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My name is Louis Bird, I am 68 years old, I was born between Fort Severn and Winisk in March 4, 1934. I am the 3rd child of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Pineshish, Scholastic Pineshish. There were seven of us.

August 2001- Dec 2002

Frequently used words:

Mitewiwin: in short translation it means shamanism, in popular translation it means the First Nations' Omushkeegoes belief and practices that was before European times.

Miteo: is shaman

Legend: the stories made long time before the Europeans came they existed at least 5000 years before that, even before that. We can be certain to say that they existed for 5000 years before Europeans came to North America. And in that period is where the question asks for this paper. This project, when it was created for submission requesting for a grant. The paper asks one question to the present Elders in the James Bay lowlands. That is to ask, "was the shamanism a First Nation church or was Mitewiwin a church of the Omuskegowak." That's a very simple question and this is the paper. In the few words that I will mention, it will talk mostly about Mitewiwin. It's the First Nations' spiritual belief and practices that exist there before the Europeans came. And the question is only "was it a church for the First Nation. Was it considered a church? Can we define that word? Can we compare it to the Christianity or the European or any other religions that have existed a long time ago?" So that was the purpose for the project that was the project purpose. And none of the words that has been written in this paper has anything to do with the Canada Council's influence. All this has come from visiting the Elder's in part of my, Louis Bird, collection of stories, which I have accumulated for the last 37 years, beginning from 65. There are many Elders that I have spoken to in many subjects. And there, during some 37 years ago I have asked Elders to tell me the stories about the Mitewiwin. That's spiritual beliefs and practices of our ancestors. Let me explain a little bit the situation

here. Those Elders who were born in 1800 or early 1900. If I may say so, that is to mean in 1850. Those who were born in 1850. They are the people who have seen the traditional belief and practices. They are the ones who understood it very well. And those are the ones who have belief and some of them have developed it themselves when they were young and held it as part of their spiritual being and some have practiced it right up to the end of their time because they have passed away a little after 1900. I have seen some of those people who believe, still practice it and still try to hold on to Christianity. But these, the ones who were born in 1900 did not have the proper instruction for them to take it. But they went against the rule of the First Nation. And some of those people who did that have find themselves into a serious disease, which we call the mental health problem. Because of the rules that they need to follow was not carried out. Because they went against the will of their Elders. Because the Christianity has been strongly influenced to the Elders who have accepted Christianity and therefore have not trained their children to be so. From 1875 they stopped training their youngsters to do that. So that is the history that has been told by our ancestors. And those who were born in 1900 did not have the opportunity or they did not allowed, they were not allowed to listen to these kind of things. But the stories, in the stories that I call legends, they were in there. The stories contained such things. Subject so vividly and so powerfully. And it is from that stories, the legends and old stories, that carries all this, the mystics of First Nation spiritual practices and beliefs. Mitewiwin is specifically told about the action of these people. It explains how they act and did the mystical powers. Sometimes not necessarily positive but mostly negative. And it is from that story that makes it so unfitting to be called as a “religion”. Because as we learn, as we study Christianity, it does not allow anyone to kill. And the Jewish 10 commandments strongly forbids a person to kill another person. These are the contrary to the First Nation tradition. Because the First Nation traditional belief and practices because it allows a person to kill one person if necessary. Unfortunately there was no rule over this spiritual nature/action, in time before the Europeans. It was the individuals’ own will to understand or to take the proper instruction or to go against them and use this mystical power to kill an individual or to abuse it. To sort of establish fear amongst his First Nation and use it at the advantage for his own benefit. And it was not a positive thing. And for that reason we hear stories that are contained in legends and the other type of stories; oral stories that are so terrible about an individual who has abused these powers. And for that reason, when the Christianity came in, the Ten Commandments strongly expressed to the First Nation of the Omuskegowak, that says, “thou shalt not kill!” And it goes against the freedom of a person to defend himself by killing an individual. Sort of minimizes their effort and therefore many of our First Nations ancestors did not want to join the Christianity for the time being. As I was told by our Elders. And this was before the European came and that existed there. And for that reason they say, the Elders have told us that any individual or the family group have always been on the lookout for any signs of aggression from another party, another family. Even within the Omuskeego groups. And it was more so of the outside groups of tribes, other tribes that have mingled with Omuskegowak. They would carefully screen out and very careful not to insult or be insulted by them. Because all it takes was a slight insult and a slight insult would dishonour a person’s respect and calls for a challenge to the death, amongst the powerful shamans. And that, the Elders tell me, is the reason why the Mitewiwin is not a church, as we know it in Christianity. So this is a short version of questions.

