Hello hello. This is Louis Bird from Peawanuck, Ontario... Today is December nine. It is Saturday. Nineteen ninety-nine. A.D. (speaks in Cree). This is one pipe of a story. Which has been used by the Omushkego. The Cree people. As they are called by the Europeans. Let us begin first, the word Cree is not a tribal name for the James Bay lowland. Why do they call the area, Lowland? It means, it’s very low it’s a mu...a bog land, muskeg land and everything that’s where these people live. The people who live there they are called Omushkegowak. Omushkego, one person. Omushkegowak, many. So it’s a tribal name. But the Cree, is given name by the European. Especially the French people. This was created in nine... in sixteen sixty. Thereabouts. ... Because it wants to mean, I am Christian. I am Christian. I am Christian, I am Cree, so they begin to say Cree.

First, they say Creek. And then they say Cree later. Because Greek means, another people, another nationalities, in, over Middle East. Near East. So there are people who are called Greeks. These are ancient people. Um, but the...they change it into a Cree. Creek, but it was Creek first. But they changed it into Cree. So what it means actually is that, from that time on, it’s the French people who created that name and they call it, a Christianized Indian, that’s all it says. But that’s not the tribal name. So that’s one of the five that we have to straighten out. Somehow. Now, let us go back to this uh, recording.

First of all, I have to explain myself. I have collect stories for long time. I begin to collect stories in nineteen sixty five, as soon as I was able to...to read, English language. It is not the English language that I...that bo...that um, ... I did not mean, to collect stories and write’em in English. No, that’s not what I wanted to do. What I...what cause me to do this is, by nineteen sixty five, I was able to read a little bit of English language. Then I begin to read English material. The books, the magazines, the novels. Anything I could get a hold of. And also learn English by reading the Old Testament and comparing...no, the New Testament, and comparing it from the translated new testament,... by the Omushkegowak dialect. So, from there I was learning the language much better. And...unfortunately, the language that is used in the New
Testament in the Omushkego language, is, the holy language. It’s not an everyday language. So uh, at least it helps me to understand the English word.

So anyway that was the beginning, when I begin to read many different books of English language, I begin to read many history books. And the history books fascinate me. And that’s what made me think, why do... why don’t we collect those stories? And this was nineteen sixty five. Or sixty-thereabout. This is where I begin to think why don’t we do that our own culture? Why don’t we write down what our elders are telling us, in legends, in any kind of stories...what kind of stories, they have. And that was my first thought about that.

That was in nineteen sixty five...sixty to sixty-five there...in thereabouts. Because I went to... I went to take the, ... I went to take the upgrading course in nineteen sixty five in Moosonee, North Bay, and to, put my...to put myself into a level. Because I was speaking ... I was speaking a little bit of English at that time. And then I wanted to know what level I would be in English language. So, I begin at zero point, and then, ended up in six grade... in six level, in English. Within eleven weeks. So, I know where I was in English...in English uh, literature. So I was not the best. At least, I wanted to read better. When I read better, and I read many books, the books that I read are more important, and then I begin to enjoy reading. And I begin to understand that I am not doing exactly what I supposed to do is to learn the language. Now, it gives me an idea. That I should write... that we...we, the people, the people of Omushkego people, we should write our own history, we should write everything what we can...what we have heard from the elders and our parents whatever it is. And their parent’s stories and all that. So that would be kept in a book, instead of in the memory. But, I did not take it seriously at that time.

I went down to take another, another short course. In Elliot Lake Ontario nineteen...um, ... sixty seven I think, no sixty six. Yeah, sixty eight. So uh, I... I took two and a half years, which took me to the level of grade ten. Maybe one, two third of the way grade eleven, which four subjects. English math science and uh, history. ... Yeah, history I think it is. I think it was history. But anyway. By the end of grade twelve...by the end of grade eleven I was taking grade twelve lessons in uh, chemistry, and, also the math was up to my grade twelve, and some part of the math. But that’s the time nineteen...nineteen sixty....nineteen seventy. In March. ... That’s when the... the new math came into schools. And the new math was totally different thing for me. So I just, my math was the weak point of my subject so I just quit. ... But anyhow, somehow I went as far as grade ten, let’s say grade ten, of English. So that was good enough. So I went back home that’s all I needed, is to be able to read and write and to understand, a little bit of English language. And by doing so, gives me a lot of chance to read, many different kind of books. And, gives me the idea, that the native people the Muskego
people should write their own stories.

And I begin to collect stories that time. After seventy. And then I collect them and listen to the elders many different kind of things. Many different ways of telling stories. Even one legend can be...can be told many different ways, by many different people. But still is the same one. There’s nobody to judge you. Nobody to say no, no, that’s a long way no. The native people don’t do that. They just enjoy the story. How, however person is saying it. So that’s the way our culture is. It’s not restricted. And the stories are flexible. And they are applicable in our life, they are interpretable, they are translatable. ... So they are very flexible kind of... so education. Maybe it’s education. It’s the most important that there are education...part of our education. ... Because our culture was not, it was not up to point where it should be written. It was because our elders were still migrating into the land, hunting and gathering, that did not give them a give them a time to settle into one place and to establish their writing system. No, they didn’t get that far. Before they were interrupted by the white man’s. Sorry. ... Tape recorder clicks off and on.

I almost get carried away there. So anyway, and the fact is that’s exactly what it was. Our people were migrating people, nomads, they call that. They move, one place to one season. So for that reason they didn’t have time to establish anything, even to establish the community for their own. Because they adapt themself into the land. ... You know, when you are adopted you have to adapt yourself into the adoption. So they were, adapted by the nature and then they adapt They begin adapt...adapt... adapt themself into the land. So the land teach’em.

Their language, ... fits the...um fits there, the language fits to that land. Is directly from the land. And anything that involve to them it’s from the land. Their education system is geared from the land. Into the land. For them to survive and all that stuff. So, this is what I have heard from our elders. ... They said: “Aski kohchimakan misiwe kekwan kakiskwemaatison. Ahchi kohchiwaapatamin misiwe kekwan okakitochiskwewan. Aski komisiwewina, as-, waskikochipwe onishwewin.” So this is the way they speak. Find in lesson to many of them, they say the same thing. Maybe not so expressively, not emotionally, but very kind way and very, ... s... what do they call it uh, in English you know mona kistenimotaakosiiw. Mona mamaskachitakosiw. They do not, dramatize what they speak. They speak smoothly. And our youngsters listen to that kind of voice. So that’s the way they did.

