

Title:	0104-Our Voices-Shamanism
Bird Number:	010801
Recorder:	Louis Bird
Date Recorded:	February 8, 2001
Transcriber:	Mark F. Ruml
Date Transcribed:	March 6, 2002
Language:	English
Culture:	Cree (Omushkego)
Transcript:	Proof

Hello, hello, my name is Louis Bird. I am from Peawanuck, Ontario. POL 2H0. It's a mailing address. My phone number is 473-9982. (705) is the area code. Today is February 8, the year 2001.

And so we shall begin. What I usually start off with this procedure is this...first of all, I want to say, the stories about this subject only covers the area of the Omushkegowuk land and the Omushkegowuk themselves. We are not talking about other tribes. Not even Oji-Cree people. They have their own system. And so is other people west from the Hudson and James Bay. And also the people, the Native people that are to the east of James Bay and Hudson Bay. We, in this recording, they are not explained what they are and what they were. But they will be, there has been some stories that involve, involving this subject with those other tribes. Now, let me begin.

I'm trying to speak very slowly because I want to, whoever listens to this tape recording to be able to write. And also I want to explain this. This is not an instruction how to begin a practitioner of traditional spiritual belief and practices. In English we say, they say shamanism. But the shamanism is not enough to describe this subject. Let us call it "the First Nations traditional beliefs and practices," or, in other words, we can say, "the First Nations spiritual ideas or beliefs." One of the First Nation tribes are the Omushkegowuk who live on the west coast of James Bay and on southwest coast of Hudson Bay. That is where the Omushkegowuk live. In English translation "Swampy Cree". Now let me begin.

I did not receive any instruction to begin one or to practice one as I was born in Christianity. To make the story short, I do not wish to talk about myself, but I want to talk about only the stories that I have heard from our Elders in the Muskego land. I will begin by saying I will not be teach you, to teach you this subject by speaking to you through this mechanism we call tape recorder. It will only give you ideas in the ways of the subject. Because, in time past

when our people used this kind of practice, this kind of belief and practice. They have a system in which they follow.

It has been said, the parents would first recognize their children, especially their son, who can be developed into such practice and belief. Once they find out that their child, their son, is gifted on something, by listening to his dreams, and then they will recommend this child to his grandfather, grandparents, either one. To be his personal guardian and teacher for this development. And usually the young person must start in very early age. Preferably at the age of five and thereafter, but not later than fifteen years of age. For the reason is that they believed, our ancestors, the sooner you get to introduce this subject and practice, the better for your body to develop along with it. Because when you develop your mind, your body also has to be strong and in good health. And when your body in good health your mind also functions much perfectly. That's their teaching.

And then when the child is now set to receive some instruction and guidance from its personal guide, preferably his own grandfather. If not it will be his uncle and if not the next best of kin of the elder man. The grandmothers can do that also, they can be a very perfect guardian to do this. As long as the grandmother knows the subject, or have seen or have watched and understand how it works. Most of the time in the past all the elders used to know this thing and therefore automatically became the guide and also the instructors. For that reason, the youngster who is to be developed into such practice, he has appointed the teacher and when he does he has to listen to his grandfather. Whatever he recommend and suggest, that he will have to follow.

Now, the first level of this development they say it's that you must obtain a dreams. In order to obtain the dreams that may be useful to you, as a young kid you must get over your fears first. The first fear any child can have is fear of being alone and that is the first thing a person has to try to overcome. Once a youngster got overcome of this first fear of being alone, especially the darkness, and then he is ready to further develop himself how to learn. Usually about six years. It takes about one year for the child of five to get over his fears of being alone at night inside the home, inside. That means to be able to sleep alone.

And then after that, the following year, if it's possible, and then he has to try to sleep outside, away from home. Or at the same time during that time he is supposed to go with his grandfather or a teacher to go spend the night together. And that, the instructor, the guide would

watch over the young person. If by any reason, this young person having a difficulty enduring the dream, dream vision, dream quest or something, he is there, he has his own grandfather, the instructor, right close by, of which he can or she can approach and ask for the calming effect for his instruction. And it usually happen.

Once that overcome then the child, the kid, is now, can be on his own and also to go and use the guidance of the instructor to try to condition himself to sleep, and also to have thought of positive ideas that he wants to find out. If he is to get over all his fear and things in his life he must try to contact'em in his sleep and he must condition himself to sleep half only. He is instructed by his guide that he should not have full protection or full comfort when he is sleeping. He must have minimum of covering. He must have minimum of comfort so he condition himself to sleep only half and half awake at the same time. And at that state of a mind is where the dream is actually almost real. And that is where he has to put himself to. And sometimes it can be very terrifying and he must understand that this is not real, this is in dream.

