. So
we blend well as two of us, and we exchange information very easily and he became my
friend and I could, I have confidence in him, whatever I tell him he’s not going to spread
it out and he did not. And there are things that he stood by me for it and I always have my
gratitude towards the old man. So he died in 1984 I think, he died anyway. He died of, he
didn’t survive the operation for diabetic, diabetic disease, it was very unfortunately for
me.

And there are some of the elders that I have interviewed. There was James Mack,
with the same, almost same age as Michael Patrick. I interviewed James Mack, especially
on the shaman, shaman subject, how do you begin and who and how. He gave me the
information that I needed as best as he can, and then I talked a little bit to William Mack,
that’s his cousin. William is not a person who speak a lot, but he tells a story about the
shamanism, so I also I have him. And then there was another elder by the name of John
Crow, who have came originally from York Factory. He didn’t know his age for sure, he
was much elder than he was, planned, I mean, marked to be, because there was, they lost
the certificate of him. I am sure that he was much older than what he was told he is,
because there has been another man by the name of John Crow in the area of, who came
from York Factory and moved to the Big Trout Lake and in them areas, and who got
mixed up with his birth certificate and him. So that’s why he was not so sure exactly how
old he was, and he can tells me a story that is much older than he’s supposed to be. And
that’s why he knows I know those stories that happens to me and it cannot I could not
have been only ten years old he says: “I could have much older.”
So he tells me he’s the first man who told me had witness a shaking tent operation in the offensive way. Mark this statement: There is a shaking tent that you can use to benefit people for communication purpose that is, that is originally the set for this sort of thing. But there are people who use the shaking tents offensively when they are bothered by other shaman. These Omushkegos used to use shaking tent to defend themselves and this is exactly what he saw, this man when he just five years old. He just barely remember, he remembers only scary part of it, not the rest. But as he grows up to be about near ten or whatever his father was still alive, he ask him: “What was that happening?” and his father says: “Well, I didn’t think you’d remember.” So he said, told him, that was a time when the three Omushkego families were bothered by other shaman from the distance land, and had to defend themselves with use, with the use of the shaking tent. So this is the first witness, who have told me this, and I am the second, second person to hear. So he saw it, and he tells me the story.

And then the other elder that I have talked to in Winisk, I guess it will only be John Chookomoolin, but he’s from Attawapiskat member and moved to Winisk in 1974, 1976. And then I interviewed him many times, but he’s not very straight person, he doesn’t have a solid way of stating thing. He seems to make fun of those kind of things. Think it’s a big joke, if you ask him about what was the shamanistic thing, he condemned it. He would just simply don’t want to talk about it, but he would tell the story about, about a shaman and their mishaps and everything, and laughing at them. So he didn’t have a concept of the First Nation respect or its originality, he doesn’t have that. He has been totally christianized. So any way I do not condemn the old man, he does have a knowledge, a survival knowledge which he pass, which was passed onto him by his father. Now that’s the last old man that I ever interviewed. These are the same age group that I have talked.

Oh ya! I forgot another old man, same age as my father. This is Xavier Wabano. Xavier Wabano was also fascinating person, he also didn’t want to mention about shamanistic development or what it was, because he was told not to bother, but he told me that his father Jacob Wabano, did not practice shamanism but he knew, and then Jacob Wabano’s brother, no just a minute, Jacob Wabano’s father was George Wabano, and George Wabano’s brother was David Wabano, David I think, I’m not to sure. So
David I mean George Wabano’s brother, Xavier’s Grandfather, he was the one that has a shaman practice, openly. He was known to be the most powerful one, one of the most powerful person to live around, between Attawapiskat and Winisk. But originally Wabanos came from Webique that’s the headwater the on the Winisk river. Webique that’s where they originally came from and worked their way down to the Ekwan River and to the Shamattawa, Shamattawa Lake here, I mean to Shamattawa and then down to Ekwan and Attawapiskat. Finally they, they establish themselves in the area of the lake called Washagami its just north-west from the Holly Lake or Sutton Lake, west from Sutton lake, in that area, that’s where this, Jacob Wabano settled as his hunting ground, before he died. And then his son Xavier Wabano moved to the Shamattawa Lake, and another person took over the area after he died. So anyway it’s not hunting ground that I’m interested in, its just an elder who was that I spoke to, able to speak to as this Xavier Wabano who told me his, himself that he has talked to his grandfather’s brother who was a shaman, and told him the story of his part of his experience being a shaman.