Now, what I have done is that that’s exactly what I’ve been doing ever since then, ever since seventy. I have collect stories in my mind, sometimes I manage to record a few elders, maybe half hour maybe fifty minutes. But sometimes it...most of the time, they don’t like no recording. They don’t want you to scribble a paper when they speak.
They want you to sit and listen. So it’s hard... it’s not easy to record what they say. ‘Cause you have to have a good memory. You have to train yourself to have a good memory. If you can sit there for half hour to listen to the elder, and you must...listen to each words what they say, so you can go back and, to your home, and, grab your tape recording machine and begin to say exactly what they said. That’s what I did. But most of the time, by halfway through I made a stumble into the log and forgot most of the thing they say. Or maybe I may ran into somebody else who know talk to me and, most of the words that I have heard I forgot. And then I, turn on my tape recorder, now I say no: “Tante eskwa, eskwa. Tante wesit.” So, it’s hard to do that.

So anyway I collect stories there. By recording the elders or um, people I speak...I have spoken to. I have listened to. That I have interviewed, more like. ... Now, there are legends. I say this so many times. Every time when I, put myself in front of the audience for the last...five, ten years I begin always the same way. I always introduce myself, the kind of story I’m going to tell, why am I telling this, and how I will...how to state it. Why did they do it that way. All this stuff. I’m doing it again. They are stories that have been passed on, which are very easy to...to remember is the legends. Because they are geared for that. They are geared to be, oral. ... They have to be spoken. They don’t have to be written down. So the way they are spoken, the way they... the way the people speak, it’s easy for you to remember.

So you can remember most of the legends. But you will never s...never stop enjoying it, no matter who tells you. Even if he’s... if he change it, a little bit. ...It the ... they’re not rigid I said before they’re not rigid they’re very flexible. They are ... they are program more like. There’s ten parts to the...to the stories, to...to one story, and they can...these ten pieces can be shift around. You can pick any one that you want, and put it in there. If that is all you want to use, that’s all you can use. And then, open the subject from there. They’re subject openers. They’re....they are uh, used for, con...consolation, or consoling person. ... Trying to teach someone or comfort someone for his problem. They are there. And for the children they are the best.

So, the legends has their own use and application. The legends there are five of them that are made that are long, and there are about also at least five more. That are not that long. So I have listened to all of them. I have listened to most of them but I don’t remember them all now. Sometimes, some days when I’m walking or maybe when going to sleep in the bush alone, I remember them. Just like as clear as I listened to the elder, in time past. I could enjoy them again as I lay down. So the memory brings back in the certain condition. But, if you sit in a very comfortable house and look at the TV and all the everything else is blaring, no, your mind doesn’t come back. So anyway, the stories that I am saying is that you know they are legends that are very useful. There are five of
them. And then there are others that are, they are nameless stories but they are...this is what I’m going to get at.

These stories, they start with quotation. When you quote someone. You say, quote, and you begin to talk, and when you finish, end of quote. ... But um, the stories are like this. You quote one word, and that’s the name of the story. ... I’m gonna give one example. I’m not gonna tell no legend but I am going to explain just one type of story. In our life, in our culture. And these, and these quotation are very important. They are supposed to be the fact of our history. The re-recording of the history, the incidents or tragic incident, or a mysterious incident, or a dramatic incident, or, you name it. Quotation are there. To bring out the story. Now. I want... I want to explain one.

Listen... listen good. This is...prepare for surprise. Here is a quotation: “Kitonihikehonaawa nama matawaaksiye [he is singing this word].” That’s a very simple quotation. What does it say? Somebody was calling. And he says, “do you have a parents those of you who walk on the ice?” Or on the space. ... So you begin to wonder why. Who is this guy speaking to? What happened? So your...your question is hanging there in your head. Sort of scary, really. So that’s quotation. Story begin. After you hear that... that quotation, any people that sit around and say, you’re sort of stop and they say... and then? And then the story begin.

So I have say that. So the quotation says: “Kitonihikehonaawa nama matawaaksi.” So they were, so there was a ... there was a lady. There was a woman, who had married the husband. She had loved her husband. And have raised children. There were three of them who survive. ... The oldest son and the... two oldest son. And then she had others in between, I don’t know how many. But there was a young son. Who was only about, maybe thirteen. Maybe less. Maybe a bit older. But, he was traveling with his brothers. He was trained by his older brothers. And these brothers you know they... they lost their parents when they were very small, they were just the little boys. And the mother always take them out into the bush anyhow.

So they were... the mother, teach them how to hunt rabbits and, ... a small animals and fishing and all that. And, but their mother never actually teach’em how to hunt the large animals like moose. But, they were very,... they were very blessed boys, you know the older one, they... it was sometimes [unclear] and then taking a moose. But they were not expert. They always, ... these, there times when they totally, miss the moose or, just didn’t catch because they didn’t do it right. Because, nobody show them how to do it really. They were just learning by practice. ...

So, this one day, the old lady must have been....must have been ah, have a desire just like anybody else. She wanted the husband but there was no husband. So, in those days, before the European was there, almost every person have a dream quest. But they
called it a dream vision. Dream quest, I think they call it. N’tawapwamowin kachiyatek. You know, this is in our language. N’tawapwamowin kachiyatek kekwan. It is called, dream quest I think in English. That means that when you’re young, if you are gift, there be a dream. Or you have... you condition yourself to dream. That’s a part of learning to be a shaman. You condition yourself to dream. And whatever dream you have you’re... you’re just like, accumulation of knowledge. You’re just have those pile of dreams in there, stashed away in your mind. And all those dreams will come back again. You can recall them in your dream and that’s when it calls dream quest. I think, in English. But, XX(speaks a Cree word). So if you have those dreams and if you have repeated dreams that you have it there and you put it away. And that will come as part of the assistance when you grow up, and as you get old.

And this lady have this gift. She had dream about...about the things. She had dream that she would able to produce a new husband herself. When she lost the first one. She dream this. So, it was at this time. When her, when her sons now desperately needed an instructor for the big game hunting. That she wanted to have someone to... to give them instruction. And also for the new...the youngest boy who are beginning to learn by his brothers and by their mishaps and mistakes and disappointment and, ... he was not receiving a very best training. So all this in mind, this lady wanted her dream to come true. That, there will be a man, that could show his sons how to hunt. ... But the man, nevertheless, that she... that she would not take over all her love to her boys and, because she loved the boys so much. But the man who couldn’t just exist as she will, and that’s what she had dreamed. ... So in her dream, she had dreamed this person. A man, only, part a man, partially. ... Now, let me begin the story again.