And now I will, I will not put in writing the words of the Elders I have spoken to. I will quote in very short sentences and unfortunately many of these Elders I have spoken to during my project of questioning for this purpose were not in favour of being recorded, simply because of being afraid to be ridiculed and also to be laughed at, and other reasons also. Many of those that are now over 60 and to 70 were the ones who attended the residential schools. And they were the ones who were born when the missionaries were so plentiful in the James Bay lowland. And for that reason they did not wish to be recorded by recording machine and they also did not want to be recorded in paper; but have allowed me to say their words, have allowed me to write the words they have spoken but to remain anonymous because they do not want to put their names on paper. The question was simple. All it asked was, "was the shamanism a church amongst the Ojibwe people." Some laughed ridiculously at my question, at times. And some make jokes about it. And after this initial ice-break period, they come down to see how serious I am questioning. It requires at times to sit down for half-hour to open their minds understanding the reason why I am asking such questions. It was only then after preparing to answer my question that they were able to do their best to answer my question from their own opinion. And those groups that are much elder, or are over 84 and even up to 100, these also were very careful how to answer my question. Those that I have approached without a direct question but simply ask, "what was the mitewiwin, what was the First Nations belief and practice?" "Was it the holy thing, was it the spiritual thing?" Some say "no," some of those who have joined and embraced Christianity simply condemn the act of the First Nation before the European, just like as they have been taught by the Christian conversion. So they say "no, it is not a church, it is not even a positive thing, it is very seldom any good." So it was very hard to get the straight answer from any group and those who were born in 1930 and after. These are the group who have been simply put to residential school when they were five years old. They simply did not quite understand the legends that were told to us when we were just small kids. And then we were shipped into the residential school including me. And for three years or so when you are put in the residential school, all this opportunity to listen to the Elders about the legends and other stories, containing their culture and spiritual nature were denied and was not foreign subject by the time those group of people get out from the residential school...that is the fact. And those of us who are now 68, those of us who have attended residential school in 1940, we are now totally far from understanding what this traditional spiritual belief and practices were. We had been stent (?138) in our mind these things were spiritually evil. As the missionaries called it, "the demon's work, the devil's work." And that is the way we had been told about the subject. And it therefore is very hard to ask this age group of who had been born in 1930 who had went to residential school for three or more years; they do not know anything about this. To totally explain or to understand what it was, and that's what makes it very difficult to interview today's Elders about the subject; because they have been totally and thoroughly brainwashed from their own culture point of view. I'm not using the brainwash word as an evil or an insult to the Christianity. It's truly the word that describes the mind of those people, and me included. And therefore, for some reason, I have on earth urged to ask a question directly to the different groups, those Elders who are over 85 or more, see what kind of reaction I'm gonna get and to see also those next in a line of Elders, see the kind of reaction I'm gonna get, how much answer can I get. And also to ask questions to my age group and see the kind of reaction I'm gonna get. I have divided the three. And to remember also my Elders, who spoke to us when I was young before I

went to the residential school, I know them. These group of Elders were born between 1865 to 75 some up to 85 and they were the ones who really carry the knowledge and also the witness of such subjects in action. And they were converted to Christianity eventually as they get older they have totally the traditional belief and practices and have joined and embraced the Christianity to their death bed and then went into the grave with fully being Christianized. Their stories were true in those times. Like my grandfather John Penishish has seen and witnessed perhaps even practiced some of it, partially or in time. But he never admitted it and so he never showed it. But there are those who have told us the story, this age group who were born in 1875 many of them have acquired such traditional belief and practiced it in isolation in the wilderness only. And there are those who dare to do it in the open because they only expose the very minority of its use. For example, the person who practice or show its power in the region of James Bay. The men I will not call for sake of his descendents. He has shown that he can use the shaking tent for information purposes only in a very minor request which he granted to such a non-Native person who didn't belief it, actually who was inquisitive, and allowed him to see. And has proved the thing is actually true. And there are other people within outside the Omuskeego tribal territory who have retained such ancestral belief and practice with a good heart, with a firm belief they are their customs, they are their cultural belongings. And those who did not quite abandon it when the Christianization took place. This is a time before the European where this First Nation spiritual belief and practice were real, were actually there, and the residue existed after 200 years of contact, until the day the First Nation of the Omuskeego were gradually forced to come into a community and spent much more time into community. And the trade, the fur-trade caused them to change the diet beginning to eat and depended much more to the subsistence of processed food from which they buy from the trading post. All these were slowly eroding the First Nation truth(?), culture and the spiritual connection, and this is what the Elders have told me. And from the first time when I listen to the Elders in this nature 37 years ago, I still remember the Elders who have explained these things to each other, not to me, as I sit and listen to these Elders amongst themselves, as a boy I have remembered those words. And this is what I want to express in the beginning about the subject.

