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This is Louis Bird from Peawanok. This is number three tape, which I want to tell a story in... in English. Today is February 27, 1997. I guess we can call this Oral History of the Omushkego people of the Winisk region, of the Winisk area.

Maybe we should say the Winisk River First Nation if you want to use the word. We have... I have said this before, that trying to tell the story, which I like to have it as titled as a Oral History or maybe... the Native sung story.

The way the Omushkego people tell their own story. Not the way the other people tell the story. The way the native people felt, experienced, lived, had lived, had experienced their history. Not the way people hear it from outside. No assumption. No make up story. But the real... the real stuff. That is the most important thing. When we tell the story in our life, we do not make up the stories. We do not make up the stories to brag about or to boast, or to make up, to add a few things to dramatize or even to minimize some of the stuff that are offal. We tell story exactly how they are and we do not tell the stories to judge person, but we tell the story to teach the coming generation. So these stories are like that. They are very old experience of native people. The oral history is our legends. That is what the legend is all about. The legend is a history of people.

One particular people who have experienced life in the certain geographical location. And because they did not write the language, they only relate the history through the stories, which eventually become a legends. But the legends are... as I said before; they are useful to teach the young person about the life, what is right and what is wrong and how to live. And how to survive mostly. And what is right and what is not right. And also it carries the moral teachings of these stories. So the legends were very important before the European came. And all the legends that existed, they all happened before the European came, all of them. So they teach. The legends are the beginning of the... of the verbal instructions how we say. It just like today. We putting children into the classrooms, fifteen minutes time, we tell them where to open the page of the book for the literature, English literature. The teachers tell them to read the pages to the next chapter, or one chapter for them to learn to read and also to understand a few stories. So our people a long time ago, because they did not write their language.

The legend was the best way. And it was always used in the late evening. The only time that the family could actually live together close by together and comfort each other, and teach each other. It's a time for the children to listen to their religions. Besides to be introduced the facts of life and anything they may encounter in the days to come. So that is why the legends were used, they were very old stories. They had no names except the given name of the character. There are other stories that were, happen under five hundred years from the time they were told. That were what... I classified them as oral history or maybe the recent stories. Recently under five hundred years at that time when they exist. For me the reason stories would be under five hundred years from the date 1997. So this timetable is not... it's not suitable for the European's style. But anyway, that is the way the... that is the way the First Nation of the Omushkego have experienced life.

So they use the legends to introduce the life to their children to introduce the life to their children, to their grandchildren. And it always the Elders that have ways to tell the stories. They have skills to tell stories. They have ways to deliver the stories that really impact on the young people and also for the adults. There were some strange hidden meaning that children do not understand; even amongst the adult they did not understand the strange meaning, the hidden

meaning in the legend. Which they never have yet experienced or never been exposed to. There are many examples. I will say here, because I say before, nothing is hidden. Nothing has ever been passed... nothing has ever been passed... it means to pass away, not to... not to try to hide. Nothing lost. In the legend there is lots of stories, even oral histories. There are lots of incidents that are immoral. And the immoral stories I use to apply or to enforce the moral situation. For example, one example, the native people believe, had always believed many things, which are considered immoral. These are the good things in life. This is the way the life must go, but there were other experiences that are told in the story which were not so beneficial. Which were not so pleasant in the life of the person who have experienced or have experienced or have created the story. Not the one who tell the story, but the one who created to involve in the story. His involvement in the story teaches the next generation to avoid such same situation. So he can live better.

So all of these five characters that we have in our legends, they play a very important part, a very very important part to introduce the educational in the First Nation. Where the First Nation culture is migratory life. It's just like continuation of pilgrimage, pilgrimage, shall I say a journey. Journey is an easy word for me. It's just like a person who travels from distance has a destiny to cover between here and there. And the things that he encounters and that he must go pass. He must avoid any hardship and try to live morally in doing so.

The native peoples believe there is a world after dead. Not all of them but most of them understand there was. There is a spirit world not only this one we have. Somehow they were given that understanding. So the teaching were very similar to the European style of Christianity or any other nationalities like India, Hindus, Buddhism, they all similar. And now the examples that I was going to tell was, people who miss use in the legend... we have in the legend some of them or purposely try out the rules... the rules that say don't do this. And these people always being in the bush, they have tendency to think there is nobody here. Nobody see me, I can do this. Even though they know that those that have a privilege of being informal, well informed during their young days. And those that who did not have an opportunity to have all the information from the legend and then interpretation of the Legends. And those people who did not have the opportunity to have Elders beside them, grandparents, grandmothers, and the parents to have provided these stories which would guide them through a lifetime. Is what shows us in the legend characters. Like this person Wiisaakechaahk. Wiisaakechaahk did something that in not supposed to be done.

Wiisaakechaahk sometimes plays like a powerful person. He has all he making of the powerful man, but he's also a human. And has the weaknesses. He has foolishness. He portray foolishness in times and he shows us the weakness of human, a man especially. It shows us of him, he plays the part of dumb person. A person who never been told about any or really didn't have much knowledge. Between man and woman, between different sex. This is a simple one that I want to tell.