Once he gets to control that, he is on his way and he can almost call or command any kind of dream that he wants to involve in that condition. If it has to do with the animal that he fears he must summon the dream and then to have in his dream a vision of the such animal that he fears. And that he must have the power enough to speak to the animal in his dream and that he would win a friendship to this animal, instead of being to fear of him, that he would be winning its trust, in fact being as one of his helper. And this the word we use in our language pawaachikan - his dream helper or his spirit helpers they say, but that doesn't really cover what it means.

Once he gets this state and is able to communicate such thing in that form -if its an animal- then he is on his way. All he has to do is develop and maintain the same thing during his development to this stage. Once you get over one item and then the next, what else does he have that he is mystified and feared. He has to summon that subject and he must deal with it in a state of quest of dream. And once he has, shall we say overcome all its dangerous possibilities and have now approach for such a friendship into such that he is afraid of, he is on his way. He has to acquire those things first, all kinds of subject that he wants to understand. And then every animal that he is afraid, that he must summon in this during this dream quest. And this would take about

five years. During the five years he would have been able to get all the things in the earth that he is afraid and that he is mystified by. He would have now comfortable to be thinking about.

Let us say, it just for the sake of going a little bit quicker, it means, supposing in the area of the Omushkego land, in that area picture the kinds of the animals that are dangerous. One of them in the land, the most feared, dangerous is polar bear, and then the black bear, and then the wolf is dangerous, and then some other animals, they can be dangerous. Even moose can be dangerous in the special season. And there is also the smaller animals that can be dangerous for your health. And then there is other animals that are there around the salt water bay. There are some mammals that are there, not necessarily dangerous, but mystical beings because no human can go into the water, nobody understands readily what the whale is like, what the walrus can be.

And how many other mammals are they in the water. And even in the rivers only...the fish. There are some fish that we don't understand how they are and how they live. And we know every fish is even cannibalistic. They eat each other. And that is not a very nice thing to know. And the fish, some of the fish are not eat-able, sometimes they can make you sick. And any other thing that lives under water and also on the ground. The birds that fly. There are certain birds that can be dangerous in certain season. For example, the hawks...different hawks can be dangerous during their nesting season. They can kill.

And so all these things a child must understand and summon in his dream. And all these animals that are potentially dangerous for the human, he must dream about them, he must tame them in his dream quest.

And then also, the next thing is, the element. Now, the element is something else. The element I mean, the atmosphere, the air and also water itself, it is dangerous. No one can live there who is an ordinary person. And one must understand how to live, how to deal with that. And, and the four direction of winds. One must have in his development state during the dream quest, must solidify these elements that are not solid. For example, the four direction of wind. There are times when the wind will be very destructive, and people have to be very careful of those things, because they could...these things can kill you, if you don't watch, if you don't know how to look after yourself with them. And therefore, usually some people, some developers will dream of the north wind and north direction as a being, a very powerful being.

And we in the James Bay and Hudson Bay area, the Elders that we talk to have said, the fearsome most strongest direction of wind, the being to say kiiwetinisiw, it is like a person. As if of its own mind, as if its own...just like human, and very dangerous. And the dreamer, a quest for dreamer must visualize the north as a being, a human form, so he can speak to it and also he can turn it into his favour, so he can use it during his lifetime if its possible. Or it can help him and also be kind to him during his lifetime. And all four directions of wind, he must, in his own power, in his own mind, in his dream quest, he must all four directions of wind turn these into a human form and that he could summon or contact as a person.

Now, after being able to do that in a dream quest, also he has to go into the further destructiveness of the wind. That is, when its whip-out a storm. When the wind begins to strong, that he must dream, in different form of this wind. To say, when you see a changing atmosphere with the wind, like a thunder which creates a thunderstorm and lightening and everything. The lightening and a thunder close together. People in time past have not able to describe scientifically what it is, so they, they approach it by a dream in a dream in a quest for dream, they do the same thing. And that state of this element to try to form it in their mind as a being. And thus we hear generally the term called “thunderbird”. It is mostly people who have formed this element, this power, into a form of bird.

And what do we have in the species that are dangerous in the air? The most powerful one we know is an eagle. So eagle plays or form as a bird with this thunderbird that has been formed into a bird, it's similar to the eagle. But it depends to the individual, how, in what way can he use this as one of his helpers. Or how much is he able to gain during his dream quest, to win these powerful forces, that he has turned it into a being and able to summon it whenever he wants. Or that he is able to avoid its dangers. These are the things that a person has to do. That is why many Native people when they speak about thunder and also other stuff, they usually thunderbird as if it's a living being. But we know today, thunder and a lightening is not a bird. But in those days in the past it is in their mind power that they have visualized this thing as a bird, a most powerful predator. And for that reason, to associate things as a real substance, they form in their dream as if they could create it.