So it's fascinating, because I was trying to interview people who knew more about this thing, but again as I told you, the experience I receive from these people is that they were told not to mention those things. They were told not to pass on the knowledge, so he didn’t want to, Xavier Wabano did not, but he tells something that was fascinating, that is you know you, one can still acquire some knowledge in the wilderness if you’re born and live in the wilderness. There will be partially what the shaman people use, but you don’t have to be a shaman. You don’t have to be mystical about it. These things grow with you if you live in the wilderness, that’s what he says. I know some of those things.

So anyway, so I think I have mentioned most of the elders that I speak to in the Winisk area system, Winisk River system, which have been called Winisk band later on. Xavier Wabano and his father were not Winisk people, they were not, they were not listed in the Winisk band, they were listed at Attawapiskat, but later in years they joined the Winisk band, and finally included in the Winisk band. So there’s, its not, its not important about that, the important thing is that what they’d tell me about the culture, is that, that is what I want to do here. I want to give them all the credit, those elders who have spoken to me and who have taught me many of those things that I am mentioning today.
And my idea in 1970, after when, after going to school in crash courses in Elliot Lake, after obtaining my grade ten level of education with the paper saying diploma, and after going into Timmins, to continue a bit of mine education unfortunately which, which I failed accomplish due to the new math that came into the school system that time, it sort of kicked me out of school, I failed. I did not fail in, in classroom I just could not, could not adjust to the new system. The rest of it is fine, I could learn the science I can learn the, the English literature, but science we need to deal numbers, and it, I would have failed in science anyway if I had gone, the way I was because I was burnt out myself, after two years, after two years trying. At least I had piece of paper saying that I have finished grade ten that time. To date grade ten of 1970 would mean only grade three, or kindergarten level, but at least it gives me the edge of many elders, that who, never went to, tried to study the, the white mans world. My most education was studied that I went to feel how it feels to be a white mans life. That’s the most education that I receive. So anyway, the main idea is not to talk about my life.

My purpose is to talk about the stories, that has been passed on to me, by different elders. Now I think that I have named all the elders in Winisk that I could remember. There were many others, ladies that my mom used to associate with. All tells us the same stories, but usually they are using it to entertain us. My grandmother is one of them, who actually forbid us, to understand or to try to take interest in, on a shamanistic story, because she strongly believed that Christianity is the best way to live. So we, I took, I took her advice, at least I think I did, and the Christianity I guess I didn’t actually I could not consider a holy person because I have break many laws and many things in my lifetime, but now that I get old, I’m too old to break anything now [laughing] too old to break any laws anymore.

So I turn into my mind into many other things that may benefit some people. I mean the young people. Today the young people, they don’t care about things, they’re too busy to try to catch up with many things. And they will when they get old as I am, as I am when they get old, about sixty, they will, they will ask themselves what am I? What did my father did? How did my grandfather live? How did my great-grandfather live? What was the First Nation culture? They will ask, but there’re not too many books in the country that describes the true nature of First Nation culture. There’s fragmented stories
that have been written, but there’s no Indian person who have written totally what it was in one, one specific tribe or culture. I am talking now just Omushkego culture, I’m not talking about Micmac spiritualism, I’m not talking about Blackfeet shamanism, I’m not talking about Mashkotem spiritualism, no I’m not. I am talking about Omushkego isolated tribal practice that was here, connected, that’s what I am doing.

And so saying this, I now want to expand the names of the people that I have talked to in this nature, and also mostly just general, a general culture or make up of our Omushkego people. I have talked to the people in different, different part of, different communities, some living in Moosonee. In Moosonee I have talked to Raphael Wabano, who was originally from Attawapiskat. I have talked to Albert Matinas in Attawapiskat who have explained few things to me, I have talked to, Thomas Archibald in New Post about things in his life. I have talked to Peter Sutherland, originally Peter Archibald. He was raise by other family, because I guess when they were young they lost their father. So he was raised by the man called Tommy Sutherland in the area of Moosonee, south of Moosonee, and he has a fascinating story. He’s an old person, he’s about eighty four now, and I spoke to him about these things. Then I talked to the most likely elder, what was his name? I forget his name but he’s a well-known person, and maybe two other most likely elders who are interesting.

Then at Attawapiskat I have talked to many, many, many people. I have talked to, I’ve tried to interview the elder who is still living who is now one hundred and two years old. His name is, what’s his name, Carpenter, Carpenter. Gee, I forget his first name. He’s Carpenter, so he’s a hundred and two years old. So I’ve tried to interview him to ask him to shaman, shaman connection stories, but he didn’t want to. Because he’s now ready to leave the world, and he has embraced Christianity so much that he doesn’t want to speak about those things. He told me openly, he says: “My, my grandchild” he says: “I am ready to leave the world, and I have embraced Christianity. Those shaman things that you talk about, they were there long time ago.” Says: “I do not wish discuss them.” So it was plainly, plainly explained to me why, and no offence.