And therefore, from 1965 thereon I had increasingly approached the Elders to ask them their traditional practice and their traditional culture survival act, not spiritual thing but the material teachings, how to survive in the wilderness and how they prepare their food and how they attended their diseases and how they assisted themselves when they are sick, and this is what I did. And now, that was a lengthy introduction. Oh yes! I have forgotten a little bit to mention. Once again I want to say, to clarify what I am talking about is this, it was before the European contact that our First Nation were purely on their own, they had established their cultural activities and they also already established their spiritual belief an practices which actually was for an individual survival requirement. And it was nothing to do with the community or social organization because as I said before, these Omuskeegowak tribes move with the season as like animals and birds in which they use as food. Before the European came, they knew the land, they adapt themselves to the land, they did not change anything and they live by the land and with the land and they stem their knowledge and their rules regulations they followed from the observation of nature and which eventually begin to belief there is a Great Spirit who precisely and systematically ruled the world as it is. And begin to respect the Great Spirit by respecting

nature and its creation and its creatures and amongst people also. Unfortunately there is a nature of a man, they say, the Elders, the Elders that spoke when I was young said, “in humanity, in a human there is everything is opposite from everything, there is in nature as we see it, we see the very nice and we see the furious stormy day but it has its purpose. We have the dark night and we have the daylight opposite from each other. And we feel the heat extreme and extreme cold. And we, the human body, have the moment of sadness and the moment of happiness. The moments of anger, the moments of love and joy. The moment of joy and the moment of grief. And the moments of plenty and the moments of not so plenty.” All these things seem to coexist and it seems to have been, tend to exist as a rule which is required. By observation of nature there is that law. Everything is the opposite. And in man there is that. There are men that are kind there are men that are not so kind. There are men that are humble and live a humble life and still have the power to exist and still have the power of mitewiwin and never abuse it. And there are those who are also indifferent, who are so very, so proud. And being so proud easily angered and so aggressive and they are the ones who abuse the spiritual belief and practice which they have acquired. So our ancestors have explained this to us when I was young and also have remembered these words. And it was from the wilderness living that our ancestors have developed their spiritual belief and practices. By observation of everything, by the universe, by the nature of land and its system and its regulatory rule that seems to apply from power above, wherever the power is. And that’s where these ancestors placed their Great Spirit, and at times in which they call differently as a Creator. And looking and the things on earth they call it God’s creation, or Great Spirit the Creator’s creation. And a human being is such a creature amongst creatures on earth. This is the way that these Elders have spoken. And as the early period contact came into existence among the First Nation of the Omuskegowak they gradually begin to adapt or change by the European style, the culture. As we know it, by this time the Europeans came with their institution, they already have established the Christianity, they already have established minorly the education system, they already established some kind of a role as a court and also ruling and also the a little bit of law enforcement, nothing was final defined or refined yet. And it is through the ages after 500 years that these things have been refined. That is not my business to explain. But to try to explain our First Nation culture by going back in years before the European came. Why does our First Nation use such spiritual belief and practice? And to also question, “why was it not established as a church, why is it?” So to answer the question in this section of the land in where the Omuskegowak live, it was not possible to establish the community, it was not possible to establish one social order, because people lived with nature, people lived with land, migrate with the land and with the animals in which they use as their food. And it was the land that they lived on; it was not the land that exists for them. It is true that the land was there for them but they did not change it, they did not make fences to the animals they want to eat, they did not domesticate animals. More like they were domesticated by animals by moving and meeting and following them. And therefore their spiritual belief was also “mobile”, mobile. They could not establish the structure in which they worship God but find places where they go to worship God individually, not so much as a group. Perhaps in one family, they will watch the leader or the Elder do the prayer amongst them. And usually that is the closest the church can be, that is within the family. When an Elder has acquired the spiritual which we call kosabachigan, that’s another word that I wanted to put in the legend. It’s, kosabachigan is the most, it’s the most used by the Omuskegowak. And kosabachigan is the