And then, now we turn into each direction of the wind. They also have to have a meaning of each direction of wind, as if every wind direction has its potential benefit to man, and it also

has potential danger to human. And all these, they have to dream. And also able to win its favours rather than destruction association with them. So all these things have been told to me by the Elders have understand. And that's the basic development about what I call dream quest, the quest for dream. You're trying to create the dream for you to understand. You try to contact things by your mind.

And they said, after that, after things there are also many other things that almost every living things on earth, the person who has methodically developed this in during his dream quest will not overcome anything. The element, the animals, the bird, the fish. The fire is also what a person can form into and understand as a human form or even in a physical form, and can communicate with it and also have a command over it. And this is the reason why people we call Mitew can overcome these things even if the odds are few against. But it is the reason that person developed to be a Mitew, to survive. And it has been said in our area, the Omushkegowuk that every head of the family must have this kind of thing. Every man must have certain amount of these things. But not every man have everything, but at least some level.

And now, we are going to have a little bit more about the dream quest. Some people will have to dream about the man themselves, about the man, to understand its potential danger to each other and also what is the benefit to have human around. Now it seems we are going into the human form, the actual human. Some, some people who have developed the shaman...or should I say, are in a dream quest, quest for dream. Some young people have heard the question about things that are mystery to them. Let us say, in time past, people fear the women activity. What I mean is that the men is mystified by the woman, its created way. Woman has menstruation every month. And that sometimes man tries to understand what is that. Because they're trying to understand, they try to form it in the woman form. And that is a very dangerous thing to do.

Many men who are going to be a fully grown man they dream this stuff because their body is demand some desire and some wanted to know what it is. So they dream. They dream this particular stuff, that menstrual blood, and they dream it as a woman. Sometimes the most beautiful woman. And only that woman they can win its love and then they think they have acquired something. And sometimes this dream can be very negative and destructive for such individual. It has been said, I personally have seen a person who have make a mistake. I will not speak about this person for now. I want to continue on, what is the dream quest do.

So it has been said, a person who is healthy, by the time he has able to acquire the dream quest of all these things, he is now fully grown man. It will be...he will be about thirty years old. And by the time his body would have stopped growing, and his body can withstand all these pressures of mind, knowledge, and everything. When he stops this dream stuff, this quest for dream, he is now have, as if he had, accumulated the power within his mind and that he could command any one of those things that he had dreamt, as accumulation of benefit for his life. He could summon any one of those things that he had dreamt or he could face it without fear because he will be able to have understood, he would have known these things already and then he was not afraid.

And there is a story about that. There is a story that says some individuals, some men, even women, have only a few or the minimum about these, acquiring minimum of dreams during their quest for dream. And thus that is enough, sometimes that's all they need. The women do not have to do that. The women, usually they say, is a gifted. She could acquire those things very easily. Because the woman has been treated so less than man, because of that conditioning, they didn't have to induce themselves into condition; because they were already treated less than a man. And therefore, they didn't have to go out in separate ways to quest for dream. And they were different, the women were differently developed. Not like as a man. A man usually is developed for physical power and also usually with the great mind control. And that is very vaguely I'm trying to say what I have heard. There is so much about this thing.

And then after these people...during, not after, during their process of dream quest they also sharpens their readily instinctually go up with their senses, which means we all have five senses which has been created within us. We can use the smell, the sound, we can have a feeling, and also the seeing, and...five anyway, we have five of those that are readily available for us. And then they say, when a person have acquired such dreams, he is able to develop extra, at least seven other senses. That by being exercising a proper dream quest would have sharpened their senses of seven other kinds. Which is more likely five of those magnified into the branch of other things. That is what it means.

Actually, what the man does is that. He exercise the mind. There is an Elder who had tried to explain these things to me, because he had seen it himself when he was young. And he had listened to the Elder who was explaining those things. So he said, when you have at least

very close completed your dream quest, when you have at least halfway through the highest achievement of development, you are able to summon those dreams when you need it. And then, and he also said, when you have get to the most of the things that has to be done, you can accomplish impossible things.

You have dreamed yourself to use your mind power because the mind has three levels of this activities. One that is never stopped, that is the one that you use. You use that as a primary...primary source of dreaming, the mind that never stops, that goes anywhere, that can do anything. And then the second one is the one that you use when you are fully awake. That is the one that is creative, physically create things, plus using the mind to be creative. These are readily there, they come automatically with your fives senses and also the needs.

But the extra senses that you have sharpened and developed is what is called, “the extra-sensory perceptation” (perception). And also, it’s also the other one that is called, in the English language, but in our language it is called pimootahegosiiwin. It means to, to be able to protect (project) yourself where you want to be instantly, and that’s what it means. And then also to be able to summon other beings to assist you. That means, your mind, the powerful mind, I am sorry to say, the most powerful mind is the third mind. I think they call this in English, English people understand this, doctors and everything, it is called in English “sub-conscious mind.” The most, that one doesn’t use often. And that is what you are using, able to use it when you have, went to the quest for dream.