Then I talked to the next, the guy that I know, I used to talk to this man, he’s he was not yet old person, he used to come in Winisk his name was Miichin, Michael Metatawabin, Metat is to make it short. So he used to talk about these things, his own life
experience because he was partially mentally retarded I would say, but fully capable to survive in the world even though he was sick. So he used to have illusions I guess, and then also experience voices in his mind, and he began to get mental sick so he was staying in the North Bay, years after that. So he spent the North Bay many years, ten years, twenty years maybe and then finally as he get old he, when he begin to less more aggressive, or violent so he was sent back home. Now he exist in Attawapiskat, he would be about ninety seven years old. And in 1949 he came to Winisk and stayed a week in our house, and I used to listen to him. He used to talk these shaman things. I was not interested in that time but it was fascinating to listen to him. So that’s another elder, but I, when I saw him in Attawapiskat, in Attawapiskat hospital where they keep the elders, he didn’t remember me, he didn’t speak much.

And I, I interviewed many elders in Attawapiskat, some, one of them is not truly an elder, his name is Emile Nakogee but he’s spiritual person, he’s a Christian person, he doesn’t speak those things. And I spoke to the, what’s his name Atooket - Edwards, I think, Edwards and who have lived out in the Lake River area. I spoke to them and tried to induce them to talk to shamanistic things in the past but there were too many people around, they did not want to speak that much. And then I think there were about ten elders that I spoke to in Attawapiskat, but it was not necessary for a shaman, shaman stories it was necessary to generalize the history of our people and also to tell me their life story and things, but mostly to ask them the conservation practice about their elders and teachings.

So I have talked to many elders and always throw in my extra question about shamanism. It generally speak the same way, they usually tell me the same basic stories, same as the old ones. Some of this just confirm what I know, and, and then for many years I have interviewed elders that I know, at least five of them. There’s a Luke Spence that I talked to, Maria Spence, and he’s, he’s not that old. And then there is Abraham Metat and then there is, oh long time ago I used to visit other people like Simeon Scott, and then there Simeon Metat, and then there was, there are, they are now people who were, were just middle aged people when I was in school long time ago 1945 when I returned they were just being married, some of them, and now that are over seventy years old. These I have interviewed like Peter Sackannee, and his brother Fredrick Sackannee,
no, what’s his name, Sackanee in Moosonee. And then there is an elder in Moosonee who is David Ruben, and then there is many elders that I have talked, I cannot name them all here, and most of these elders that I talked I did not interview them I just listen to them tells me the story about the past. I remember most of the thing, it is always confirmation what my, my own elders have told me. So that’s why I am so, I am so certain what I am talking about is what it was.

And now I travel across country. I traveled first to, to Churchill, Manitoba, there I met mostly Metis people, elders, you know half whites where my wife originally came from. There are about six elders that I know there. One of them is Jimmy Spence, Alex Spence, David Spence, brother, and then there is Alec Chapman, and there is David Niipin who was not very old. And then other elders, what’s his name, Alfred Hill and his wife Amy, and these were the elders that were very nice to talk to, and then in Gillam I talked to the person by the name of Peter Anderson, or Peter Anderson yes, and there’s another guy by the name, I forgot now. There were at least three elders in Gillam that I have spoken to and interviewed sort of for my own purpose. And then right across country I have met many of the elders that came from different part of the, western provinces and right up to the Yukon. In the Yukon I met three elders that are carried their own culture, mostly three ladies- I’m sorry this tape is coming to an end.

Hello, hello [Laughing] this is Louis Bird from Peawanuck, Ontario, Peawanuck is a new community. Peawanuck is a, is a new community which has been establish 1986, after the disastrous flood in Winisk which damaged the, the old settlement of Hudson Bay Company and missionaries, which eventually became a small village after.