closest to the church, as we know it in Christianity. Because kosabachigan requires some audience if it's necessary but sometimes it's not, sometimes that individual can do by himself just for the sake of understanding a few things. Sometimes when the group of people live together they need to understand something they will ask question and therefore approach their shaman to set up a shaking tent to ask such question that is there. And in that time, in that moment, that is when the people sit around the shaking tent (kosabachigan) to find an answer and when they find an answer that is through the purpose of such action and that is the only thing that has ever been explained to me as close to the church service. One other thing that has been told to us as a boy was that, there were some Elders who were performing as Miteo who used to sing with the hand drum and they sing when they want to ask for some good hunting success or a good journey to one place to the other and their Elder would sing in the evening or in the morning and people would sit quietly as he does his duty, I mean...his thing. And then people would have faith in him; they would listen to him. And that was the past that was before the Christianity. And they had many rules that we cannot put it in this paper. There have been many stories that have been told and passed on to us from time before the European were and how the people have managed to exist on the land by their own belief, by their own spiritual belief, by their own capabilities. Being independent for each family. And that was the way. And that is one of the reason, one of the most important reason why the First Nation Omuskegowak never did build any community. It was not required. To live together something that you need to change and you need to be under one rule in which themselves was totally foreign for their own belief because the Omuskegowak people were the most freely exercising their own life; whether if it was easy or hard, they prefer to be free, they prefer to be on their own rather than follow someone's orders or anything or rather than have someone tell them how to live. So they live on their own, they have their freedom to live as they please, regardless of how the life may be. And that was their culture. There was nothing wrong with that. That doesn't mean that they were less human than any others but they were and they were proud as they lived. And this is the past before the Europeans came. And to get back to this shaman question, this mitewiwin. And it was in that time this mitewiwin truly existed in First Nations right across Canada. And it was geared in such a way in each geographical location, it was not all the same all across Canada. It's totally different from the mountain region to the Omuskeego place. It is totally different from the prairie region to the Omuskeego place. It is totally different in the boreal forest and to the Omuskeego place. It's different in any part of the world. The shamanism is different it's applied locally. And therefore it's very hard to change people from other nations. That is the fact.

And now, not to repeat so much what I am saying, I am now going to begin by reading my notes. I will say I have already explain myself what I am and I have told the name of the project and what it was. What was proposed is to visit five communities within the James Bay lowlands. Five communities consisting of: Moose Factory, Moosonee, Kasatchewan, Fort Albany, Attawapiskat, and Peawanuk. And that visit to be made to ask one question to the Elders or to the people, is to say, "was the shamanism a church amongst the Omuskegowak people?" "Or should I say, was the mitewiwin a church for the Omuskegowak people?" The background...for the last thirty-five years I have collected the Omuskeegowak oral history on the Hudson Bay-James Bay lowlands. Even now, I wanted to recorded our culture, culture history which has been passed down to us by our Elders and the point in time. A simple history so I thought then, and

later I realized that it is a very big thing; it is an enormous task to try to collect stories. I did not bother to collect legends at the beginning because I didn't quite understand them. I did not aware of the importance of our legends, when I was younger. Now I understand. I talk to our Elders from 1965 and they always talk to me in legends, telling me a legend when I ask a question. Then they open by interpreting the meaning of the legends. So they say, legend was where the event in our past as humans and it is recorded in legends. When I ask, "was the shaking tent or a shaman or mitewiwin a church? Was the ritual as a church? Was this activity a religion or a church?" Most Elders I have visited last year in James Bay were reluctant to answer my question. Instead, they tell me a story of an individual about his practice of mitewiwin, either in forms of shaking tent or other ways. The story they pick is always negative. And at the end of the story would come to the tragic end of a person. So they said, "does that sound like a religion to you?" they said. Some of my questions, some ask me why do I ask such a question. Most of the time, some Elders will say "no" instantly. These are under 70 years of age group. Some of those groups have been to residential school either in Fort Albany or Fort George in Quebec. On the east coast side of James Bay. These are the ones who belong to the Roman Catholic church today. Those who are over 70 years of age to 84 years of age who were born around late 1800's to 1926 or 28; these groups have not attended residential school more than a year or two. All these were born around the Hudson Bay and James Bay area around these five communities. At times there was no Native communities in James Bay lowland, but the European settlements such as Hudson Bay fur trade post or an out-post operation. It was only in 1824 or 1832 when travelling Roman Catholic missionaries who made visits alternate years at these outposts of fur trade company posts. For example, in Winisk, the Roman Catholic mission church was built in 1900. The first church erected on the mouth of the Winisk River. So was the Attawapiskat maybe sooner. Kasatchewan was started sometime around 1630 (he must mean 1930) when the RC missionaries arrived in the area and by 1940 soon established their church structure. Soon after that, not all the First Nation of the Omuskegowak did take the Christianity seriously at the time. Not the ones who made their home in their hunting ground or on their hunting areas. They only practiced Christianity while they are in European settlement. Once they move off to the wilderness they just went back to their own beliefs and practices. To go back in time before the European and in James Bay lowland, the Omuskegowak have lived by the land and with the land and adopted themselves to its environment. They lived according to the seasons, move with the season or changes, waiting animals were they migrate in time in one season to another. Waiting for them at times in the right locations. Waiting for the migrating birds each spring season in particular areas. Moving out of the winter camps to open areas, move to the large creeks, creek junctions or smaller rivers in the early spring, as the water and ice move. Before the actual ice breaks on major rivers. Moving away from the major rivers into a place where a flood is imminent or in danger to occur. Moving to the higher ground still close a place where they can fish. All the Omuskeego had their migrating routes. Those who lived by the day they had their routes as to where to live in certain seasons. To have a hunting place during each season. Since almost all animals do move with the seasons, tribes move with them, even before animals move. Birds migrate back to the area in each spring season. The fish also move with the season therefore the district tribes do also according to their Native time. Omuskegowak may not have developed their civilization as Europeans, nor did they develop timepiece, time measurement, but used nature's time. It is this style of life they developed during thousands of years that they