And, it was one of those days those... one of those days that she to...she told her sons. She says. My sons. As they get ready to leave. They said my sons. I want to give you a small warning. They say and then as she, as she fuss over them just before they go out. Especially the young boy and he says, Don’t be afraid if you see something or hear something, my son. Because one of those days you may be startled to hear something and, remember. It will be for me. ... So the... boys, sort of wondered what, what is she talking about anyway? So they ask, they ask again. They said, mother, what do you mean? That we should not be afraid if we hear something?

So she says, one of those days. One of those days when you’re out there hunting with your brother. You may hear someone or you may see someone. A man. Who will requires my help. And you will have to come back and tell me. Of course, the boys didn’t know what’s going on. But they know it anyway, they know. Every elder has the Mitewiwin. Mitewiwin means that shamanism eh. That shaman....stuff. So they know she must be Mitew she must be talking a whole, she must conjure up something, you
know for her or a man. So anyway, so they were prepared sort of. So they forgot all about this, they just went hunting and again, all that day. ... When... one year there were hardly any moose and they had missed moose and they were, short of food and there’s only the rabbits they hunt and fish. ... And they desperately needed the moose.

So, the old lady had...had prayed. The mother had prayed that this dream should come true now. It is this time that should be here. ... So one day those boys went out to hunt together and to teach their little young brother to...whatever they can do. So they were on the way home, it was late in the evening, it was almost sunset when they walk across this, ... maybe perhaps three quarter of a mile long or, someplace in that...that size of this, a small lake. And, which has very high banks and, a very... very old tree. In this part of country anyway. And, of course the two elder boys are walking ahead and, and the young boy was gettin’ lazy, and he was ... he was behind, he has been playing behind. You know, imaginary foe. You know, fighting trees and hitting with the sticks and all that. And he was be...far behind when the, when they come upon to this lake. And, the brothers were still ahead, were already ahead.

So he begin to run it was almost sunset. So they run. This was part of the hunting trip. Their home was not far away. Their, their tipi. Whatever it is. So, the boy run across and, run across with these brothers and as he almost get half way to them, the boys were about three quarter away of the lake, and he came in and he was half way through the lake. When he heard this voice. Distinctively, she hears something, first she didn’t actually understand. ... But he hear, “He, Kino kamatawaskwe. [singing].” Then he, then he listen and he look at his brothers and they didn’t move. And then again it says, “He, Kino kamatawaskwe. [singing].”

Now the boy got scared and then he run as fast as he can, and the boys, the two boys, the two men, they had they heard it already, but they know it they always been uh, waiting for this some day it’s gonna happen. So they just walk, pretend to walk, and the voice says: “Kitoni niko nawanakamatawaskwe [singing].” And then the voice...the boy just catch up this, “do you hear that voice?” And then they stop and they look. And it came from there, you know to the right, you know, to the south-section more like. And there was a high bank, there’s a hanging moss there. About three feet from the...from the ice. And that’s where they hear this voice. So again it says the same thing: “Kitoni niko nawanakamatawaskwe [singing].” And then he, the boy says, uh, the elder man says, do we say yes or no? So they said, No, they said, no, we don’t have no, all parents. .Nikawiinan pwechimaatisiiw Only our mother survived.

And then the voice came again and says “Kapechinanitaawiwaan.” And then the boys says, Nothing. They just walk. And the little boy was just terrified. He says, “Aren’t we gonna go and see?” And the boys say no, no no no he says. He says your
mom will come and get me. Tell your mom to come and get me. So they went home and. So they got home.

They forgot about this thing all of a sudden. So they walk home. They got there and they greeted their mother in just the same way as ever. And then as they were sitting down, they had the food ready, and they get all their moccasins off, the young man was actually pampered at everything, and mother was fuss over him and, they just distracted them all beside the food and everything. And the nice warm. And the boys forget all about anything. And it was now after sunset. And then she keep on saying, so how did you make out today? What did you see? She was giving the hint, if they had seen anything. And then all of a sudden.... until all of a sudden...until all of a sudden this young boy says, You know mom. We heard someone. We heard someone on the lake. And then the...then the young...and the old lady says yes yes my son, yes. So what was it the guy say? Did you did you see him? He says no no we didn’t see him. He just called us from the shore of the lake. And it’s a man. And, and he says, do you have parents? And then my brothers answered they say no we don’t have all parents. Only our mother is alive. And then at the last time when he answered he says, your mom must come and get me. So, he says, your mom’s gonna come and drag me home. Manachitaapepahik means to drag me home. So, that’s the puzzle word, for the voice, what does he mean. ...

Why bother my mom if he cannot walk, sort of thing.

So anyway they tell her and then, oh o.k. ok. She says now ok you go ahead finish eating then and, give correct instruction and she just gone. So she grab a toboggan and off she goes. And she’s why didn’t you tell me so. I forgot - sorry mom. So, she disappeared into the bush.

And, I guess for a moment, the boys were sort of sittin’ there you know, what’s gonna happen next? What’s she gonna bring? A man will come? ... No. ... They waited. They soon they can hear the sound, they can hear the very happy voice of the mother, talking to someone and everything then they just expected the man to come in behind. But she came in. And she had this toboggan string. And she pull it in. And to their surprise, inside the toboggan, was the man’s body in it. Just a body, a head, and a back. As far as the rear end, that’s as far as the body is. No legs. So the boys are just horrified for the time being but they sort of turn their head away, because the mother says don’t look, turn your head that way, don’t peek, don’t peek. So don’t peep. So they turn around and, hide their face to the wall. And they can hear the rustle and everything in there and, and then the mom says O.K.. And by this time when they turn around there was a human body sitting there.

But it…it sits uh, the front way, you know sideways more like. Besides the, beside the mother. It was not a very nice thing for them. Because you know they’re
always used to seeing their mother. And always, fuss over them and they always
sometimes sit with her. And, but to have this ospiskon. Do you know what ospiskon
mean? It means, just the back, the backside of a man. But the boys didn’t question. They
never question their parents, no. So, that’s it. The night fall. She went to bed with this
ospiskon. It is a man ospiskon and there’s no legs. No nothing. They don’t see anything.
I guess that’s all she needed. But anyway the morning comes and [unclear word] same
thing.