Now, my purpose for this recording is, is to try to, to record our culture history, the Omushkego cultural history. Let’s say I am attempting to tell what is our cultural was, before the European contact, and then what became after that. So there is, there is a division. The division is for that, we can separate the culture among the First Nation which we call today Omushkego who lives on the West coast of James Bay and South West coast of Hudson Bay. The distance between roughly four, four hundred fifty miles, if you say from the tip of Southern James Bay, and into, to the, to the North West, all Hays River on Manitoba. So that’s as far as Omushkego extended along the coast. So these are the, these are the people I am going to talk about, their culture before the
European contact, maybe years before that. That is a time when the, when today’s legends that we still have, we call them legends, stories that we tell and some characters, are name after, name of these stories, these legends. It’s actually the oral history our Omushkego people and from there you could trace the activities of the past which now, which now people have named nameless, because its too long ago and have an assigned a name to say this legend is called Giant Skunk, or this legend is called Diving Duck, or to say this one is Wiisaaakechaahk, and this one is Chakaapesh, and this other one is Wemishoosh. They are the main five ones that are very, very, very famous. And they are the ones that play a big part in our oral history. The history of humans, if we can consider the Omushkego humans.

So that’s the story about them, the past, what they wear, what they think, why did they do things they do, and what they believe, and how they come to believe the spiritual world and that they believed that the life exist after bodies die all that stuff. And then these stories play a big part in our culture because as you young person when you are, from the day that you understand language usually in my time, when I was young, I could speak to my mother when I was two years old, but I may not remember everything what happened when I was two years old. After two years old somewhere around three then I begin to remember some things, very exciting things only, and when I am five years old then I begin to remember most of the things that happened. So it was somewhere around when I was two years old I hear the legends, people listened to it and laugh and everything. I don’t quite understand, but when I am five years old I begin to listen them, and I begin to enjoy them. So it is the purpose for these legends, is to inform the youngster, what his life is all about. So it helps him, helps him or her to, to go on living and almost eager to try out what he has heard in the legends. And there is a practical teachings is as soon as a youngster is five years old the girl begin to practice what mom’s does, and then the little boy begin to imitate the father, what ever he does.

So this is the training, it start very early, and then to touch to the things about the spiritual part. It is sometimes started around when the kid is five year old, and as soon as he can able to, to recall his dreams so he begin. That the mind existed even when you sleep and the mind does, does activate itself, it doesn’t rest. And that begins to be part of your mind. And that’s where they believe that our, our ancestors they believe the mind is
where is where the spiritual connection exist, it is in your mind that the spirit world contact you, whatever the kind of spirit that will be. So its expand the knowledge that way, and it, and it usually practiced that the youngsters would, would be induced to dream, or make condition himself to dream by assistance or by the advice of his grandfather or uncle or some other close relative. Usually it’s it is not necessary the father and the mother to be a guide to such youngster, and for this reason the young person is actually at five years old beginning to study many parts of his life that he’s going to live on, so that’s the teaching.

So any way our history is like that, and there are other stories, that helps the youngster to, to prepare himself to experience the life in the future. The stories, that are also include in the legend part, they are names. There is one that is called Anwe. Anwe is a character, who is an expert cannibal exterminator. He’s an expert, you know he kills the cannibals, you know when there are too many. He’s a hired person, so there’s a long story about that, and he’s very exciting.

And then there is also stories about the characters that, some stories that start of with quotation. You could start off by saying: “And so he said,” and then some humor, and then the story opens up. These are another kind of stories. These are not legends, they are usually happens within, within us that the person dies or after second generation, but his name is not mention, only they say: “Once upon a man,” or he may have a name, so he, we can say his name is, his name and then quote him. Or maybe at times you could, you could mention his name and you can quote him by saying something, and then the story will go from there. But the story usually, an incident or a tragic event or it could be, a very humorous, which makes you laugh right away, and then makes you wonder what happened? Why, why did it happen? And the person that knows the story can start off from there, and then he tells you the story and when finish a story you understand why. It’s a lesson about the life, usually is. So it teaches you, this kind of situation that you may have to be careful. So that is the purpose of that kind of story.

Now that’s my introduction to my, to my recording of history, because there is no specific point to start off. Now before I go on, I want to give space, or opportunity, if I
can recall some people who have, which I have listened and of those who have taught me our history. The first that I can remember is my parents, my own parents. My father, not much about my father, and then my mother. My mother’s name was Scholastic Pennishish which means birds in the last name, but the bird, it’s not a big bird, it’s a small birds you know like song birds, maybe chickadee type of birds and all those summer birds. Shish means small Pennishish if you want to say the birds are migrated and all that larger ones, usually the word is Pinesiwiwak means many, Pinesiwiw is the large one. So Pennishish it’s a small one. So it doesn’t specify what kind, it’s just that, Pennishish. So that is our name, family name, which came from my grandfather and his father. I think there is, his father was the first to be called Pennishish or it could have been his grandfather’s father, I don’t know that for sure.