Once upon a time there was Wiisaakechaahk who travels the distance between here and there. As he travels, this was in summer, and the weather was fine. And at that time at the same time there was a woman who was picking berries on the ridges of the Hudson Bay or maybe James Bay. On the ridges she was picking berries, whether they was glow berries, or raspberries or any other berries. She was stay by herself and she was told always look out for the bear and also strange men. And she should always be ready to hide in order to save herself. Let us tell a story about a woman side first.

A woman was picking berries this afternoon and all of a sudden she forgot. She forgot. She was concentrating on picking berries. There was so many berries. She forgot to lift her head every once in a while. She was too busy. She was just on her knee on the ground picking berries, then all of a sudden she remember that she should look. She lift her head, turn around and scan the area. In one place where she was not expected to see anything, here was a man of just appear on top of the bushes, the willows, just the head. I don't why she knows right away, but this is Wiisaakechaahk. She knows how unpredictable Wiisaakechaahk can be. He could be good at one time and he could be evil at one time. Never know what's going to happen, what he's going to do. For her... for her safety sake she just couldn't run away, she just simply freeze and just lay down on the ground the way she is and put the pail or container away from her. She threw the

pail or whatever it was, bag, away from her. Not to show what she was doing. That's what she... that's the fastest she can think. That's the only thing she can think about. And then she pretend to be dead. By this time Wiisaakechaahk has already covered a few more distance and noticed the human form laying on the ground. She had seen the sign of human, but she couldn't find the camp. He was still looking for it. But not actually expecting to find any camp or any human. He was just traveling through and just came upon this person just lay on the ground, looks as dead to him. It's not usually that you find a person lay on the ground when you travel in places. The first thing that was... anybody's mind is that this person can't be alive when they lay on in the middle of nowhere. They must have been killed or died. This is her assumption right away. And so he walks up to this person and it was a lady. So he looked at her and said: "What happened to her? What killed her? What happened?" Wanted to know and then to show her nothing the way people, the way that people do to examine a dead person or animal. They always examine its feet, it's body, it's eyes, it's mouth and anything. This was what he was doing. He was looking for sometime, what has killed this person, this lady, a beautiful lady at that. And just recently, it still warm. Because the lady was not breathing but it still warm. So he examined it but there was no wound, no place. So he turned over this here and there. Looked everywhere. Of course the woman has the small dress. So finally he turn her up in her back. Lay her on her back and left the skirt... left the skirt up. And then he says: "Woh, that's where she got hurt!" That's her sex organ. So he says it's really a deep cut. No wonder she just died. I don't know what convinced him to be that way. Maybe it was the wrong time of the month. But he was so sure that the woman has been wounded in between. And last night. So what he did was you know... it didn't tell us a story of what he did. The story-ended right there. So that's the end of that story. It's a small part and that's what the Wiisaakechaahk played the role.

The interpretation of the story is that Wiisaakechaahk is playing this story how stupid you can get if you don't have Elders, if you don't have parents who teach you about difference between human body, between men and women. So you have to be very stupid not to know these things. So he must have been... he played the role of an unfortunate person who was not well informed. So here is the example the way the legends does worked. So it gives you that... gives you that feeling, that excitement and it left you there hanging and you say, "But why, why does story end?" And the storyteller, that is an old person, tell you this is why this guys so stupid and he doesn't know what's going on. So Wiisaakechaahk was very stupid man at that time. Another time he's very mighty, powerful man, and very tricky. So that's the end of that one small example of a story.

What I am doing here is I'm trying to emphasize the use and application of the legends. Because many people, today, especially today the young people, the young First Nation have forgotten the use and application of our legends, because the life is changing. We do not live anymore the old ways. We are not migrating people. We don't live in the wilderness. We don't have life... experience in the wilderness the way our forefathers lived in the early, shall we say nineteenth century or twentieth century. I don't understand if it between century between... anyway this was experienced still in nineteen hundred. The year of nineteen hundred people still experienced their own migrating life in Winisk river system and all around the James Bay. Just recently, only ninety-seven years ago. Sixty years ago or shall I say fifty... fifty-eight, fifty-seven years ago to be exact, I remember as a five year old boy, we traveled three hundred or four hundred, perhaps five hundred miles cross country. But today if you fly this area it would be about three hundred and eighty miles distance. But we traveled this area, our rivers, our small creeks in zigzag motion. Perhaps it might have been five hundred miles. But that was our old life. That was part of the old style of living. The wilderness is our home. The wilderness river system is our food supply and anything that we find, the birds, the animals; especially fish that is our food. We pick up as we travel. We don't carry much.

I lived through this life and it that time that I used to hear the legends. I was very young, a young five year old. I was two years old when I understand our language, the Omushkego language. I was only five year old and I already understood it. I did not speak it that well. I could say a few word I know.