became seasonal migrators themselves like animals, birds, fish, they use for food. It was during this period that maybe they develop a special kind of spiritual beliefs system from nature. They developed their spirituality, which was mitewiwin in various methods. Many different ways according to each individual. This mitewiwin was said by our Elders, requires a deep sense of meditation called dream quest period. That is in every at a very early age around five years of age of a youngster in order to begin. A dream quest is a conditioning of a body and mind. In certain stage of awareness of a deeper mind. So it has been said. It was during this period that the young person is most susceptible or easily trained, easily trained and quick to adapt the basics. To be able to be in a trance like state in mind a body. Body have five senses but there are three extra senses to be ready to be used. They are to be awakened during early childhood, that is, in the period of the dream quest. If one wants to give it a try, not all have it, they also have it, they are the ones who can be guided by an Elder who have went through this procedure. Therefore a young person is recommended. He or she has a guidance from one who knows and went through this process. If one boy or girl is trainable, she may be able to trained to be conditioned, conditionally, spiritually developed, depending on how far ones wish to take or go. It is up to an individual. The training is there, ready to be learned or to be studied, as it requires. Not all person have the gift, has the know-how. That depends on ones persons makeout in period of dream quest. If one is gifted he's well on its way, yes. These were the rules to follow during this period process, not written as instruction but the instinct. There is a process that had to be followed by the trainee. Unless this particular person is parentless child or an orphan. This kind of a young person does not require much fasting or conditioning. He or she already has no comfort of parents, no parents love and protection. Most children have who had both parent. Therefore, an orphan has really acquired these conditioning by being childless (I think Louis means parentless). These processes in fasting for dreams or to go through the dream quest training or the need so much of physical training. All its need is a guidance from an Elder if there is no one he is still trainable by himself. That is why our ancestors have observed this as one of their customs, to teach that, to show love and care because when one mistreated such a child he never forgets. Revenge will be severe. He will revenge in time in his dream will see to it that there will be revenge. The vengeance to whoever mistreated such a child is always there. So these are the old customs that were there when this spirituality or spiritual part of our people have existed.

I have explained at the beginning the problem I had interviewing the Elders of different groups. I have traveled from last year in the month of August. I went to the West from Winisk, which I was not planning to go. I went to attend the Keewaywin conference they call it, which is actually Indian days. And I was blessed to be taken there my fare was paid, me and my wife. And we spent five days with these activities and then when it was time to go home we made a detour from Big Trout Lake Ontario to Shamattawa Manitoba where my wife's relatives came from, her Mother, her Mother's side. So we visited the people we know. Some Elder groups that I have seen in Churchill who were working on the railroad, 1974. This man called George Miles; I spoke to him and asked him the questions that I have in mind. And he too has a very reluctant way of answering my question. And in time he says, "well, it's totally different he says, this is different, this was not like the Christianity because Christianity tells us not to kill. And the Christianity that we know and also it is written in the Old Testament, it is said, "Thou shall not kill." And therefore, our ancestors were able to kill if they were threatened by other person,