So any way they were the first people that I hear is my mother, my father and then my grandmother, my father’s mother. I heard her tells us the legend many times, when I was young, and then my own grandfather did not, I don’t remember him telling the legend because he died when I was only about twelve years old. So I did not, I didn’t get to know him as to speak to him or to speak to me, but I did listen to him speak amongst the other elders. He was considered one of the wise person maybe, because he was older and he was a very active person. He was considered an important person amongst many, and he usually chosen to, to take the lead on social activity. So he manage, I mean he has had many stories about our history. And my grandmother was the one that actually tell us the detail of many things, when I was young boy.

Now we my mother and my grandmother, and then there is another person that we used to associate with very closely was my grandmother’s brother, her brother, older brother. His name was David Sutherland, I remember him somewhere around in 1939. Somewhere around there I remember him first time, but I didn’t get to know him until about 1940 when they used to live, when they used to camp close by our, our home. And I used to visit their home and sit amongst the sons children and he would tell the story and many times I have listened to him tell the stories of the five legends that we have. And he’s a very, very good story teller, very exciting, he can actually make you live in the story, that’s how good he was. That’s another person.
And then there are other person I have listened to, women. They were women, they were friends of my mother’s. One old lady that I remember her name is Anna, Anna Nakogee, I guess she married and her husband was Nakogee. She was fascinating woman, she was just like a man, she was no different than a man activities use, but she was a female, and she has a daughter and her daughter married to David Sutherland. So that’s how I get to know those people. So in summer time when my mother used to set net out into the Bay, Anna Nakogee used to come with us and in the evening she would tell us a story. Not legends all the time, but the actual, her life experience. It was just as fascinating when she tell us her life history, life story.

And then, and then we have another old lady that we, my mother used to fish with out in the Bay, and we used to spend time, we used to spend a nights’ sometimes a week out there. My mother fishing in the, in the, at the Bay, and we used to stay with this old lady, and her name was Jane Sutherland, her husband was Joseph Sutherland. Joseph, Joseph is the brother of David Sutherland, and Joseph is also a brother of my grandmother, Maggie. So these are the, these are the people who tell us the stories or tell us the legends you know in the evening as we settled to sleep. And each person has his own style of telling a story and each has an, there is no rule how to tell a story, especially the legend. It is very flexible, anyone can tell the legend in the way he or she feels, excuse me. I am sorry I am constantly being interrupted trying to record, sometimes by telephone and sometimes by a person coming in. So it is very, its very disturbing, my line of thoughts are sometimes are wiped out. In order to try to continue I will just name other people I know of as a young person who have told us a legends and some life stories, their own life experience.

Now, let me try to recall other person that I have listened to as a young person. There is, there was another lady that I know, who was also related to my mother’s side, her name is Fanny, Fanny Augustine, at the time, but her first husband name I don’t remember, but her second husband was Charlie Augustine. Unfortunately later on in the years, Mr. Augustine changed their name to Fireman. So it’s a, its very sad but this particular lady is Fanny Fireman, should be known today, but she past away about ten years ago, ten or fifteen years ago. She used to stay with us, same way as the other old ladies. She used to spend a night with us, sometimes up the river from the mouth of the
river of Winisk, up the river sometimes for one week, maybe two nights. Sometimes we would go with her out into the bay to do the fishing or sometimes during the month of August, the big berries or any other way in any way at all from, from the point of Winisk, and she used to tell us the stories, life stories. The kind of stories that I called recent history, recent stories, the stories that take place after the European contact, and also she used to tell us the stories about before, before the European contact. The way, the way the people used to have conflict with other tribes, not, she never mentioned about why, she only explain to us that sometimes tribes will come from far distance on their expedition and along the way sometimes they pick up a tribal person, maybe a man sometimes maybe a man to guide them, sometimes a woman, to fix their moccasins and things like that, and sometimes a young woman for their sexual release.

So these things happen, but most of the elders that I know of, they never quite understand how many tribes were involved. In the legend time, for example, we hear about Wiisaakechaahk passing through the land, and that is, is sign are, are there now, there are signs. Which signs that could not be made by one human, except if the person is extraordinary super man, but they say that is Wiisaakechaahk. So there are at least two, two historical landmarks that it was Wiisaakechaahk who did it, but no human, no one person can move, can do these things. So that’s how this Wiisaakechaahk played the part of our history.

So it’s the same thing with these a tribal expeditioners who came for their own purpose which we never quite understand. So this, these are the things that Fanny Fireman used to talk, tell us about, she specializes on trying to understand different tribes and what they were doing, and never quite understand why is this is justified. To these people, Omushkego people, they always consider it being raped, raided, raped, killed, slaughtered or massacred you can name them, you can use any of these. So this lady, Fanny Fireman was very, very interesting she tells us a story.