Soon they got used to this, this body of a man half a man. And, then she, every
time when they move sometime ... they didn’t move much that winter. But the main
thing is that you know they were short of food, and then the pa... the boys could not kill a
moose. And they needed an instructor. So, two perks. Two blessings for this ospiskon.
That, he is a man. Perhaps to satisfy the, the hungry need for the woman. And then, an
instructor for the two or three boys. Maybe an angel. I don’t know.

So anyway the story goes like that. So, one day, the boys went out, and they have
seen a fresh moose track, and then it got away. They were not good enough. So they get
home at downhearted and everything they just, told the mother said we lost the moose.
We just couldn’t do it. They’re sort of giving up. So, that night, when it passed as of
nothing, but the man speak, yeah he speak to his wife. Uh, not too much to the boys.

And then they hear this very deep voice at night, and all the noise they don’t
know. The next morning, the woman got up very nice she says well boys, I want you to
take this man with you this morning... this morning where you have left, just a minute,
I’m wrong. They were telling that you know, the mother was, in the morning ... the next
morning they said, Ah, your un... your uncle here your stepfather he says, Next time
when you find the fresh moose track, do not follow it, just come home, and tell us. ... So
they did that. They went and they know there’s a moose there. So they said, O.k., we’ll
go check them all, where we think the moose is. So they went there. They return again,
early morning in the early before lunch, and they said yes we found the moose. It’s still
there. So they said... so they said now what? So the mother says Well I have prepared
the toboggan, and, these are the man’s snowshoes - extra pair. She says, you take this
ospiskon, you take your stepfather - whatever you call it, and take him to that thing.

And so the... the boys took... took the sleigh. Put the body in there with the
snowshoes, and dragged this body over to where the moose track is, and then right there
they had been told, that once they get there they will just leave it there and turn their
heads into the bush and do not watch, and then until he ... until they know he’s gone.
But, they just wonder, but how this ospiskon is gonna ... show us anything or, kill a
moose for us or, show us much. ... So anyway, they didn’t question they just do what
they were told.
So they brought this ospiskon, I mean this bag, this half a man in there, and, they said, this is where the moose track is right there it’s right there, they were sort of whispering it. And so the man said o.k. give me [tense]. So they...they went to the bush and ... not far, there’s a [unclear word]. And they, they can actually hear this man, as if a man getting up, and they can hear the snowshoes are put on. Just like a man. Then off it goes you can hear swsh, swsh, whsh. The snow, being, being shoved aside by snowshoes. And as the ... the sound cleared and then, it left ahead, sure enough, the man has put the snowshoes and off he goes. Powerful. Ka-moochopwechikoonaanapwanokoon. That means, I don’t know how to describe that in English. It mean a with the man with the powerful legs. But they haven’t seen no legs.

So anyway, they follow the... the man said follow me after while uh, maybe uh, give me time he says. ... So they stay for a little while. Sort of quiet down and everything, ... Finally they hear. They hear a noise way in distance, somebody’s cutting the tree or something. So they know he must have done something. There was only bow and arrows. So they went. They follow the trail, and there was. The moose was dead. Already. And the... and the... and the man has gone. He’s not there anymore. No no, just a minute. I’m wrong. No no, the man is not far. You know he had, he had cut the branches and everything and, now he’s sitting in that little, ... a mat. Where he make the branches and everything and the snowshoes standing beside. And there it is. Um a the ospiskon. And they have brought a little sleigh, those ah, those boys. The one they use to pull that bag. I mean ospiskon.

So they, so they covered the moose and take every, everything out and [unclear] do everything. So they ... they usually the men usually just take the guts out and, turn the moose upside down on its, on its belly, to drain all the blood out and, bury it a little bit to keep it from freezing. ... So they, they have to do that. Because it was late in the evening. Uh... Already almost sunset by this time. So, they tried to do this. I can’t help to laugh at this ospiskon. And the man, they dragged this man again, this half man, in the snowshoes back home. And just strided in the string in and they can... the old lady pull it in.

And by the time they come in, the ospiskon is already there in its place and they go in. They brought some food, yes. The inside of the moose like kidneys, and liver and, ... the heart, and all those... they brought those with them and, their mother begin to cook that and, ... what they did was, they watch how this man walks. How he, how he has followed the moose trail what does he do... They, they can speak to the...to the man, not directly but to their mother. Because the man never speak to them directly. ... So they, many times. They begin to know how to hunt moose, and they’re very good at it, soon, as they, no, no. They didn’t hunt. They’d always take this man. And then he kill a
moose. And, soon they know how to do it. So they didn’t care much about whether he is there or not. So that’s their mistake. Oh no, it didn’t really... didn’t really happen. I mean it didn’t really kill them anything. But what do is that they always have this...strange urge that they should see what this man look like. Why does he have no legs and that he has...a powerful legs according to the way he walks.

And they have seen it once where the... where he has, chased the moose, you know, in one place to show them how it’s done. And he can see how far he was running into the very deep snow and kwana pookeshipak piiwakoonikaatasitawin eyawkaskipaniiw moose mpanisitaawmekwt. And, but there’s no legs. So, this is what curiosity’s so strong. These two boys couldn’t help. And then one time when they take him into the hunting ground, they peek. They peek at the person as he put the snowshoes. They didn’t know what to see. They didn’t know how it looks like. That’s what...curiosity was so strong. And that was, they disobeyed the orders of their mother. And that man. And then, they look at him yes. They didn’t see anything they just saw a man getting up and put the snowshoes on and off he goes. And then after that they went to follow and there was again no legs.

And then he was... there was...the moose was there. Good hunter, caribous he killed. But, by this time the boys were really know how to do it. Unfortunately. The man says, this is the last time I’m gonna be with you. They didn’t say anything, the boys. So they took him home, same as usual. And when they got home, the next morning, the mother says, you have not obeyed the rules. You have your stepfather has said you have peek on him. And he’s not going to go anymore. So it’s going to be your fault if you cannot kill. It will be your fault if you suffer. So, since then, they never took him again. And it did happen a few years later. They almost starve to death. But now, they couldn’t use him anymore. Because they have destroyed that, disobedience. So that’s the end of the story. ... So you hea-...you see. An... and now they can interpret all these things. If you just give them a chance to interpret if you ask. After you are finished a story. ....