physically, or they can do it from the distance with their mystical power. So therefore, (??) could it be called a church than in what they did.” So to him he is also a Christianized person, but he is still strongly believe the old traditional belief and practices. He even feared of it, he fears of mitewiwin, he fears that someone might do some harm to him if he’s not careful, he’s very watchful on a strangers. And he has spoken about these things when I work with this man and I know him and that is the reason why I ask him about the question. So even him, he was very careful about what he wanted to say. But he says, “I don’t believe it is a church, he says, I guess it was an individual thing, to each individual has to acquire such powers. And it is up to him to use it properly or he can very easily abuse it, regardless to what character he is. That depends mostly, he says, how the person’s character is, his reputation. If a person is a bad person he abuses such power. If the person is greedy he abuses it by using it to get things. If a person is sexually oriented, he will abuse it that way. And it depends how the person is and there are a few that are usually live with it and do not actually do any wrong thing, but use it in a way that is very kind. Most of those people are usually very kind. And a kind person can be very beneficial to a group of people. So this is as far as this George explained, this friend of mine. And then I stayed in there and visited other people but I did not know them all. But there was some younger people there, younger than me, who were willing to speak of my question. And not quite know exactly what it was themselves because they are much younger than me. But they were very interested. All the young people are interested in all these things. When I went to the Big Trout Lake to have this festivity there were those who perform in a traditional manner and dress in a traditional manner and those who actually go into a places in different groups. There were those who go into a groups as a singers and the material dances, I mean, the group dances and also those who are Christianized and sing and there were many different groups. And that was the trip that I took and that cost us about five thousand dollars to go there. I put in my share and my travel money. And then we went down from Shamattawa, Manitoba to York Landing it’s called. It’s not far from the CN, CNR. And there’s another community called Cross Lake, not far from the York Landing. And all these people who live there they are from originally from York Factory. They were the members of the York Factory members. And most of them were half-breeds. And they were still, some of them regained their treaty status and have come to choose that place to live as the treaty people. But not necessarily have a reserve in where they stay. But ground land which became community land. And I don’t know the exact situation about this but that’s not my interest. My interest is to visit the Elders and see and speak to them if I can get some answers or some comments from them. Unfortunately in York Landing there were again two people that we know of; one is much younger than my age, probably a few years younger, and it was my wife’s cousin that we went to visit. The young lady who had produced a book called the voices from Hudson Bay. And she has collected the stories from her friends and relatives and their relatives friends and she has produced perhaps a 500-page book in which they interviewed the Elders. And in that book there was not much of the subject of the shamanism and that is the reason why I thought maybe I should bring up the true value of the Omuskegowak culture And these are the Omuskegowak people, they’re called in English the Swampy Crees because they came from the York Factory. York Factory is the end of the swampy land, although it still continues into the northwest and but mostly it’s solid rocks out there. But it doesn’t matter but officially in our language we think York Factory is the extreme northwest of the Cree speaking or the Omuskeego speaking people, which we say Cree speakers. And then they move

into that land when they abandoned their community in 1957. Some of them moved to Shamattawa, some of them moved to York Landing some of them moved to Split Lake and some moved to Gilliam, Manitoba and some went to Churchill, Manitoba. Mostly they were half-breeds and non-status people went to Churchill, Manitoba and Gilliam. And they are still in between, people who do not quite have a status or those certain groups. There are those who are called Metis, but they are not well organized. And then when went to York Landing I met some people but I didn't know them, not me but my wife knew them through her mother's relationship. And those people were called Beardys. And I went into one Elder who was called Frederick Beady. He's the one that tells me a story, for a very short story, which I'm not going to quote. But have given me the idea of the question that I have in mind. There are such ways to explain those things without hurting anyone and without useless dramatizing as we tend to do. So he tells me the story that was quite funny. And at least he speaks to me in a topic that I wanted to hear. And then there was an elderly woman who spoke to us together with my wife who mentioned about such activities as a mitewiwin. That they at one time and their forefathers had believed and so dramatically feared such subjects before the Christianity actually took hold in everybody's life in their area. Which is the same applicable in to the southeast region of the Hudson Bay and into the west coast of James Bay. And that is what I have done for this project. I also visited Thompson, Manitoba at the same time and in Thompson I couldn't find an Elder that I could speak to, although there are some Elders that I know in that community but unfortunately in my age group they were more interested in sitting in a bar, than talking about their traditional belief and practices. It was very unfortunate to have some Elders that have really disregarded their ancestral background and their culture background. But that's the way the situation is. There is nothing else that we can do. And in that time when returning from Thompson on a charter which has cost us 3000 dollars to return. That was not my money that was my wife's. She had made a loan to make this trip. And had asked me to join her and I surely appreciated it and it gave me a chance to visit some people. So that was part of my project and then I was not able to do anything in the meanwhile but was still able to speak to some people late in the night to phone them and also to speak off and on to the local Elders that we have that are remaining. There are not so many Elders remain in our community...those who wish to speak about such topics. None, I would say. There's nobody who wishes to speak about such topic any more. There is an Elder who is over 84 probably 90 who doesn't really care about such things or he makes fun of it. And yet still, even though he makes fun of it, at least he is telling me the outline of the subject. And I thank him for that just the same. And there are those under 80, and those also do not care much about the subject. They do like to tell about the legends where people are mystical and powerful and they also tell a story about those who in the past have been shamans or miteo. And mostly tells a story how those people tragically end their life. Which is very unfortunate to have that kind of as story. It's as usual we usually here the story that is negative than that are positive because the positive stories are usually forgotten and they do not have the same impact as the tragic stories in our memories. And that is humanity, it's a human mind that we must understand. Somehow, my purpose of this project is to ask that one simple question. And it has brought out many many answers. I have spokedn to many people in all those communities from James Bay to the south and to Moosonee and right up to York Factory, people who have lived there. And they all have the same characteristics; their mind is like that. Which brings me back to make a comment about this. When I talked to the Elders they always talked about the great dramatic