And now that is a little bit of explaining what is the legends I use, and why they were there and how did they come about? There are many other life stories, life experience by people

between... between after the European came. These stories which took place recently, they have... they are not yet become a legend. They are there. One example again. Not long ago, maybe perhaps four generations or three generation ago, maybe just sixty-five years each, there was a man who had ten wives. And they call him Bruised Knee. Bruce Knee that was his name. That is when you get a green, or blue... a blue mark on your knees. Like having a black eye. So that's a Bruised Knee. Well he had a name because he had ten wives. He did not actually sleep with ten wives at one time, but he had at least... he had ten wives on his care at one time in his life. It may not have been ten at once. But our, our stories are always comical in its delivery system to make it worthwhile listening. Not to be so serious all the time. So the story says, this Mr. So and so, ten wives had an ability to service his wife, or all ten of them in one night. And that's why he's got his wounded knee. So anyway... so that's another story about... which expanded to many interpretations. It tells us why the man can have so many... so many women. How does he do it? So some storytellers tell us... tell us that the man was an expert hunter. He was a very well off man and able to share all his success with people more unfortunate. Maybe perhaps he had married perhaps a woman who had sisters and was under his care. Maybe they just make up a story to say he had ten women. But he did provide women, at least ten different women at a time... and one during his life. So they make up this story to say this is the way a man is when he's a great person.

But then again, that's a good side, that's a good side of a story. Jealous of the man. I am jealous of the man.

Anyway, and that's what people say when they say when they listen to that: "What did he have that I don't have?"

And ... and then some of the men say: "What did he do that I don't know?"

And some of the people will say: "He must have been fortunate man to be loved by so many women. And some other part tells a story about him that he was a lazy man. The only thing he was good at was providing sex to a ladies. And it was his wife who take care of him. I guess this part of a story was that people who are jealous of him, or didn't like what he was doing, maybe they make up a bad story.

And there are those that says that: "He had... he had fulfilled his dream, of his dream quest." Maybe he has that. But he was very successful man.

So he begin to be a well-known person. He's well known across the James Bays, Hudson Bay and the west coast of Hudson Bay, right down to all Cree speaking people. Perhaps part of the Oji- Cree speaking people. SO he began to be outstanding person mostly by making jokes. So that's another story that teaches about something. And all these are little, bits and pieces like this tells us something. It teaches people... teaches the young people what you have to be to... in order to be successful person. Sometime the reward in this world will be so plentiful. But there's another... there's a sad part of this story about this man with ten wives. They say on his deathbed he had a disease, he died of disease that was horribly to his body. That he said he died rotten, all of his flesh. That's a another bad story about the man. But the interpretation was that the people who translate this story into that category use to tell us having too much in free sex has its side effects. And has its punishment. Although having so much pleasure and having sex or easy sex. We have that today. We have it in this modern world. This is my saying, this is my opinion. We have the same experience today.

The Indian legend or story tells us. This is applicable to any nationality, this thing. Take for example the major society has established their life, their culture; they have established institution and many things. They have established laws, legal system which to protect also to protect in many ways. Sometimes over protect. For example there was a law against... there was a religion that forbid freedom of sex and then there's a... especially Catholic and Anglican and those things... Christianity have forbidden so much free sex. But the natural law, the human laws are made to overcome these. For the free sex come in after the last war. So out came the many broken marriages, divorces. Then the last ten, fifteen years came out... what did they call it... same sex... same sex experience. Man going after man. Woman going after woman. Lesbians.

So this is the... the law is going to protect those people. Our law was... there was a strive to try to save those people, not to be condemned. Because of the equality. Because the law says equality is there. Material law. So this gives the right for those people to exercise their curiosity or

shall we say their stupidity. Well they have a freedom. Freedom has been established on earth. So they... what happen... what happen after there is a lot of freedom, we have disease. Disease came after that. The disease came out which is called AIDS. Particularly stem from those actions, those activities. It may have happened... it made have had... AIDS could have exist long time ago, but somehow didn't spread wide open, nowhere in the open. So this is what is called the... should I say, that's what happen when you have so much freedom. And nature doesn't... doesn't tell us... but it shows us. So all these things, it's the same kind that we have learned from these stories; the legends.

They may sound funny, they may sound comical, they maybe delivered comically. They are very important. The people who created these stories were naturally given the wisdom to be able to put them that way. And the way they delivered them in orally, they are very easily remembered. They are not forgotten. They hadn't been forgotten for the last sixty years. But for the last twenty years they are rapidly are forgotten as our culture changes to that major society.

That is the reason I feel so urgent that we... our Omushkego people should... make an effort to try to record ever little story that we can find. Every little story or legend, or life experience by our people to be... to be written down. So in the future... it may be a one hundred years from now, when Omushkego people have succumbed by the major society and have forgotten their originality. Maybe they will find it in a book. And this is the most important. Never mind today about trying to make a story to sound... or even to try to sell the story. Never mind word, because it's not important. Because if we do that, if we worry too much about trying to sell a book, we will lost the greatest value there is, the truth. The true story from the people is the people themselves. The original people. The original First Nation and their culture to be expressed, to be told by their experience by their own people. That is the important thing.

Now that I have explained... another part of these...oral history, which I repeatedly say, which is coming to an end. It's very said. It's very sad to know that. The oral histories are very... are very vivid in the memory of people. And they are many stories that are truly negative. They are bad stories, bad experience in life. There are many bad experience before the European came and after the European came. It was after the European came that slowly, gradually our culture begin to change. Some things for the better, some things for the worst. Now we are in the middle of the transition. We are rapidly changing, slipping into the major society. And we forgot about our stories, about our culture. Except those who have written it down. Those who have seen it and able to write it down. Who do not actual experience the life, who didn't feel it mostly by the early Fur Traders, the missionaries, the early travelers, miners, perhaps some of them trappers who have experience with life in the wilderness with the Native people. Maybe they have partially true story about the native people.