I like to go back to the other old lady that I was talking about prior to this, her name was Anna Nakogee. This is a lady who was, who was fascinating to listen, because she always tells us the horror stories. Most of the stories are recent histories are horror, they are very bad and very bad incidents. That’s why its’ a well remembered. So anyway this Anna Nakogee used to tell us about different kind of, different kind of wiihtiko
because wiihtiko is a general name. It’s generalizing these characters that are very, that
are very terribly explain how they were and how it was.

So Mrs. Anna Nakogee used to tell us her own life experience, and one time when
she was traveling with her own children, with her own daughter that she was being
bothered by some kind of wiihtiko and never actually being hurt, but in her opinion
perhaps by the, because she was so afraid and scared perhaps she has hallucination, but
she describe such person as so big, bigger, bigger than a tree, taller and very ugly looking
and has a very unarranged hair. [Laughing.] I guess wiihtiko didn’t have no comb, and
that’s the only thing she could remember is the head, she says: “So huge with the hair,
hairs being all, all not arrange.” She says: “Pishwestigwaniw.” Its description that you
can talk about a color people. Sometimes she called her people who have very, very, very
tangled up kind of a hair, and these, that’s the kind of thing she was describing. Maybe it
was colored wiihtiko. [Laughing.] So anyway we, she was very interesting. She used to
tell us these things, and she was the one that tells us about different kind of wiihtiko. So
that’s her story, the kind of stories she tells us. But many, all of them, all of those people
have an expert telling us the legends that I, we know, five of them, but there are fives that
I talk about but there are more than five.

There’s one that is called Anwe, that’s categorized in a horror story, but its still a
legend, and then there is another extra ones that are kind of loose. Some people blend it
with the other five legends and this, but in itself they are separate, and then there are short
ones, that supposed to have happened, not very long ago. It’s supposed to have happened,
under five hundred years ago, because as we know it the white men came to stay in the
bay, in the bay area around 1600, 1610 perhaps the first time to, white man to spend
winter in the bay area. That is southwest close to Hudson Bay, specifically Churchill,
Manitoba. And it was after that years that another group came in and perhaps spent the
winter some other place in one of those rivers that flow into the Hudson and James Bay.
So after, after the Europoean contact there are many stories, that, that involve with many
things, and these are short stories, they’re very short. Usually they started off with
quotation.

Now, let me get back to the elders that have, that I have listened to. I have listened
to an old lady also her name is Jane Patrick. She’s the wife of Xavier Patrick. Xavier
Patrick who is, who has been one of the negotiator of our treaty in 1930. He was the youngest man, and he was the first person to be elected, or selected chief for the Winisk River area band. Take notice I have said Winisk River area band because in those days there was no Indian village. There was no village of the, of the Native people in Winisk River. There was the Hudson Bay, outpost activity at the mouth of the Winisk River. There was nothing there before 1900, and then it was only 1900 that the missionaries, the Roman Catholic missionaries who established the church at the mouth of the Winisk. The church stays but no priest. The Hudson Bay merchandise box stayed, but no, no manager no nothing. It was only after 1900 that the manager finally came in to stay few, a few months at a time. Before that, the Hudson Bay Company have traded in Winisk and have used the Winisk River to get supplies for the main depot at York Factory. People used into the mouth of the river to shot geese, to catch fish, make pemmican, I mean niiwhiganak. Niiwhiganak is a powdered and powdered meat, what ever it is. And its stored into the keg a wooden keg, and shipped to York Factory or Fort Severn if it can be if its too late. So it’s shipped by those York boots where the Native people used to sail on them, without compass. [laughing.]

So anyway that’s a story a very quick story, and there are many stories like that. So we have all these people to tell us a story, and I have listened to this Jane Patrick tells us about the inland life. Inland and up the river bush life. Where she grow and she told us all those also to all kinds of wiichtiko stories and also those five legends that sometimes she pick up a part of it. One series of it and then, to teach us something, or to have, to entertain us, and Xavier Patrick, her husband Xavier Patrick. I, I went to stay up the river with them in 1952 I think. I’m not too sure if it’s, yeah ’52, ’51 yeah ’51. We left the village of Winisk, I mean the, the mouth of the Winisk River. We left in the month September. I think it was September, and it took us about ten days to reach to his destination where he usually spend the winter. That is hunting ground. The hunting ground that he stays was exactly where they pick the Indian reserve for the Winisk area band. In 1951 there was still practicing of spending the whole family in the winter, up to 1953, and that was the end of it, because of the construction camp.