So there’s a questions there - what this teach us? One thing we know, a woman who is single, needs a same desire and requirement, even her husband is dead. Even if she’s devoted to her children she still need that. Because it’s a habit, it’s a body habit. Half of her is gone when her husband is dead. So she need. ... So its, in order to fulfill her need in those days then she has a dream. So her dream come true to have at least man, and then for her benefit, and then also, to teach the children, it does surely required your father to teach you to do something. It needs an elder to...to show you it’s and to pass on the knowledge. For you to survive. And that’s one of the meaning of that. Because when you disobey these thing when you do not respect an elder or your parents,
you will lose that benefit. That’s one interpretation. So this is the way all stories are applied in our Omushkego culture. Even the legends are, interpretable, to teach us how to live. And this is, one of the stories that I call, quotation story. ... And it... it have... I have heard the story many times. Sometimes I heard it in just a comical way just to make us laugh. Sometimes it has been said very dramatically, so that we will respect our teachers, our parents our, no matter who it is. Who give us the benefit for our survival. And that’s why these things is, is so fascinated that way. It’s unbelievable story, part of it.... And it also gives you, the...the cultural gift.

Where people used to have the own belief. Like mitewiwin. Or shamanism if you want to call it. That is a part of our culture that was, the whole, when it was like that. When you don’t have a shamanism in those days you were, not fully equipped to survive on the land. But, today, that doesn’t apply anymore. Today we have settled into communities. Todays, we have taken another culture. We do not have that anymore. That teaching has been cut off. Because as soon as the white man came in, they have distracted that. Soon as the Christianity came in, it denies all that other stuff that it was there. But I’m not saying Christianity is bad no, I am just saying that it has, replaces that stuff. That was used a long time ago. But for that period in time before the European came, ... that sort of activity was...uh...it’s a sortable thing it’s um, it’s part of the culture. Otherwise you would be very hard for...for... for the nat-, ...for the first nation to survive. It has been a gift for them. And I am very confused myself, the way the Christianity has condemned it, the way they has been condemned in and it has been, very unfortunate for us. To be part of our culture because it has been condemned by other nations.

So that’s my point of view. But I’m not fighting that. I am not... I am not fighting the Christianity. I am not, condemning it. I don’t blame it. I don’t want to put it that way. But it seems to be that way. Maybe it is for the benefit. That it has arrived, maybe it’s for the better. Because the world is changing anyway. So that’s my personal point of view to stress how important this, our culture to be written down so it can be understood much better. For our young people who will survive, who will live on. But at least they will have that thing written down in there ... in a paper. So they can have something to listen to. Perhaps they might give ‘em a bit of a...a bit of a what they call it... uh, self-esteem. They may be proud to say, I am the first nation descendant. I may not live like them but I was. So even myself, I have lived like that a little bit, but only first twenty-five years of my life. But now I am, and elder. I don’t have the strength, the physical strength that I... that I could use to enjoy it anymore. And besides that, we are all being forced to settle into one community. And we have been, denied, to carry on our culture in ... in our cultural traditions. ... Well, that is the end of this one story, and, I
want to thank you for listening. And I hope you can, you can write this thing. Thank you very much.

[approximately five minutes of commentary in Cree]

So this is another another story which is not legend but it is considered supposed to have been true a long time ago. It’s supposed to have happened a long time before the European came and it start with quotation again. And this one says, “I may splash my food to my grandchildren.” I think that’s what you would say in English. So it start. There was a woman one time who was very who was very gifted or shall we say she was gifted to be a a prophet more like but also same as the other people in the in the in that period in time in our culture and this is take place in the Omushkego land.

The Omushkegos had had develop an extraordinary gift which is called a dream quest. And the dream quest is the beginning of being to develop shamanism. If a person wants to be a shaman he must begin with a dream quest or and then a vision quest I think. It’s it’s one of those there it’s vice versa. Some people will be will begin what what they call a dream quest in English I think it. It means trying trying to find out how the dream or make sense of your dream or make a dream come true later in years. But there are others who say who trained for the vision quest. So vision is also the same can be in a dream. Some people are gifted to have a very quick vision as they close their eyes in a state of falling asleep. So that is what I think it’s called vision quest. But some people develop a dream quest first, how the dream thinks and then after that they come into a vision. They can actually close their eyes and vision something that they want to know or gifted to know. So these are the people that are classified in our culture a prophets. People who can see things very quickly as they close their eyes. They don’t have to sleep. They don’t have to, it doesn’t have to be at nighttime. It can be at any time. So this is something similarity here in this story.

So there was a lady. There was a lady who had this gift, strange gift that is. And like anybody else she was she was she got married to a arranged marriage which was which was the which was part of her culture in in those days. There was arranged marriage and she was given a man to marry which she hardly knew but somehow have a very good husband. And her husband was really a good provider, healthy and loving and many other fulfilling needs for a for a wife. But there was something. There was something that has bothered this lady.

As soon as she was able to remember way out when she was a just little wee girl she had a dream. The dream that seems to come back to her again and again. The dream that seems to seems to be so real. The dream that seems to be so so important that in the dream she has been sent over to this land to accomplish something whatever that thing was. But she didn’t know for sure for the time being. With many dreams like that as a
young lady as a young girl she told her grandfather that the private teacher for her, assigned teacher, and the teacher has told her that she was a prophet and she was supposed to do something to accomplish something to benefit the people his people her people. That as far as we can get to that point.

And now shift to the story to another side another side of it. In those days or before that time there were the natives Omushkego people whether if it was only them or it may have happened to the other tribes I cannot say myself. But it was said in in time before this young girl born there were many times that strange, strange things will happen in period in years. Sometimes in circle in cycle sometimes will happen after tenth after fifty years maybe every ten years things will happen. Some things that are very mysteriously controlled by outside force whatever that is. People didn’t know that. Because as I understand today they didn’t have no scientific explanation. There were no science in those days. There were no people who break things apart to study. There were not too many people who can be comfortable to sit on their bum and look at the stars to be astrologers, astronomers. No, they didn’t have that. But they were gifted people somehow.