And now I have been continue trying express the important about this story collection. I do have stories that I have collected, but it is in my language. I have considered they are the most original. But the English stories it's not... it doesn't carry the... the importance of my story, doesn't carry the emotion. I cannot bring the emotion in English story... in English language. But I could bring the emotion in my own language. For example, this morning, I phoned my friend who usually tell me the story. I ask him the the sad story that he recall, that he remembers when he was a young man. This guy's name is John George Gustafson. He will be over sixty-seven... or sixty. He has seen one tragic moment in his life, at least one anyway. And I'm sure he had built some of it too. He had seen in Winisk the last time when people froze to death because of starvation. So whenever he ask to tell me the story, he choked up. He cannot speak about it. He cannot describe the the scene, the way those people look when they were found dead. He could only compare to when you snare the rabbit in the winter and it stays there and you see its eyes wide frozen and stiff. Says this is the way these humans lies. Some in sitting positions, some in half laying position. Something... it was some interesting position. So he could not describe the scene before he became too emotional. So there was a living person who actually seen this tragic incident. And I have other part of the story what cause the thing.

That's my interest. My emphasis to that story is this. My question is, why did it happen? I have asked my grandmother. I didn't get much answer from her. Because my grandmother adore the White man. Literally adored the White man. So the other people told me... the other Elders

told me what happened. Why did these people froze to death? Why did they starve? So they said this was a time when the beaver... beaver was banned. It was banned to kill amongst the trappers. And because the beaver was banned, or stopped to kill, to hunt, by the government or by the Hudson Bay company. Because they were the power in this area at that time. So the people used to be in the up land, up the river where the beavers are. They're literally have to move, had to relocate themselves. Some of them tried to live by the bay because there was a fox was much more worth to catch then the beaver. And they could not hunt. They could not kill the beaver just the same for food. But they were so honest people, they were literally didn't kill any beaver which cause them to starve. Because the beaver is one the largest food value in animals, especially inland. So these families who use to live up the river, had to relocate them self into the coastal area hoping that they could survive there.

But without that experience in their life, that's what led them to go starved. Because they didn't have all the knowledge that requires and did not have all the knowledge about the condition of the bay or the coastal region. It caught them. And one of worst thing is I remember, being told by other person, at hard time the Hudson Bay Company had some food item in the store. They had flour, they had lard and they had oats and tea and other those basic items which could have supplied a person if they had. And this manager who was there at that time, did not want to give no credit to these people. They did not want to give them to buy something in... indebt them to their account. Because they didn't pay the last one... the last year. So that's the way... was doing his own business, trying to keep his store running. So he could not give out anything for free. And there was a chief. The chief who was suppose to speak for the people. The chief who was given a leadership and to protect, to speak for the people did not help those families. And this chief rather help the manager. The Hudson Bay Company manager who emphasized the reason why he didn't want to give anything to this trauma.

And he stood beside this Hudson Bay manager and saying, "I'm sorry you cannot have no food you come here. You cannot be given anymore in the credit your account. To indebt your account, so because you didn't pay last year." So the forefathers took off anyway with the little they get from other people. And they follow other people down to Sutton River where usually a family could survive by fishing.

Unfortunately, there were so many other people and almost fished out the area and there was no room for extra family to survive. And it was that time that this family decided to leave early in November or December. And it was unfortunade kind of whether at that time. It did not happen too often to have a warm weather during the month of November, the end of the November or December. So when they decided to come after having a few bails of minx, whatever he caught, this man, who was a leader. So he decided to sell his fur and get the food and then to relocate themselves.

It was this time that he came with this old family. Just nine miles away from the village of Winisk. That's where his family froze to death because of starvation. They really did not have nothing to eat. The man himself, the husband, had left them about fifteen miles east of the Winisk River telling them to wait for him there not to bother going across the muskeg, because it was really dangerous. So he... he went ahead, you know, with the full speed to go sell his fur and then go get them. A few pounds of food, whatever it is, maybe flour, sugar and tea, whatever it is to make them going. And it was while he was gone there that the storm hit. The blind... snow blind... I mean a white out they call it. A snowstorm that comes suddenly once in a while in the coastal area at that time. That's what hit them. They went against the leaders advise. They went across there and they don't know the area, they don't know the conditions. So they went straight across because it was nice day. They thought it was warm. And it was right in the middle before they got to the other side of the trees that the storm hit them. And the storm they talk about is really a strong gale. You could hear the wind, they say, a long time before it... before it get to you. And it was this story that John George had could remember.