And then also it is the third level of your mind that you awaken when you sleep, when you want to dream something, when you want to know something you can summon these two; the one that it can do anything and the one that you use when you are actually awake. They can, they can help you to dream something that you want, to actually see it in your mind. And the third level of mind, sub-conscious I think they call it, is the one that you use to be able to accomplish almost anything that you want. Of which that you have dreamt when you were young. Your self-conscious know these things and they could come out and activate your mind to the way you want.

If that is, that means, if you want to do something that is impossible in ordinary physical thing, and that is what we mean. In other words we say, you could perform the impossible thing. Another way of saying is that you could perform a miracle, that is not possible in ordinary man.

And for example, you could command things, you could command the element, you could make it happen the way you want and also you could overcome things that you can not do otherwise as an ordinary person. You could walk on water, you can even walk on air, or travel on air. Or even travel instantly in your mind to go and see where you want to see, not going there physically, your body can stay behind, that's what I mean. And also you could do something with your mind only, to be able to move things and to make a person do things, without their knowledge. You could make a human do something by your mind power and they won't even know it. So this is what I mean to develop the extra power of your mind and this is what our ancestors use of which is called the Mitewiwin.

Ok. I have gone that far, but there are still many things yet, that our ancestors, somehow...my own grandfather has said, there are certain things that a human mind cannot do. There is certain level of this that cannot be overcome. Where the Great Spirit is located. Whatever that means, I don't know. But it seems to say that there is a great spirit who can overcome every power on the earth and the atmosphere, in any place. The Great Spirit who have created everything that we see. Everything that is there on earth, this is a Great Spirit, who has its mind power that can create anything, and this is what they were saying.

And some Elders who have developed this sort of thing, there were some who were gifted to act controllably, also, to exercise their given power with morality, rather than immorality. Our ancestors may not have developed a very acceptable institution because they did not live communally, they did not live in community. They did not establish a larger society, more than a clanship. Therefore, they did not require to have any more than that. And that is what my ancestors have told me. And these are the things as far as I understand. But, unfortunately, I was not allowed to do this. But allowed to understand at least, allowed to listen, but discouraged to try to do it.

And now, to go back early, back begin the certain kind of a mind power can do. Our ancestors use or moderately use this power mind, they were able to use animals to see things. Any time when they want to if it's justifiable. What I mean to say is, they can use the animal to see things ahead. They can use the hawks, they can use the birds that fly to see what's out there ahead where they want to go, just by using that power. Not distracting the bird or anything. They would even be able to that with the fish. They can be used fish eyes and fish senses to know

under water. And they also can do that in the wilderness, they can do that to the different animals. But so much, they were not allowed to be able to do a few things, that is to instantly know where the animals are they hunt. That is something that has not worked so well. And these are the things, some of the things that are ancestors were able to do.

One of the things that I have heard, in many times, the most extraordinary and dramatic stories that I have heard, is that recently, not long ago...after contact, after the European came, after they have trade with our people, there were guns already. Very few. Not everybody has a gun. And it was that time, well it used to happen long time ago that other tribes used to come in into this Muskego area, to come and raid the families, and those people used to kill and they used to take some captives and take them.

But it was that period in time in that Hudson Bay and James Bay area that those group of people came in, arrived. But I don't know for sure exactly how to, what, in my understanding I don't know anything really, but those who speak about the events long time ago, historical events, they have named those tribes that used to come and kill their own people, the Omushkego people. They have names such as Pwaatak, and the other ones they call them almost the same, they call them, in three different ways: they call them Natawewak, and the other one they call them Aatawewak and then the other Atoyewak. Atoyewak were supposed to be the Inuit people of today.

(Pause)...Sorry I was called in for the breakfast, so now I have to go down and eat and I shall continue this thing after. And the last word that I say was naming different ways of three different tribes who came in to the Muskego land on a southwest coast of Hudson Bay and the west coast of James Bay. So I said three ways of saying: one, Natawewak; two, Aatawewak; three, Natoyewak. There's Natoyewak, Aatawewak and Natawewak, three ways. And it means there are three different people, kind of people. So that's the reason I wanted to specially say the right way. Ok, I'm going to turn this tape now. [end of side one]

Now, the reason why I mention about different tribes who came to, to kill our Omushkego people on the southwest coast of Hudson Bay and the west coast of James Bay. They didn't, they did not, they did not willingly tell why they do that. The reason why the Omushkego people know that is because when these attackers did their stuff, they take captives, especially the younger person. Sometimes the older women. If there, when there are many men. I

think these are the people they call themselves warriors. The Omushkegowuk believe some of these attackers or, or whatever they were... Our Omushkego ancestors use to believe they were some of the Great Lakes Ojibways. Not the Oji-Crees but the Ojibways, the real one. They were the ones who came. They were the ones who used to kill people and take women. Our ancestors believed that.