Anyway to get back to this Xavier Patrick, he is the one that teach me how to trap beaver. Trapping beaver is, is a unique style. It’s different than anything else it’s different
way to trap the animal, because the beaver live in the water and the beaver have a house and beaver have dens around the beaver house or around the area. And it’s not easy to catch, and you have to be an expert how to read water, water ways under, under the ice in order for you to find where to set your trap. There are tools, hand made tools that I use and these are necessary, and to be a beaver trapper, to be an expert, you are an expert, you know exactly what to do, and not everybody has that expertise. It’s a person that grow up in that area and hunt that type animal who will become an expert. There are, there are hunters who generally know how, but they are not truly an expert. For example my father was not, because he never actually hunted very much about the beaver. He preferred to hunt a smaller animal like otter and mink and those things and also provide us food by hunting the large game animal like caribous, and that’s more fish.

So these people who hunted beavers, that’s their food, that’s their supply of food and they know how to hunt and nothing is wasted when kill a beaver. It’s one of delicious meal they have, and the hide is the only one that brings the other items through trading. So they really valued the beaver. So this man Xavier Patrick, the first chief in Winisk, he is the one who have the one who have taught me about how to trap beaver, and also he is the one who have told me many stories, life experience that he did when he was young man. That he traveled from Winisk to Fort Severn to York Factory to go to work there in summer, and to come back late in the, late in the, in the fall before September so that he can go on to his trap line again. And it was a fascinating story. He used to say he left about June, the end of June, and do not return about, at the end of August, and then, by then his wife was ready to leave, or other, other family group to go up the river again to go spend the winter out there for nine months.

This was the story that he used to tell us, sometimes he told us a story in one of the trips that he made towards the York Factory and where he met other, other people. People from, from all those, the headwaters of the rivers of the Hayes River and also Nelson River. He used to talk about a different men from far distance to the west which he calls them Mashkotewininiiwak, that means the prairie people. They didn’t call them Omushkego, because the land is not Omushkego. So they used to call them Mashkotewininiiwak. And also Ojibwa tribes like Blackfoot, they called themselves Mashkotewininiiwak. So it’s the, what we call today Prairie Crees. They did not call
Crees, they were called Mashkotewininiiwak. Mashkote means prairie or a desert land. So anyway it sounds like as if there is a farm but it which describes actually there’s nothing grows there they say. So anyway he talks about these people, and the talks about the inland people, people who come to York Factory by way of Fort Severn and way at the lake, at the headwaters of those rivers like Fort Severn, and, and these they, what we call today Oji-Crees, they’re mixed, the Omushkego and Ojibwa. It’s a wrong thing to say Oji-Crees. It should be Ojibwa-Omushkegos, Omushkegos, a shorter Omushkego [laughing.] Anyway [laughing] Oji, Oji means shrink, Ojipaniiw, but Ojibwa is a word to, the original Ojibwa people they speak different than, than Oji-Cree people and then the Ojibwa-Cree, Ojibwa speaking people, they have other language which is a bit different, and are known as Blackfoot. They live around Saskatchewan and Manitoba border in the State. They were the ones that never got along with the Prairie people.

Now, we are off track I was talking about this Xavier Patrick that he explained these things to us a little bit at a time, while we were spent the night out together in, in the trap line, away from the main camp, because we have our main camp in where the reserve land right now is. They call it Ashweig junction, that’s where the main camp is located, around that area, not necessarily together with five families, no maybe one, two at the same time. And our trap line was towards West, following the Ashweig River and towards North-West from there, there is a lake there which is called Willow Lake, Moshikopaw. So way out to the West there is a hill and that, we go past the hill, and then towards to the North and around that lake. So that was our main hunting area at that time, trapping beaver.

So I travelled there with this old man, and every night as he has relaxed a little bit and then he would tell a little bit of a story, different kind of stories. He was not much of a legend, legend teller. He, he quotes them but not very, he doesn’t, never finish them, and he was the man who believe in shamanism. He believes in this tradition or belief, but he did not practice it. He practiced the Christianity rather than using that one, but he does believe the other one. He believes very, very strongly, but he, he choose to use the Christianity in his home. He prays and he sings and all that, but sometimes there are times when he uses this, the original one. That is when he wants to know where is the best place to go to look for the beaver and he used to sit at night, in the middle of the
night. So I ask one time: “You know, why do you sit in the middle of the night?” I shouldn’t have done that but I was young man. He knows I was young so he says: “Well,” he says: “I was just looking where is the best, where we could find the beaver houses most in the one day.” “Looking!” I said. Yes, that’s how those shaman did, they usually just trance and sit in trance and usually tobacco if they, if they would and then their mind leave them and they go out and ask if they travel around places and see where the beaver houses are, and this was the act, the idea what he was doing. Whether he was doing it or not I don’t know, maybe he just enjoyed smoking at night.