The sound of the storm coming from the north. He calls it thus, a great waterfall rumbling over the edge. When did he ever hear that noise? Also, he says, it just like the sea water that crash into the shores in the fall. Continuous rumble. That's what we hear, he says. And he remembers exactly the time. He doesn't remember the date or anything but he remembers as a young boy. And it was that time in the afternoon. About three or something in the afternoon anyway. And the man, the head of the family, was already in Hudson Bay and on his way back to

meet them. I guess he spent a night there. Instead, I guess, because the storm hit. It was the next day that he went back. And John George was staying about five, four and half miles from the Winisk community, Winisk village. They were living there. And then they saw this man going by. And knew that there must be something wrong. And he was gone for some hours and he returned not finding them. And he report that... and then they went to the village to find some other people to do a search. It was still storming, a little bit. But they went out to look for them there and that in the middle of the open muskeg. There is a mark there. There is a big stone sticking out from the muskeg. It was right in nearby where these people died. Three people died. One Elder, one mother and one... women... middle, I don't know if it middle age, but one woman. He didn't die, but he froze, he survived.

[END OF SIDE A, 1 of 2]

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“LEGENDS & ORAL HISTORY”

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Let's continue the story, a sad story; it was one of those tragic incidents. My interest is that what cost this tragic incident. If I were to blame someone. If I were to seek justice I would blame Hudson Bay Company, and I would blame Chief, and also I would blame the missionaries who were there. That's their settlement and they had the opportunity to help.

I cannot blame the other people in Sutton River because they were so many. Because they just did not have much left for themselves either. The situation is to blame because of the effect of the Fur Trade. Because of the effect of killing off all the animal that has a value which cost the native people to seek other places for survival. One other thing is that these people were very honest. They wanted to follow all the rules that were brought into them. Otherwise they would not have to move away from their own original place. They would just remain hunting the beaver and just keep the skin and don't tell anyone. They could have survived, but they were so honest. They so believe in the White man's law and roles and statements. So they sacrificed their life. What is it? Who to blame? Or we don't have to blame.

But the only things that is important now, why that tragic incident have to happen when everybody was around? Can't anyone done something? So three people died out of it. Two froze to death right there. And the old man also froze part of it. Also died later. There were two girls that survived. I think three children were survived out of that group. And so there's a story, one the actual true story that happens recently. And that's only fifty-seven years ago. So now the story tells us how how fast the life changes in this area.

The Europeans may have been begin to be civilized three thousand years before Christ. Our people lived a few hundred years before Christ. They did... they did frequently experience starvation because of the condition of nature. Because of the condition of the world, changing weathers. Which sometimes cost the animals to diminished or disappeared. Or sometimes the fishing go bad because of the weather changes. Yes, there's... there's the force that controls the land which actually ruled the land, that it would not be overpopulated, and that will stay. Even people were measured by this population control was there. People know that. Our Elders understand that. And that is why they have the law that stems from the nature. They have the laws. They know the great power that invisible that controls things. But they did not describe it vividly. They did not have any written form, describe exactly what this is. Because they were always ruled by the weather. By the seasons. They did not stay one place. They adapt the land the way it is. They live by the land and they die by the land. And that is sad... it is sad to see that.

And today we, the First Nation Elders and parents, have no time for our children to listen to these stories. They are too busy to listen to other culture's develop education system. They don't even go out anymore. They have to stay inside to learn and they don't learn their culture. And that is the sad part. And that is why it's so important that the recording be made either by the voice, by the machine or by the hand written book, I mean papers. To write things down. Because our people will be just like the Mohawks. Some Mohawks cry because they don't speak the word of their language. I have seen the Mohawk or had choked up because he could not speak a word of his language.

We the Omushkego people in James Bay and Hudson Bay have the opportunity at this time. And I am sure... I am certain I will be the last person to speak very near perfection of the Omushkego language. And it is that language... from that language that story should have been written down first and that to be translated into English later. And it is now beginning to be aware

by amongst our people in James Bay and Hudson Bay; they now begin to recognize this, the danger of losing the language and also the stories, the culture. They are now begin to aware. There are some community members who are now begin to listen to the Elders and to give them the opportunity to write something down or even to record something down. I think it is happen now in Fort Albany in Ontario, west coast of James Bay. There are people there who are given certain amount money to sit in a desk, in a table to write down a few things they remember from their fathers and from their grandfathers.

Especially, the culture education. How do you teach the First Nation to survive on the land. What are they to learn? All this now they are trying to write it down in their language. And that information will have to be compiled in the printed form in their language and after that it will have to be translated into English, which is the common language now, official language there is in Canada. So we haven't got much time. Soon these people who do this will be gone. And we don't have other people who are interested to do that. If only one person also can travel again across those villages and find those people who are understand. Find the Elders who are willing to give all the information they can get and record it. We would save some of the culture, history and stories in the record our history... our culture history. To benefit the young people now who are now born and yet to be born.

I myself haven't doubt if I could last much longer. I experience sometimes very close calls. My physical being is not that well, but my mind still clears. And I want to use all that mind, my mind as long as I can. And that is why I want to record as much as I can.

Now I want to briefly describe a little bit about the importance of our education system which has existed before the European came and which was carried on a few hundred years after they arrived in the Hudson and James Bay area. I guess we are the most isolated community in the northern Ontario. And we are the last people to exercise our cultural activities. We still have that opportunity, but the modern society forcing its way into our lives. And the unfortunate thing also, our young generation are eager to join the major society and almost completely forgotten to retain their cultural originality.