Because one time there was a middle aged lady who was a wife who was taken to...she was taken along with the others when these warriors went and turned back home. So she was taken along just for the reason of to serve the men. To sew...to sew the moccasins and also other clothing that are broken. And whenever they get the hide that she would tan and make moccasins and whatever that was necessary, and also to do the cooking.

So this was one time that the lady was taken captive and she, not willingly followed but she has thought that her husband has been killed and there was nothing else left behind to stay for. She just forced to go along, and just do the things that she was supposed to do. But once in a while, once in a while she couldn't help it, took to crying for the loved ones that was, that were slaughtered at her home. And usually during the day when they stopped, when they, -this group the warriors- when they stopped or made the camp where they could scout around to see if there were any other people. She was left at the camp with another, with the man, not...not the young man but the maybe middle age, maybe older man. And he would be a guard to make sure that she don't run away.

It was one of those days that, after the men left and they were staying in the camp, and her loneliness overcome her and she was crying. Actually just let go everything and she was really crying. And the guard, the old man that was there didn't like the sound of crying of the woman and says, "will you stop this noise." And, the woman didn't listen, she just went on crying, even though she was working. She was working doing her work and she cried until she couldn't cry. And another day the same thing happened when they were stopped again. The same old man was a guard for her. He too was getting bored and because he had to stay there.

And then one day when the lady cried and he really get mad, this guard, the old guard. And finally he says, "Why don't you stop crying, what do you want any way? You're not starving, you eat good and you sleep good and nobody's done anything to you. Why don't you just try to stop crying all the time. I'm sick and tired of you, and you make me so feel terrible

when you do that.” So the lady tried to stop crying but she could not. And in desperate, this old man, he was pretty mad. And he...in a desperate without knowing what to do. So what he did was he walked up to the lady and he says, “here, is this what you’re crying for?” As he pulled his sexual organ in front of her.

And the lady was so mad. She hated those men. And instantly she changed, her mind flashed, how would he do something because she was so hurt. What she did was is she says, “Yeess! That’s exactly what I want.” And the old man began to...was startled, actually was startled and he just, he just stood there. And the woman reached and began to fondle him and soon the old man was beginning to enjoy himself and his organ was functioning still and she began to perform the oral sex on him just to make him relax. As soon as he was relaxed and really begin to enjoy himself she bite him. She just literally bite off his organ. And it was that time that she just run away. And the old man just scream and scream and he was still screaming when she no longer hear him as she run away.

And she’s the one that tell the story. She returned back to her homeland, she was lucky enough she never was caught...caught again. So it was in those night, one of those nights that she understood, she understood the language of the Ojibway...and...(phone rings). Apparently she was able to understand the language. And while the men were talking they were talking about the captive they have. That you know, they were saying our people will be glad to see us returning with the captives and so that we can practice our tradition. That is meaning, when they return they would kill the captive for a sacrificial feast. Whatever they do I cannot say. And that is what those people were doing. They take captives, and take them all the way to their homes and when they get there, they would set a date to perform a feast and kill the captives for sacrificial offering.

Whatever they do, some of the captives from the Omushkego land who were able to return, tell the story sometimes how, how extraordinary thing took place. And that some of the tribes who were returning to their home, they would actually sacrifice human...kill it and then some of them, they would actually cook it, and then everybody has to have a taste of the human flesh, when it’s cook. Even those people who cannot have a piece of meat they would have a soup, and that is why those people take the captive home. And that is what those people who returned from this captivity have said.

Some of the Omushkego young men were able to escape from the group of those people. And they were the ones who tell the story. And they also said, when while they were in captive they were not treated roughly, they were treated very respectfully. They are fed well and also looked after, the only thing is they were not allowed to escape. They always have a guard with them and then when they stay where the tribes staying they were guarded all the time. They were just like having a fatted calf (Louis laughs). And that's what they say tatchapooahaapinak, it means fattened person for the next feast. I don't know but this is what we understand.

Now, what I am getting at is this...I am not putting down the tribes that did this. I am just explaining. Their ways of believing was, if they eat the human flesh they will extend their life. Most of these people, men who were, who were leaders believe such things. And that is why they have to go so far away to kill people and take captive. So it seems, but there were always men who traveled up north. Sometimes fifty of them, sometimes more than a hundred. When they are more than an hundred, that is a sure thing and there is always a terrible killing amongst the Omushkegos.