story of the early fur trade. How impressed they were to see the European, the wemistigouche they called them. One fact that I have found out is that our ancestors did not know the difference between the English speaking European and the Dutch people and the French people. And there are some Elders who have spoke the English language with a French accent. It's amazing. I have heard some Elder who reads or seems to read the English language or English writing language, written language and pronunciation was...the accent was French. I will never forget that. And all these Elders that were born in 1875 to 1890 they all speak as if they were so mystified and impressed by the European action. Their arrival, their fur trade and their fire-sticks, especially. And also their manufactured items in which they use. Their ships, you know, what they call steam ships. They call them, what are they called in our language, kasskabateejeeman, that means the boat with the thick smoke. That's what they called it. That mystified them when they saw it first time. The very first time in 1600 they saw that, they were mystified by the high square rigging of the ships. And then they would always see the square rigs appear on the horizon of the Bay, which dramatizingly, so mystified by, so powerfully impressed by the Europeans the way they do things. And when they hear the cannons or even guns, the primitive guns that Europeans brought in, they were so mystified by those and powerfully influenced by the Europeans and therefore did not have the idea of resistance or even invading their lands, no, they give very easily, they embraced the whiteman, they welcomed them, so the story goes. So it's evidence (?) too. And it's been 400 years since the Europeans arrived in James Bay and Hudson Bay and then from early stage, the early 40 years of fur trade and even before fur trade, their were interrelationships, sexual interrelationships, there were half-breeds from that time on. And today there is none of all the walking Omuskegowak groups that are not has the European blood running into their veins, you can see that. If one travels from Mosonee to York Factory maybe 50% of the people might be noticed that they are partially European. Some blue eyed with the dark skin, some white skin, some have freckles in their face and some even red hair. And all these are signs of their genetics carried on into that 400 years. Some families can remain dark and their grand children can come out into the very pure white and redhead and hazel eyed. And all these things do happen. And it started in 4000 years ago in James Bay and that is the result of the contact, contact with the European culture and the mixture of blood. And that is something that I have noticed travelling across the James Bay lowland and meeting the people and seeing them and watching them. There are very few of the original tribes that are truly not mixed or pure. Even those who are right into the bush, they still come out with the very fair skin and the blue eyes. And they consider themselves the purity of the First Nation. And one other thing that I want to include here. What I know the difference between the tribes here in Canada or any other in North America is that the Omuskegowak people do not dress in feathers, they don't do that. And it's Omuskegowak people who do not drum with the big drum in which the Western tribes used. And the question I asked was "why?" "Why did not the Omuskeego people use the large drums. So the Elders sort of laugh at me, they said, "what do you think will happen if you have to create the big drum and you have only 13 inch wide toboggan which you carry your blanket and your pot to move? How would you carry this drum when it's 30 below? Do you think that it will survive?" That's all the question they ask me when I ask a question. So the answer is given to me in a question, so I can see their point, and it truly is a fact. Nothing of this sort of thing can exist in a year round, the big drum. It will crack, it will freeze and break and brittle. So that's why the Omuskegow people did not use the big drum in all season. And one of

the reason is that because the Omuskeego people move with the season. They do not stay in one place. Very seldom do they have created the big drum. Only in where they gather in one season. One season they use to gather that is early spring as soon as the ice cleared off the river and then at the mouth of the lake at the mouth of the river the mouth of the Bay, they will gather there and visit each other and then have the songs and drumming, dancing, in the past, before the European came. It did happen yes. There are such locations in James Bay and Hudson Bay. But they have been forgotten already. Our Omuskeegowak people today do not remember anything past 1900. There are very few people who can tell you anything about the 18th century or let alone 17th century. There are some young people who live today going on 50 years old who don't remember anything past the residential school or even before that, so the world exists only from that time on. So that's how the education system has been since they moved into, with the European society. Our First Nation young people are totally a lost tribes. But I was born at the tail end of the Omuskeegowak culture and I know where I belong. And I may be not a very pure Indian myself, because my grandmother was also partially white, white person and God knows if my grandfather was any at all. If he was actually a pure Indian or pure Omuskeego I mean. So these are the facts that I find out and there are many stories that I have collected which answers the question which I summarized today. I summarize only what I have heard because most Elders that I have questioned about the specific question did not want to be recorded for the answers and they did not want to be recorded for their own opinion. And for that reason I respect their wishes. And but I have had the prior permission for me to speak and to write what I have gathered from them. They said, "you tell the story that we tell you and do not bother to name our name. But there are a few who have allowed me to record them. There are a few who have allowed me to use their name. I am very grateful for those who have allowed me to use their name and also have allowed me to record them. And to summarize what I have done. I visit these communities into Manitoba in Ontario at Big Trout Lake, Ontario where I met some Elders that I know and briefly ask the question that always has the same reaction and also a very short answer. And there are those I visited in two communities in Manitoba and they also gave me the same kind of an answer. And then from their on we discussed the situation and they said, "these things in the past do not exist anymore and therefore do not seem to be important. The unfortunate matter is that the reason why I came out to ask such question is that. I have seen the action across Canada that our youth are seeking the ancestor activity and beliefs that were there before the European and they are really willing to learn and to imitate. That is all they can do today, to imitate. They do not quite understand or actually have the information how to be real. What is the real mitewiwin is. They don't have that. The most of it that we see in the open is the show, not quiet true. And that I can sincerely state that. And that is what's happening in this area in the James Bay lowland. We have been totally brainwashed by the Christianity, by the European culture. We have actually denied our identity to our children and our children are now seeking that and beginning to ask that question. And that is the reason why I wanted to ask that question to the Elders and those who have heard such subject. So that it may be written down so we will have a material that is written of the such subject and the question and answers type. So our youngsters, our young people will get the true information. Rather than blindly imitating something which they dramatize in their mind and that is what I think was required. At least I have given it a try. But unfortunately the Elders that I approached did not see things my way. They did not see the importance of this. Even today as I speak. Today the whole world is seeking