It's a mistake I think, because I have seen other First Nation who have went through the same experience. I am trying to save that. I am trying to do an effort not to lose the opportunity, the time to save something that is they're which would not exist very long. I have said my condition is not that good. I could just expire any day. I feel it. I even sense it. And my wish is that as much and as long as I can I must keep going. I hope to record our Omushkego history in the written form in our own dialect, in our own experience. In our own emotional expression. Not because I reject the modern life. Not because I reject the modern society. Because all the people that came to stay in this land, all the nationalities that join this land have left their culture and many of them still retain the dignity of their culture, to have the pride of their culture. They valued their culture even though they have left it behind many many distance behind and perhaps never to return.

We the First Nation live on the land where our grandfathers have lived. We still have the information, the resources, the knowledge that we can use to provide the information to write our history, our cultural experience, our cultural education which has made us survive in this land for many years before the European came. Time is not important for our stories. The exact date is not important, but the expression of the history in any form by the First Nation should be recorded as it were... as it is and worry about it later. It can be fixed later. Who ever want to use this information will be able to do it on his own, but the truth and the originality will remain the same if we can record our history in our own way by First Nation, which we call Omushkego.

In many stories that are not heard by the major society will benefit from these... from these information. It might help the major society not because I called their sympathy, but their understanding, their cooperation. To have their pride having the First Nation, the history written down. Same way as we do to other nationalities. So that is my idea. So I tell stories just for that. So I repeat, I have collected stories for twenty years at least, but I have recorded only for the last ten years. In the last two years I have been... I have... much of my activity in my mind to do the same. So far I have recorded one hundred and eighty hours of tape recording. Not... not solid storytelling. Not solid continuous native storytelling, but perhaps twenty-five percent of

explanation examples and up to date experience. And the change in life by our people. And the information to help those... our Omushkego people -parents, Elders who do not speak other language. To help them understand major society. To help them adjust to the changes that are coming. Because that is what missing. And to help those young generation who are now rising, who are now beginning to be mature, to help them understand their past. To have them something to read or to have information if they want to keep pride of their ancestry. If they want to understand a detailed information why these things happen in the past. Not because to take revenge for wrong doings. Not to have vengeance over those people who have created unpleasant things in our life, in our culture. But to adjust without any negative feeling. That is the reason. And if we could just get these things... this thing done at least started. As I wish to have been done. I would die very happy.

My stories are not all there yet. They are stories that are very tragic. Very sentimental, just like the one the family that froze to death near Winisk settlement. When I want to ask who have seen it, like this Mr. John George Koostachin. He experienced sentimental... so emotional, that he cannot speak. He has to stop. Because it choked them up. Because he relived the day he saw the dead people frozen to death.

So it is not so hard for me to tell the stories that are tragic long time ago, because I did not experience. Because I did not see it. I did not feel it. But some Elders who have seen those things, they are so emotional. They cannot even speak about them. It's not because they are shamed. But they are so emotional it's very hard for them to tell. Unfortunately, what happened to days was that when our young people when they hear these stories,

they make a decision to say: "Why in the hell do we have to talk about a tragic thing we have in our culture. Why do we have brag about being in our culture and so terrible as it were. And it so unpleasant to hear, so humiliating and so... what do they call that... undignified way of description. But what pride do we get for listening to the tragic stories about our culture. This is what they say. But they are young and they do not understand life yet.

Those young people who think that way. They yet have to live another forty years maybe. If they are twenty years old, even if they are forty, they still need another twenty, in order for them to understand the meaning. The meaning of the stories and the meaning of the past. And that is almost to summarize why do I wish to collect stories and to record them? And why do I want to record them into my language? So the teaching I say, in the past as they had explain it to me; those Elders that I have been involve with, who have taught me partially how to live in the wilderness. I will list a few here. I will mention a few things that one has to learn. One has to learn how to survive is the most important. How to survive in the land where it's harsh and unconditional. You don't make deal with the land or nature. You do not compromise so easy. The natures goes on the way it is. He doesn't stop for you, he doesn't sympathize you. When the storm hits a place, it doesn't matter how many people there, Elders, young, middle age people, lovers, it kills them if it has to kill. The winter that is so severe at times doesn't have no sympathy. But that is nature. That is the reason the stories are told in these kind of stories for us to learn. What shall we learn to avoid to these things?

So the native people, the ancestors understood that you must study the nature. You must study the weather. You must study as soon as you are able. To read... to be able to read signs of the weather in any place that you can find, by the animals, by watching the animals, by watching the plants, by watching the weather itself; the formation of the clouds. By watching the signs and sun and moon. By watching even the aurora... I mean the northern lights. Or even the stars. They can tell you. So you really have to be a concerned about astrology for you to help you to understand the nature. You have to be concern about the stars, what they can reveal to you in order for you to predict what's it going to be. Not only for tomorrow, but maybe a year, or a few years ahead so that you could prepare yourself. And how to be able to understand the land itself. Where does it provide food for you? What season does it provide you the food in order for you to survive? When is the best time in the season for it to be easier to have a relax moment and still survive? And what plans can you use for your medicine? Where can you find them and when can you find them? What season is easily accessible to get? Where in the parts of the land can you find the medicine plants that you use for medicine? What animals can you use to attain the

medicine that might cure you for your illness? And what, what help service... shall I say, what... what medication exercise must you learn in order to be able to be useful for human, for your family? Or for any human. How to treat and what to teach. Can you cure and how? Because you don't have no hospitals. You don't have nurses or telephone to call anyone. You must learn all these things by yourself. And how to survive in nature again.