So somehow, sometimes the Omushkegos were totally slaughtered because they were unexpectedly being attacked. But sometimes they were able to, to detect the coming strangers. When they on guard that is. Sometimes the Omushkegos have the man who sense the danger ahead of time, so they would warn the others. Sometimes they hide instead of fighting. They just let those people go. And sometimes well after they been, they been attacked and some of them survived they would gather to the other place and sometimes they attack the attackers. Now, I am not in favour of talking about my ancestors and other tribes fighting each other but it has happened.

The thing is shamanism is sometimes it's not...I mean mitewiwin, it's not very, not very nice. Sometimes it's very bad. But sometimes it is very good. Sometimes the shaman, a person has the power, can be useful to guard his people. To have this power for the successful hunt, and so people will not starve. And sometimes the shaman will be protecting the groups.

But the Omushkegowuk did not stay together in one place. Every winter they would scatter all over the land, each for his family, so that they will be able to have something to eat. But it is in summertime that those people usually get together. One of the reason is that in summertime, they can stay out in the open, they don't need no wood much, just to cook. And

therefore there is no, they don't damage the land that way. And besides that, they stay into the open country to the coastal area, to avoid the flies...the mosquitoes, the house flies, the bull flies, whatever kind of flies that bite. And that's one of the reason they stay out there, because where there is a wind, the flies will not swarm you...swamp you. They could only be one side of you. And one of the reason, in those days before the European and also after, one of the reason they stay out there in the open is also to spot any danger. Especially those tribes who came in to attack them.

And that is as far as I'm going to go to that. Because that's one story about explaining how the mitewiwin works. It depends on how, how people use it. I am not saying that the Omushkegos didn't do that, they do that to each other too. Every time when there is a person acquires the power as a mitew, there's always another mitew who challenges him. And therefore the powerful mitew never have peace, because there's always a challenger, to prove themselves they are...to find out if they have enough power to beat the powerful mitew. And that has been the repititious activity amongst the Omushkegos.

So it was not nice to have that kind of situation for mitew to challenge each other all the time, because it doesn't give any pleasure or any peace to the family people. If one mitew is so powerful, he never rest, and so his family is always on guard. They always being bothered by something mitew use for their challenge each other. It is not peaceful. But some of those mitew that actually have the power, do not bother anyone, even though they are bothered. But it is their loved ones that is suffering. And that is what...one thing I have been told from my own ancestors and their ancestors, that is one way this mitewiwin is not, it's not really as good as it sounds.

But it is good when people use it properly. When they use it for their benefit, for their health, and for their to be able to cure themselves, to treat themselves when they are sick. And also to defend themselves for anything or sometimes against nature, against the element and therefore also against the human if they are bothered. But sometimes it always happen in summertime that the visitors from the distance who came to kill them.

Ok, I am trying to portray how the mitewiwin was. And the way I have heard it, it is said that mitewiwin is not a church, not as a Christianity, no. Mitewiwin was not created as a social spiritual practice. Mitewiwin was developed individually. A person would develop it for his own

capability as much as he can acquire. And, sometimes when he has his own power he doesn't share it. What he knows, he doesn't preach like a Christianity does. He does not teach people how to say, "This is how you live, this is the way I show you. This is the way you going to live and this is the way you going to practice," No...they didn't have that kind of a...that kind of instruction. But they have it, only the way they have experienced it, they guide the next generation. If they know they were gifted or if they know if they want to be one. All they do is guide and support and stand guard for them, for the learners or for those who want to develop their own shamanism.

And one, as I said before, when the person is fully shaman he is automatically looked at as a leader and looked at as a supporter or defender. So that's the way it was. There were some good shaman, there were good mitew who guide or guard their own people, their family, their clan. And sometimes in some of the tribes when they get together. And in those days, that is why the Elders were always looked up to, because they have accumulated a lot of knowledge how to survive on the land. And most of them have accumulated a lot of mitewiwin power. The skill, the knowledge and the control and understanding of things that require to understand in a lifetime. So they became automatically advisors, they became automatically a decision makers. Automatically they became protectors of the tribe, because they have a wisdom. So that's one part of explaining what a shamanism is all about in the Omushkego country. So I will stop here for now.

Hello this is Louis Bird. Today is February 11, it's Sunday, I think. And, this is the continuation of recording about the shamanism only in the Omushkego land. So we had talked about some part of it. Now I'm going to continue to explain a little bit more about this shamanism...Mitewiwin is in our language.

And so this Mitewiwin, once again to review, the young person of five can start by guidance of the Elder to quest for dream. Quest for dream which I mean is to try to get dreams as many as he can, or she can...a woman can do that too. And then as long as this allowable for, for such person, by the age of 15, sometime a youth can have enough dreams by that time, and then from then on he can begin to live as a, begin to live his life with these dreams in his, in his knowledge. That doesn't mean he stop the dream quest there. He continues, not all the time, not everyday, but every so often or at a certain given time or the such season he can do it.