So this girl was one of them. So in her dream, in those days I mean first let me finish, it so happened they say if there is no starvation in the land people used to know that. As soon as people begin to be so many in the land upon the Omushkego land there would be something happened which would were which will depopulate the area. There was a population exposure, explosion. It mean there were too many people sometimes and the land was poor and then people began to die. Sometimes they would not die of starvation but they would die of something else. Even if there’s plenty to eat, plenty of things and then something will go wrong. Sometimes it is a local animals who be who come to, to decimate the people. Sometimes it is the wolves. Sometimes a single wolf will come and became extraordinary powerful animal as the windigo animal and then it will go places and follow humans and eat humans only. And this we used to call windigo wolf or wolf windigo. Mahikan, mahikanitawa. But there were other times in those days.

Sometimes the bears will become plenty and then they would kill. They would kill off people. And this people they say it was part of the creator’s control of over population of human. Instead of having disease, contagious disease, these things would happen and some of the times the whole land would just be would be the animals would be gone, like moose and caribou and that will decimate the people population. I mean up up to the half a, a proper proportion so that one overeat the area. Sometimes it was the fish that was not around and when the fish cannot be found it usually a very tragic a poor year. Many people will starve to death. And in that case another bad thing would
involve. People would turn cannibals and then the worst is come. And then somehow there’s always a controlling system there. And there is always something happen to defend this mishaps or, or strange happening. Sometimes some elders when the population now is down to size some elders would suggest these cannibalists, good people should be killed off from the land and then they would have they would hire a person to kill them off. They used to call them a cannibal killer.

So they that’s different story. It’s there is a story for that. But this one I’m talking about. This was the situation in time. And it was this condition it was that period that this lady come to our life. And she was gifted as a dreamer. And so she dreamed this dream that she was growing up. In her dream she was growing up to be a lady and she know that she’s going to get married and it says one time in her dream that a person that talks to him says, “When you have, does it say, when you begin to have seven children that’s when I will come and visit you. And that’s when you will when you will you will be involved.” Because those days before that there were many there were many quite often I mean a cannibal will exist amongst people.

And this cannibal sometimes in a large family and it would slowly pick off the people and kill them because they do not they are not the ordinary cannibal people. They would live like ordinary people but the urge to carve to eat the human flesh is what they were once they eat it. So they would kill one person and steal it or and take it in their home and have a feast. The rest of the time they would just eat any kind of food. Visit them they would be just the ordinary people but they are cannibals. And this was the situation those days. So it was too many and it was not very nice for the land. And that's what this young lady dreamed about. And her grandfather told her that you will have to be involved in this thing and you will have a big you will associate the spirit in time that will that will bring changes to our land. So it happens. She got married, she got seven children. When the seven children were born she knows in her body in her being it is now it is now any time now after her last child was about three years old that she told her husband. Her husband is a very capable man, a very good hunter, a good provider and everything and loving. And all around them there were people who telled were terrified by the cannibalistic people or things. And she was spared by it because she they had lived somewhere else somewhere else. So she knows this winter it was gonna be the day gonna be this year. So she told her husband she said, “Be careful. Whenever you see a track leading to our home one evening when you come home do not worry. That is going to be my father. My dream father he’s gonna visit us for a while.”

And this was in March thereabouts that one man this man came home and he saw this track that leads to his camp. A human foot so heavy and big and right away he knows this is wiitiko so big too. Anyways he he remembers the wife’s warning so he
went home anyway. As soon as got in his wife came in and says, “Yes, yes.” The boy the wife says, “My father has arrived. I arranged the teepee and enlarged it a little bit so he can fit in one side and we can live on the other side.” And he says, “Oh, so where is this?” The man says, “What is this. this extraordinary size of man?” And the wife says, “He is my dream father. That’s the one I told you I dreamed my father. It’s a different kind of thing. So he will be great. He will help he will help the people.” “Help?” said the man. Because wiihhtiko doesn’t help people. So anyway they went on to live. So as as soon as the man walked in he saw this human being that’s that’s laid its back to them the spaces behind the wall and into the wall and big. Bigger than a man. Maybe tall as tree. So anyway so they live. The, the thing speaks to them and to have seven children. But the children became accustomed to it and they call my grandpa. And he speaks to them too.

So there is nothing happened but a month went by and he hasn’t eat anything so the man begin to worry. He says, “All of a sudden this thing will turn against us and eat us.” So he told his wife his worries and the wife says, “No, no, no. He’s gonna leave soon. I’m sure he’s gonna leave soon.” So he says, “Why don’t you just bring some food to him.” That means go kill a man for him to make sure so just for your safety. The the lady so believed that they won’t him because that’s a dream. That’s her dream. Not in her her dream not even the kids. So anyway it so happened this man could not just simply couldn’t exist there. He even contemplated, he even thought about leaving leaving her husband or wife and kids and it was a terrible thing. So anyway he went out and he knewed that there were a few families not far from where he was camping so he went to visit them. He usually visit them. He knows them. He went to visit them and there was a there was a man there a grown up man who was more like a retarded man. He was not a very good provider and just an extra burden to the family. He’s a man, a grown up man. He knows that guy. So anyway he went to visit and he thought this particular this guy. So he talks to the elders and all that and he says, “Well I need some help at home. I need a person to help me and I was asking if I could I was wondering if I could take this guy with me this young man and he could help me.”

So the so the, the parents were not there. I think the guy was off. So anyway nobody really resist because you know they were just glad that their this person might be taken off to their off their hands because he was he was in the way. So they said, “Sure. Just keep him as long as you want. It is no big deal.” So he took the young man with him followed him home. And then as soon as they get home not far from their home he could see the smoke from the distance you know from their camp. So he told the old man to walk ahead and the young man walked ahead. So he take his axe out and hit him from behind the head and killed him instantly. So he just picks it up from pick it up and you
know throw it over his bag and carry it a little bit ways close to the camp and just drop it out there not far from a teepee. Then he went in. So just like ordinary everyday. Gets in, take his moccasins off. His wife thanked him and all that and was fed and everything. Didn’t ask anything.

So it was after they eat and after the kids eat and after almost ready to go to almost bedtime so he said to his wife, “I brought some food in there for your father.” So the mother said, “Okay, okay. He should be happy.” So he told his father he says, “Father, I think there is some, some, what does he say, caribou a smoking.” “Ahtikoosis,” they say. “Achikooskipeshwaakan.” “There’s a little caribou outside there for you.” “Oh, oh yes, that’s good, that’s good”, he says.