So I have seen one person who do that, and he explained this to me. He explained some of the time when he was in the mood, I ask him, one time, first we were, we were three of us, two his son-in-law was Daniel Collin and Daniel, I used to ask Daniel: “Why this old man do that?” And Daniel says: “No, no, you shouldn’t mention, you shouldn’t say that.” So he says: “When he’s in the mood,” he says, “ask him, ask him nicely.” So I did that. Some night he’s very good mood, the old guy, and well fed and everything, he would lay down and enjoy smoke, and that’s when I was to ask him. And I said: “How does the people scan the area while they sit as you call looking around?” So he laugh for a while, he actually laugh and he says: “Well,” he says, “long time ago” he says, “our forefathers used to do that.” Says: “They actually sit at night and their mind is traveling way ahead or around them as if to look around.” So he says: “From up there, up the air and then they see, they follow the river and they see the beaver house and here and also sometimes they see animal tracks by doing that and then the next day they know exactly where to go,” so he says. “That’s what I’m talking about,” he says. “Do you actually do that,” I said. “Well,” he laughs again, it wasn’t, it wasn’t the right thing to do, I should not ask him that. Anyway he never told me whether he was really actually doing it, but at least, he make me believe he was doing. So this is the kind of person who tells me the story, tells me the, those kind of stories. Gave me the hint about them, and that’s another old man I have encountered. He’s he was important man, he was a leader. Whether he was a leader because he wanted to be served I don’t know.

And then there is, and there is another person that I know as a, as a distinct person, I mean different kind different, different way of hunting. And this was Moses Kostachin, he was not a very old man. He was the same age as my father, but lives
different places before he came to Winisk. He came from Attawapiskat area like at James Bay west, west of Hudson Bay, west coast of James Bay I said. You know there is
different people live in the west coast of James Bay, they hunt differently and they experience life and survival skills differently. And those who live in south west coast of Hudson Bay they also have a different geological makeup in their, in their life. So it is important that you talk to the different location, different, a different elder who has raised and experienced life in a different part of land. So between one hundred and one hundred miles distance it was a great difference. So this Kostachin used to, used to tell something in half, half joking and half being comical person, but very, very interesting. He was open to speak by doing that. He, I guess, and let me get back to this person Xavier Patrick.

Xavier Patrick is a very careful to talk about the tradition or shamanisms, and how its, how it is to be one. He was very careful not to, degrade it or make fun of it. It was not, it was not supposed to be done that way. So Moses Kostachin has this comical action what we say, it’s just like comedian, and he uses the comics to hide, to avoid, what do you call that, to avoid degrading the past believes and practices of the elders that he know of. I guess that’s the best way I could describe, because of he respects what the elders have done a long time ago, they, it was not supposed to be, it was not, it was a secret. It’s just like the very holy secret, and it was not talked about openly. So in order to do that he uses jokes and comical way of telling that and it was very interesting it was very suiting to be able to listen to someone using comic to being, to be a comedian to tell you something and that was his way of telling something. So he was very interesting, he tells many things that way, and its very easy for us and its interesting for us, but there is that again you cannot force him to be serious. This is the way he tells you things and he warns you of many things. There are many in the, in the old shamanistic, shamanism development that’s not supposed to be fooled around with, and that was so interesting. Exactly the same way my parents have warned us and the way my grandmother have warned me and us, boys that we should not take so interest on that, that sort of thing, because the Christianity is much, much suiter, much, what shall we say?

Christianity is supposed to be love and kindness and forgiveness, but the shamanism long time ago was the same story in the bible what it’s supposed to be in Moses time, an eye for an eye. That’s exactly the shamanism was. If a shaman being
insulted or, or being attacked, whatever he is hurt, he gives back to the other person. So that’s an eye for an eye sort of situation. So it was not too good. So the Christianity came in which says no, you do not fight your enemy, you pray for him. The man who hates you or takes you, pray for him. Well it’s totally different. So the shamanistic doesn’t fit in that, because shamanism is a defense a self-defense, self-protection for your family and yourself, because you live in the wilderness where everybody has to live at the best of his ability where the terms used the survival of the fittest. It is truly that’s exactly what it is apply. But shamanism is, I am sorry, this tape is over lets begin the other side, Thank you.