He is supposed to do it on each beginning or duration of one season. For example, in the Omushkego land we have four season but six season all together, overlapping two. The main four seasons are, if we can begin, the fall, and winter, spring and summer. These are the four seasons. But we have other seasons that overlap the two, between spring and summer, we have that...minoskamin we call it. And then we have one between summer and fall, or fall and winter. There is overlapping period there.

And these, that's the time when the Omushkego used to practice dream vision, dream quest...in the early fall as soon as it start to freeze. Because during that condition, that's where most, that is when most the proper temperatures is existed. It's not totally freezing weather...it's cold enough and it's warm enough for someone to be able to sleep out in the open or in the wilderness without much blanket. And able to survive at the same time. But during the middle month, middle of winter, somewhere around December, January, February, these are the coldest months in that part of the country. They don't have to do the dream quest because the winter is too severe.

After that, from middle of March to the middle of April they can do that again. They call it the spring dream quest, spring time. It's a better time to do it. And also between summer and spring, that season, they can do that. So these are the period that the Omushkegowuk would have the opportunity to, to practice dream, or the quest for dream...to try to dream. So the person who is fifteen can do that and during those seasons. Up to 20 years old or 25 if it's necessary, until he is advised he has enough dream, he has enough to last him a lifetime.

Because, a dream accumulation, it's supposed to help you during your lifetime. And every time when there is a situation in question about your safety or about your success in life, you would recall those dreams to assist you. Whatever the dream it is, be it's a, what do you call?...spirit helper. What it means is be it's a human form, or animal form, or a bird form, or any other form that you see, or even the element form, these things you can call on when in, when the time in needs in your life. That is why you have to dream all those things. In your dream quest...To assist you to understand them, to be able to avoid danger of your life and to save your life and how to, how to harness these things. Like the, like the weather, like the wind. When can you call on the wind in favour of your travel. You can do that. And so that's many ways of trying to acquire the, the things, during your quest for dreams. And then, at the same

time you are applying those dreams already, that you had when you were young. You're already now using some of them. And that's the way this thing works with a quick definition about why people have to dream.

And now, where do the Omushkegos do this, as their special thing, special way? Yes. Some people, not, there is no one direction, one instruction. One thing that I know is that our part of the country there is not, there is no mountains. And then there is no high waterfalls. None of those things. But we do have a small hills that are about 800 feet high from the sea level. And we do have a fast waters that are, you can actually hear them from the distance, but they're not waterfall. And they al...we also have a special place, that where people do not usually stay even in the winter and in the summer.

In those secret places, this is where these people go. And usually into the higher ground. People look for the higher ground. Some people look for the...a fast water, a gorge of the lake where there's a fast water. Some people created their own height, from the...if they wish, if their instruction and their mean calls for. Some people make a nest in the tree. And go there in one place to dream Some people make the nest over the waterfalls, over the fast water to have the water always in their ears, in their hearing distance, which will help them to have a special kind of dream.

Some of the Omushkego people will go in the fall, they will go maybe a few distance. Maybe, shall we say now, at least three miles from the shore of the sea water. During the fall when the water is open when there is no ice in that Bay, Hudson Bay. On the southwest side of the Hudson Bay, when it's...strong wind, when it had been a strong wind for a day or two, you can hear these waves crashing into the shores, not necessarily against a high wall but on the tide water. You could hear them from the distance. So the people used to sleep from that certain distance where you can hear them at night, which helps you to create a dream, during if you want, whenever you want the...a quest for dream. So that's one way.

And other people, when it's allowable, they will go out, out into the Bay and, if they have a canoe. You know when the water is not, not in the fall, during the summer. They would anchor out there, open water, and they will sleep inside the canoe, and they dream there, try to dream. And then also in the early month of June and July when there's still ice on the river, when you're out...I mean on the sea, on the open Bay, there's a broken ice. And every time that the tide

goes...all that...it makes a noise, sometimes it's very terrible, it sounds like as if there's a gun and cannon, we call them the white man's firepower. It sounds like that because the ice are bump into each other and that...it sounds like a thunder. And then that's where they go. They go there again close to the Bay and then sleep there during the night, and condition themselves to sleep...I mean to dream.

Another way they do is that, in the spring from March to the middle of May, there-about, when the walking in the bush is very easy because the frost of the ground, it's still firm. They can walk on water, yes, but it's very shallow water and muskeg. They don't spring yet so they can travel almost anywhere. In that condition they will go into the higher ground, someplace where they're isolated and that's where they go to spend the night or so...whatever, a week, three nights or something. To...you know, to begin to try to find a dream, or the question they have in a dream.

And it is during that time too when the water begin to rush out into the creeks, you can hear the water all night and you can hear it making such a noise. And different kind of noise. And then that's where people usually make a scaffold over the small creek that makes such terrible noise (Louis laughs) and that's where they sleep. And just for that reason, something...the sound is what makes them dream of something...anything that is associated with water. And they do that.