Then he begin to stir a little bit and he and then finally he says, “I am, I am gonna outside”, he says, “I’m gonna go make a fire out there in the bush and that’s where I’m gonna eat this. I may pass the food out to my grandchildren.” So he got up and he didn’t get up. He just sort of crawled out in the doorway. He’s a big man.

So after he went out then they can here this sound there you know as he breaks the trees and put them into a big pile of fire and you can hear all this crackling and everything from the distance and there he was. So he make the temporary scaffold there and that’s where he hung the flesh of a human and cook it and makes a smoked meat out it. But there is there is a particular name for that. I think they call, I think it’s in English, they call it a, what do they call it, smoked meat. Yeah, smoked meat. Jurky, jurky but much more lighter. It’s just barely smoked and it’s we call it in our language, in our language we call it kaakisikan. That means you throw fresh meat in with with fat and everything over the over the fire and and quick quick roasting just like a barbecuing. It’s just like exactly like a barbecuing hamburger outside. The way they the way they squeeze out the oil and you can hear that sizzling sound. And that’s exactly the way he was doing. And it’s a human body. And he began to eat and eat. In one human there was anything left after he finished. So he went to put leftovers over in the when buried over there a little ways and he came in again.

So the days went by. There was nothing happen. The man was happy, the husband. He knows that at least he fed this guy. So he was they were safe for temporary. I think I’m not maybe a few days after that, it was late in the evening, when they were staying the kids were already sleeping. And this thing this beast here a man looks like a man, the dream, the dream man was saying that way, “I can’t sleep”, he says, “I don’t seem to be able to sleep. Something bugs me.” So he says, “I think the, the stranger is gonna come visit us. I’m sure. I mean the stranger like a person like me. He’s gonna come. Much meaner than I am. He’s gonna clean off the land if he’s if he’s not get rid off.” He says, “I’m worried about noosimisak. I’m worried about my grand kids and you
people.” So he says, “I guess I must do something that you have dreamt that will come”, he said to his daughter. So his daughter the woman said, “Yes, yes father and I understand, yes. I guess you must have to do what you have to do and then I will just stay here.” So the man says, “Okay.” “Tell your”, he says, “Tell your husband that tomorrow I think we’re gonna have the visitor and tell your your husband not to go not to stay out too later, to come home a bit sooner so he can stay here when the visitor arrive.”

So that’s what happened. The next day, this is a few days after he was he was fed. This was very close to the end of March in that that season. So anyway sure enough the next day it was not a very nice day but it was some some of those days that seems to be dull and something that sort of put people to be feel not so right. That’s the kind of day, the following day. And the old man the old wiihtiko crossed the fire place was really preparing to expect something. He had already went to eat again you know the night before and he eat all the leftovers and cleaned up the place. And then says, “You know, tomorrow”, he says, “Tomorrow maybe towards maybe towards midday then we will have a visitor.” He says, “I know for sure now.”

So he says, “He knows me I’m here and he wants to get rid of me because he wants to have the land. He wants to have all those people. He is a wiihtiko, a way bigger than me. And he’s going to stay here for a very long time if if I don’t try not if I try if I don’t try to take them anyway.” “He can kill me also.” he says. So the woman the woman says, “Okay, okay. What shall we do then?” So the Wiihtiko says, “I want you the husband to come home before lunch time before the half of a day and then he can stay in here and then I want him to cut clearing clearing around here in the home around the home maybe all around there to pack trail. It will be very nice. And so it can be well packed. Because when this guy come I will go meet him.” He says, “But you guys, you and your seven daughters seven seven children will stay in here and they gonna practice this song. They will sing this song.” So he instructed and he says, “Here comes the the wiihtiko of wiihtikos who is going to be taken out of this land so that the land will never experience with another human wiihtiko. Our grandfathers had take him away away from this land so we will live in the land be in peace.”

So this is the wording I think that he tell his daughter for his grandchildren to sing. He says, “When”, he says, “Because when when this wiihtiko arrive here I will go meet him and then I will challenge him to chase me and then when he chase me I will run seven times in your camp in your in your teepee on clockwise. And on the last seven times I will say, ‘I will now leading him away from you.’ That may be my last word and then I will run to the east and he will follow me and when I make my last farewell my grandchildren shall come out and sing the song. They shall sing the song as long as they hear our foot sounds towards the east.” So it was so he was instructing. And then the
song that he taught to his grandchildren was they were singing that morning. They’re practicing with their mother.

Soon they know all the they memorize all the words and then they waited. Soon enough at the midday you can hear the sound the usual sound that you can hear when the wiihtiko is near. Usually it’s something like a heartbeat but it’s much louder and you could feel it in your body. But here the the wiihtiko that stays with the with the family has said, “I shall take the shock from him and you will not feel fear.” He says, “I will I will absorb it all so you won’t be hurt.”

And that’s what happened. As soon as they hear the sound the old wiihtiko went out and stand outside and they didn’t feel any fear. And then they as soon as they hear this sound coming closer and closer and then that’s when you can hear them talking to each other those wiihtiko challenging each other. Because the, the home wiihtiko was saying, “You cannot come and bother these beings because they are my children. You shall kill me first and then you can have them. Or you can have all the land if you can kill me.” He challenged him. So the other one says, “We shall do that.” And then they they began to tackle each other.

So instead of fighting in front around them they begin to chase each other to clockwise from the home. Because the teepee was made the the door to face the southern part of the land. And then they begin to run to the clockwise one time and two time and three time and fourth time and a fifth time and a sixth time and the kids begin to get up and they say, “Are we now ready?” And then the seventh time. By this time the old the old wiihtiko said, “I am now leaving. This is my last run.” So the children just begin to take to get out and they can hear the foot the foot sound leading away to the to the east and they went outside to sing and they sing the song that they have been told to sing. And you can hear this foot sound on the ground which shook the land for a long time every time when they step on the ground towards the east and you can feel the land shook for a long time.

Until then when the land was stop shaking and shivering did the children stop to sing. And that was the end of that that wiihtiko and it was taken across from this island to the to the great waters of the salt sea and dropped off into some place where he cannot get out. And this land today to the island that’s where he where he was dropped off where he was where he where he catch up catch up to this other wiihtiko that’s where they fought on this island toward the east and then they take, he killed the the, the, the first one. The big one killed the small one. And then in the land where they fight they shook the land so much and it break apart and up to this day the land is still shaking and once in a while burst out the smoke out of it and the fire. And that’s that’s when that’s the last time that the human wiihtiko ever do exist in this Omushkego land ever since
then. Ever since then the people of the Omushkego land have never experienced the giant wiihtiko to threaten their existence. And that’s the end of the story.