How do you study the seasons? When is the highest, when is the coldest period and what must you do? When is the season dangerous? For example, early in the spring when the water is high. When the rivers are rushing there is a caution there for you to understand to understand to movement on water. If you want to travel by the river or creeks. You must study the the water, movement of water. So you will be able to travel in it to use its power. To know its movement. To predict the possible danger when you travel by water, either on the small creek, or the large creek, or the river, or even the sea. All these, you must learn. And you must learn by experience by watching your parents, by listening to your Elders. By watching the expert person do things or be with the person who has survived. These are the things that you must learn. Unfortunately, when I talked about how to care for the sick, how to cure the sick person, it's the one that I'm sorry to say, that not everything was considered.

There are some secrets or taboo. One of them is sex. The parents did not teach the children openly about sex. Instead they they make them to observe the nature by watching animals in mating season. But the children already knew that. There are certain season when the animals mate. But the parents did not did not speak openly about these things. They did not say we humans are different from them, yes. They can say that. They can say it's immoral to be like animals. It's not nice. Say it's a secret thing. These things only happen after you get married and has to be only two of them. But that's as far as it go to explain the system, the sex organs and how and everything. There is no... there is no manual. There was no global instruction. One must experience itself sex life when the time come and with his partner. Two of them must learn that's all there is advise was given to them.

But totally strange process of growing up in those days before the Christianity and also before the European. When our people were... are them... by themselves in the wilderness. With this strange attachment to the wilderness. This strange spiritual connection with the wilderness. Plants, animals and all that. The people had the spiritual connections, spiritual beliefs and practice. For in order to have an extra power and connection in your life there was certain instruction that the children must introduce, mostly to the boys. Because they will be providers. They would not lots of strength, lots of energy, lots of physical energy in order to be able to be a providers and protectors. The women were not, were not men... they were not demanded that they should, but they were gifted.

So this is to study the spirit... deep spiritual practices which in English words called shamanism. That is the fifty percent of the aboriginal peoples strength in order to survive. When it... when the boy is five he's usually interested in knowing those things by asking, by listening to the legends. By the listening to strange stories, he asks what makes person be become one. And usually he is told by his grandfather or father. Now it's lunchtime...

This is afternoon. Let us begin. It is ten minutes... nine minutes after one February 27, 1997.

Now we finish off by saying when does a young begin to be interested in shamanistic instruction? Well as soon as he's about five years old. That's when he supposedly actual practice or supposedly, the Elders would know which or who of the youngsters is interested or gifted to be instructed. But... about the shamanistic thing. That is what I say the spiritual part of life. Let me explain what the spiritual thing in our language. Spirit, our self, and in our understanding in our Elders instruction is that the spirit is a thing that exist outside of the materialistic world. Some things that cannot be touched, seen, explained can be explained, yes, a little bit. But something that has no physical being. So they say there is a great spirit, which covers the whole universe, the earth and all its contents.

Everything that has been existed ever since the world is known. The earth is known. There are many different explanations by different people. Different Elders, different past. Past Wise men. Many different ways for explaining. Not only one. And it's up to individual how you

develop your... your belief. Yes, yes there is an evil. There is. There is a good spirit and there is a bad spirit. That's the only way that I could explain, that I could say. Not explain. That is I could say that there's a bad spirit and there's a good spirit.

The good spirit is what makes people being good to other people or what they are. What's in them? What makes the person be what he is. It's that thing inside their... whether he lives in his body or lives in the brain, our person. So it seems that the far distance and wisdom our Elders have believed that. The Great Spirit lived, not in the materialistic world, but spiritual world. But just not necessarily have to be way out there amongst the stars, but here. Here amongst us. Here between us. Here, right here on earth and also all over. They believe that. And they said and true of human.

So it's a human also have a spirit. But they didn't say exactly where the spirit lives, but it is there in a in a person. There's a physical body and it has the brain and that's where the mind actually con... works, right in the... right in the grey matter, which we call, brain. They know that. But it is also there the people; get connection with outside spirit. It is there that they get the revelation from other things that are not understood by material... observation or by the material world. But they say the spiritual has to be there. Without spirit, the material world would not exist. They say everything would be as chaos, if there was no spirit, if there was no great power beyond everything. And that's why they call the Great Spirit. So in order to have that knowledge, in order to have that extra knowledge in our mind and in our being, a person has to have a contact with the spiritual thing. And somehow have a connection with this really world, in this material world in this life.

So that's what I think the English word called shamanism. Don't like the word shamanism because it doesn't seem to describe anything. But it's the only English word that I know. And I don't like to say occult because occult is something that is generally used for anything else. So the shamanism, also, it doesn't cover the particular First Nation nationalities over particular tribe's experience. So that's why it's so hard to do that. So anyway our Elder's belief there's a spirit world, there is a great spirit and everybody... everything has a spirit even the beings, but not higher level. They also have this distinction. A human being has a higher level of spirit and the animals have a bit lower. And the plants have lower. And the elements like the air, water and things also have the spirit but it doesn't... it is there. But it's not like being. So it's hard to explain. So anyways this is the world. This is the kind of questions that young people dream.