And sometimes during the summer some people go out there a distance from their home, especially when there's thunderstorm. And these people they will sleep wherever. On the surface of the land, on the tree, or on...and make a scaffold as a bed, they will do that. Just to get a dream during the thunderstorm. But the young person who does this always has to report to the...its own assigned guide. Usually his own grandfather or sometimes it is his own uncle, otherwise any other old person that is available. And that is part of that, the process of accumulating dreams.

And then also, some people will literally just sleep close by the water. It doesn't have to be necessary a sound but that to be able to sleep on a small island. Sometime there is a small tiny island and they will sleep there. Both sides the water is going. And that's where they will sleep. Not necessarily with a comfortable blanket but enough to pillow. And they will sleep there, half a state of sleeping. That will bring the dream into them.

So all these dreams accumulated and these are the dreams they summon when they need help. That is why they do that.

It has been said by some Elders which I have interviewed about the subject, they have told me that some people in their quest for dream will only require twelve or more major important dreams. That is all they need during their lifetime, because it is during that dream quest that they will have a revelation to them, whether they're gonna need more dreams or not. Because their life is pre-determined already by such power. By such...basically the Great Spirit does that. So they don't need to have many dreams. And those who have been pre-determined to live a long life, they don't need many kinds of dreams. That is to help themselves and to help others around them. That was the basic idea. That was the most important thing. But it is those dreams that people, some Mitewiwin abuse them and they turn it for their own favour only and that is not recommended.

And now, after saying about a dream quest...it is after these people who have a certain amount of dream accumulated that can be measured how a degree a shaman power is. Some people make fun of this, but that's the way exactly what Omushkegos do. I have heard some Native people and non-Native saying that you know, a so many degree of shamanism and just make fun of those stories and that...I don't, I don't care about those people. But in the reality, our ancestors in the Omushkego, they have told us that. A certain degree of shamanism you can have, or Mitewiwin, just for the benefit of yourself. But if you have gifted for the benefit of your people, your family or friends or clan you are given a bit higher, higher accumulation. Which brings you up, up a degree higher. And then there are those who are simply gifted that they could learn and dream almost anything imaginable...and they are the powerful people. And those powerful people sometimes can turn their accumulation and knowledge into a very bad use, and they were very bad people. They were not recommended. It is not recommended to do that...by the guidance or advisors for this, for this...situation.

And so this is the most important thing that I wanted to say. Our people, our ancestors in the Omushkego land have pass on this information to us. I have, it has been pass on to me. But my parents, my grandparents have advised me very, very strictly...that they said, "do not try to have them." Because, they said, "you don't need it. In the life that you're going to live it is not

going to be needed.” All these things that were been done were, they were beneficial in a times, space period. In our...to our ancestors.

So when I ask the Elders today. When I say, “Why can’t we do that? Why can’t we go back to this thing?” So they say, “the Great Spirit is a power, you see the changes that you see today, these things do not required as much as it were long time ago. Because today, we don’t live like our forefathers lived. Today we have gathered ourself into a society. We have gathered into a place we call community living. And it is where the changes took place. You cannot apply the old system in a community. Somewhere, somehow, the method has to be developed that will be applicable in the community living. But the old style, the old kinds of method cannot be applicable in society. So therefore, it is not recommended for young people today to try to acquire such thing as it was 200 years ago. Because we now, we have everything. We have everything on earth that is so comfortable for our body and the way we eat and the way we have our home. So that is why it is not necessary required to have all the knowledge.”

So that’s the way the Elders have advised me. And I am satisfied. The only reason that I get this information is because I wanted to have it written down as part of our history. So that our young people that are going to live, they will be able to have such information, and then they will understand why it’s not practiced today. It is possible, I am not saying that it’s not possible. It is possible to be still revived. The question is How? Where? Can you revive it the same as it was when the people live in the wilderness? The freedom of space of land to move? Can it be done to develop such things in a community, or even in a major society? Is it possible to develop it? In what way? And how will it be applicable in every day life? Will they be in such control? Will it require to have a controlling system, so that this thing will not be abused? That is the question.

And I personally have not, am not able to give any advice at this time. But I continue to ask our Elders if there is such a way. That we can find to apply this old traditional practice in a modern society. I have not yet found it. I mean the real stuff. I have seen being enacted. I have seen the action, enacted or recited. But is it real? That is my question. I have no, I have no problem seeing or hearing or...seeing a little bit of our past, our people’s way of living in other parts of the country. But in our Omushkego land we have now moved into the community living and this kind of exercise is not applicable for us. That is all I have to say. And I hope this recording will be useful. Thank you very much. Bye, bye.