So there is a part there is a part of this story that can be interpreted. Why was it told that way? So we can begin with the lady. The lady who dreamed persistently when she was younger as if she has been revealed something that will happen in the future. Because it is said in our history there were times when the human wiihtiko will exist amongst the Omushkego. The wiihtiko being big, bigger than a man. And usually eat kill off the ordinary people. And sometimes it it would take a drastic measure to try to get rid of such beast whatever it is whatever wherever it comes from.

So this is, this was happening more way back in the past. Whatever cause, if it did actually happen. Whatever caused to happen people have the elders have interpreted. They said a long time ago before the European ever came a long time people didn’t have no disease. There were not too many diseases that are contagious as, as it is when there is people living together. They can be isolated disease that can kill off the family that the rest wouldn’t get hurt. So because they are scattered all over the place the Omushkego territory the people are not not usually eliminated by a disease even if it is contagious. But something somehow has to eliminate them. By nature or force. Whatever force is behind which controls the population of human.

Why does it control the population of human? Why does it happen in one particular place? So it seems, the elders seem to understand that wherever there is a life that it exists in a seasonal basis. Wherever there is only in the migration kind of beast existed in that place it’s not fit for stationary population, stationary home. It has to be adapted to the migration of the animals, birds and fish. So whenever the people are over populated they eats off one certain species and endanger the life of these species to probably extinct forever. So instead of the, the human, the animal species or bird species the human is depopulated by some force. So this is what why sometimes the human itself human form of beast will emerge of the land to kill off to trim the population in the land. So this is the interpretation of our elders. So they have accepted that as a fact. So they don’t actually have to be terrified when they know there is a there is a cannibal out there. No. They just say, “Well, I hope it’s not us.” Just like the same today.

Now that’s one part of the explanation. Another thing that is very come out very clear right here is that this thing what they call shamanism. Whether that is a whether that is a holy thing or evil thing people in the land requires it. They, they seem to have to have it for some reason. Because it’s a form of, of security system. It’s a form of power that can be used to benefit mankind or to destroy mankind whatever it is.

Let us compare this thing what I say for the for the short while. Think about the European culture or maybe in Middle East thereabouts where there was
[inaudible] was recorded and Babylonians. Let’s think about these two nationalities like Jewish and Babylonians. Jewish people have already established their own god, the one god. And then when they disobeyed god it is the Babylonians who do not have one god who were who were made to punish the Jewish people because they were out of hand. So that’s the situation. And the history still applies anywhere and it applied in this land of ours even in the particular nation tribes as the Omushkego people. So that’s one interpretation of the story.

Another interpretation is a gift that they are supposed to have like a shamanism. Not only not only to be restricted to the man. It also a possible and applicable to the women. And the women usually are made to use it as a as a prophecy sometimes sometimes as a as a future events or something or to save the tribes. Sometimes the women always played that role. So it was one of this ladies that has dreamt up this wiihtiko to get rid of this giant wiihtiko who kill off the tribes in her tribes. So she became a hero in this story. Even though it takes a bit of human flesh to feed this dreamed up father whatever it is. And the story goes that you know the Omushkego people never experienced the giant wiihtiko to emerge amongst from the human form. Since then they have not experienced that ever since.

So this is the important story about the women. So we see. We know about now why did the Omushkego or any other tribes have to have that that extra extra gift to those tribes, to have the spiritual part of thing to develop. And it is always individually developed. It is not a religion. It never was a religion because everybody has to live on his own away from each other and it is part of that force which prevented prevented those Omushkego people to, to concentrate in one area to establish the community or to establish permanent residence. No, that’s was caused for them to, to rebuild more like of a unit. But they were gifted in another way to survive. So this is a great interpretation for our culture so you cannot condemn them. You cannot say it’s wrong to live that way. You cannot look at the people in those days that they are less important than the others. They were fit to live in that part of the country in that style by some force. But that force I’m talking about. Who is it? Is it god? Or is it gods? How many? So it is so reported in our legends.

Now let me finish this story. A little bit more comment about it. I was thinking about, about the, the wiihtiko stuff. I’m sorry there’s a puppy upstairs who keeps screaming. I mean barking, I mean, if you are forgive. I’m not torturing the puppy, no. She’s just scared. She doesn’t like it. This wiihtiko stuff. Wiihtiko usually is a human form. That’s a key point. If you say wiihtiko it’s usually human but they can also animal wiihtiko like when the other part of the story about the, no not the other part. There there was another story about the wolf wiihtiko, the wolf being a wiihtiko and the other
animals being wiihtiko.

Perhaps it was not the spiritual connect maybe it was just a disease animal disease that been exaggerated in the wiihtiko story. And but the human wiihtiko is actually real. It was real. But very seldom did we hear about the giant one you know a, a Wiihtiko being big but this particular that described the outsized human Wiihtiko. And it was that that frequent happiness happening that has ended in the story. Because Wiihtiko against Wiihtiko to prevent such a thing happening again. After that there were Wiihtikos yes but they were not as extraordinary big as they used to be a long time ago.

So this is the important about the story. So it started off with quotation. We didn’t say once upon a time and we didn’t say in another time this is what happened. No. This story is a one story itself. It begins and it ends by itself. The only thing I couldn’t understand is I could not myself explain why. Why this Wiihtiko grandpa instructed the children to sing? But that’s what the children are saying. They are saying, “Our grandfather is taking the giant Wiihtiko away from the land forever so we may live in peace.” That’s what they were singing. But the tune itself I have forgotten. My grandmother used to hum with that or some other person I have listened to even say the word itself. It it sounds it sounds should I say it sounds the sound the the melody fits the story as if you are thankful, as if you are happy and sad at the same time. That’s what it the sound soundly like sounded. The word fit the song but the melody I have lost. It’s very unfortunate. There are many stories that come with the singing or even sounds that have been forgotten already and that is why I think it’s so it’s so misfortune, it’s so unfortunate for us to forget those things which one time so very useful for our culture education. And also to carry to keep on our our oral history alive. We don’t have it anymore. It’s very unfortunate. I’m giving it my best. I guess I don’t know who else is doing it. No, thank you for listening. My name is Louis Bird. Bye bye now.