So if the young person dreams something... let's say, for example, that he dreams about the storm. Perhaps he dreams about the real heavy storm that we experience in the coastal area for the Omushkego people. So he dreams about this and he's terrified, like anyone else when you are young. And then finally dreams about it as being carried by the storm and survive. Didn't die there. So he wake up with nightmare or experience. So he tells the story to his mother or father. Mother's don't say much. Father's don't say much. But they say go tell it to your grandmother or grandfather. So if he does tell the story to his grandfather... but the grandfather would know right away that this child is gifted. He is able to understand things, spiritual connection. So start to encourage him to have a dream. They even ask the kid to dream again, "Next time you dream about the storm, try to be in it. You know, try to be friend with the storm and try to control it later." So that's the beginning. That's the very basic instruction, but that's not all there is. There is much more to doing that.

So in this the young child is now encouraged to go back to his dream. And then the next time when he dreams the same terrifying things, so he would be able to overcome his fears in the dream. And be able to understand the mystery about this thing. And begin to understand and able to form it into a... into a... into a being, rather than element. So he became its friend. It became... he is encouraged to try to overcome it. To have it... control over it in his dream. And if he can do that, he is a gifted person. He can even control the wind, the storm; he can call it in his lifetime to use it. And so as many other things. So he can do the same thing with water. With animals. With other things, even human beings. So it becomes more complicated when you deal with the human because the human has the same gift and there's a bit more... there's a bit more knowledge is necessary in order for you to deal with the human, than it is to do with the element or the thing.

So the spirit world is that kind of stuff. But it is to do with the brain. So the spirit live in the person. But actually contact is in the brain. The spirit can't say that's all contained in your body. The spirit can be itself as a person, just like your body. But it has no material substance. It can appear and disappear and it can... sometimes it's like a ghost like experience, ghost. Yes, people have experienced that. That is a part of the spirit. Maybe that is why people belief there is a ghost and the ghost is a spirit of the person. So I cannot explain exactly because there's not much time to explain in this tape recording, so at least that's the beginning of the teaching of the young person in the First Nation culture. You must grow up with this experience. You must grow up with it. You must dream. You must take all of this in dream quest. When you experience this dream quest, when you are able to dream something that you wish to dream, you will next be able to have a vision dream that you be able to just trance yourself, or put yourself in sleeping state and then have a dream come to you. So you can see things, rather than your brain just works itself. I just comes to you. You actually just will something to see as you close your eyes. And that it what you call a dream vision. That's my understanding.

Many people explain these things differently. Many spiritual leaders in the... across this country have different ways of explain. The way I understand it myself is this way when I go out in my Omushkego country. And this is made a man to be man fifty percent of his being. He can be powerful person because he has that. But depending how much he has developed. How much he has gained and how much he had obtained. There's no limit, they say, person can obtain. As long as you wish to know more it will be there. But there's no restriction. No body tells you not to do it or it is up to you. Sometimes it is up to your individual. If another individual is too weak, then it's no good to him to go further ahead. And thus you just to have a little bit. And sometimes you have to expanded it, and develop it and use it for your benefit or for your personal achievement or path.

So these kind of person that we call them with very simple word as a shaman. So they are... what do they call him... In English there are many names... there are none of them describe anything. And they call medicine man. Medicine man is actually, in our language, is the one that have the knowledge of healing people with or without herbs and plants. The powerful person, the shaman is really power, doesn't need no object to use. He doesn't need no object to use. He doesn't need no plants, herbs to heal someone or to do anything. He just uses a mind power, that's it. So I don't know what it is. Whether you have to... I know you have to fast. You have to do a lot of fasting and conditioning, praying, and hoping, and believing. And having strong faith to accomplishing things that are unaccomplished history.

So this is... so this is what's most important for the native culture in the past before the European came. And that is what has given them to survive. Has given them the power to survive and to continue living.

And when the European came, regarding Christianity, it changes a little bit the way they do things; they value things. An when Christianity came, it changed them. If it was fifty percent of their make of their physical being, they deny themselves their own. They lost the capability to that function. Well the function will within us. But the Christianity replaces that. Now they have the spirit that doesn't have to be slave. More like less than... less demanding than the wilderness. I don't know exactly how to explain this. But I... I myself think that Christianity fits any culture. Whether you live in a city, or whether you live in the wilderness. It fits just the same. I think the Christianity... it's much more holy when you live in the wilderness, than it would be in the city. Because in the city there's too much temptation, distraction and you cannot begin fully and good Christian. And it's the same thing with the native people. You cannot be the shaman, powerful shaman if you don't live in the bush, if you do not exercise your cultural instruction. And it's only in the wilderness that you can have this. And that is part of my explanation.

So that is fifty percent of the required education for the First Nation, especially the Omushkego people. We shall continue this discussion in the other tape. To mention other things that are required and included in First Nation culture, for the Omushkego people. Now I should end this recording for the time being...

So it will end very soon. Maybe a minute or two some more. So we will go on to the next tape. I don't know if I can finish it but I will try. Ok.

[END OF SIDE B, 2 or 2]