the answer for the problems of our youth. Even the leaders understand that. Even the lawmakers, who have made laws to sort of have so much freedom, have found that some laws are actually beneficial from the young people to fight back, to fight the establishment in the major society. And in the Native community, we have the young people who have now blended with the major society's ideology that they asking that question. And they are now even seeking the identity that they can hang on to. And we do not give them because we, the Elders who have been totally Christianized and totally brainwashed to forget our culture and to resent it, to be ashamed of it almost. We do not take pride to answer the question of Elder that the young people who want to know their culture of its totality. What I mean totality is "what was their spiritual beliefs and practice before the European?" And this is what they ask. And this is what they want to keep. And some wish to revive it. But to revive it in order to be complete, they must, they don't know that, they must go back to the wilderness, that's the only way. But as we see today, our youngsters, our young people are totally tied into the community living. They cannot even go into the wilderness anymore. One mosquito will scare them back into the house. And 1 hungry day in the wilderness will rush back into the restaurant and Tim Horton places, they look for that. And that's how youngsters are today. But how are they going to go back to the traditional beliefs and practices if they cannot take some conditioning for the dream quest. And those who did the dream quest, they go into 3 days with the good blankets, with a good meal and the good things and they say, "I am a traditionalist." That is not true. I have seen this thing. Even in television. Some non-status people, non-Native pretend to do that. They go into the wilderness maybe three days with the nice blankets, with mosquito repellents and everything and they say, "I am a traditionalist." You know it's a false belief, it's a false thing, it minimizes, it degraded the First Nation reality, what it was when it was its own. That's what I am talking about. And today, that is what's happening to our youngsters, they seek for that. And what happened to our Elders? No, they are too ashamed to talk about it. They are still to afraid of the Christian leaders to condemn them, to criticize them, to ostracize them from the church, which was exactly was a threat at that time. And they still remember that. Our Elders are really afraid of that. And they are still afraid also, the old traditional, the danger that was there. They are still afraid the Miteo might kill them or send them the curse or even send them the beast that might kill them. They are still afraid of this. Even today's Elders that are over 74 they are still afraid of that. And that's where we are, the confusion state of the mind. And here are the youngsters who are seeking some solid evidence and truth. They don't have it because we cannot give it to them. The reaction, the impact of the European culture is not, it did not happened 400 years ago but it happens today. It still continues to happen, it doesn't stop. It's not going to stop until all the First Nation have blended to the major society...this is my prediction. Just like exactly what the old bureaucrat named Duncan Campbell Scott, who was a superintendent for Indian Affairs in time who had stated that the Indian problem shall be resolved by this, by that and this. And if it doesn't work this way, we will absorb the Indian amongst ourselves by intermarriage. That prediction, it's happening today. Many communities that have settled into the community now are the best houses are the well-kept things and cost free. And our boys, our girls marry the non-status majority people and they have benefit. The women begin status Indian and have produced the half-breed in the community and the community became not any more pure Native culture. And it turns gradually every decade into the right society. Duncan Campbell Scott's prediction comes true. He was a far seeing person and it comes true. And I am not condemning him but it does happen today. And

there is no stopping. Because we have been pushed into the community living. We, the most isolated community in Northern Ontario. We, the last of the Ojibwegowak who kept hold of their culture had been forced, tricked, deceived into community living of the highest standard. And all the rest of the surrounding communities have asked their leaders to ask the same housing, the same infrastructure of the community for their enjoyment, at the costless. That is a very dangerous thing. In other words, we have been bought. And that's the end of the Indian culture, I mean the First Nation culture. And that's my conclusion. And that's not all. There is so much yet that I could explain about the culture stuff. The cultural identity and culture teaching system and how to remain culturally oriented. No, there is no time. I might be able to that some other time. And for this tape recording this will be the end but I will have another one if I can.