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Hello Hello, This is Louis bird, I want to tell a story about three things. Today is March 5, 2003. Here is the story that I want to tell you. So here it is.

There was a long time ago not so long ago. This was after the the European arrive in the Hudson Bay area. After the fur trade have begun already. When, according to the history, the European history in Canada, we hear about the Hudson Bay starting off somewhere Hudson Bay Company. Fur trade officially started, 1682. It may have been a trade before that, but not as as intense as it became later. And it was in from that period on, that the Native people begin to actually work for the Hudson Bay Company. Gathering furs for them and trapping, because the fur was demanded.

And it was very hard on the animals. That we considered fur pelts especially the beavers, otter, mink, martin, and fisher, lynx, and muskrat even the squirrels, we sold them. And all these were considered fur-bearing animals. Which was a commodity or a demand, for the fur trade between the First Nation and and the Hudson Bay Company. And later on, other fur trading, fur harvesting.

It was in those days, that the Hudson Bay Company establish its business in the Bay area. And needed many kinds of help. Different skills. Local skills and also other kinds, besides trappers. It was somewhere between the year of eighteen hundred, especially seventeen hundred and eighteen hundred, before the Europeans manufactured the steamboats. They may have manufactured already, because it is mentioned by the Native people, when the over sea ship was expect in the month of August or September, there was a story about the local people in York Factory, or in that area. Or Kaaskatamaakan - that they used to see a black smoke sticking out in the water from towards north. And which means the steamship must have approaching the land. It was

these little stories that we heard about from our ancestors, the Omushkego people who live around that area.

And, it was also that time, that most of the west coast and James Bay, west coast of James Bay and the Southwest coast of James Bay, the Omushkego people who mobilize. What I mean to say is, when the fur trade act was actually started in the full swing, these people used to do their fur trade first at the York Factory, and people live in major rivers, and upland, where it fur trading at the York Factory. And by doing that, there were lots of those who traveled back and forth from west coast of James Bay and up to the Fort Severn, and onto York Factory. The evidence of this activity was and can still be seen on the southwest coast of Hudson Bay.

Where the people used to walk with moccasin feet. And those trails are still there. Some places if you ever follow these things, if you can find them, it's been so long that some of the trees that grow inside the trail will be about eighteen inches diameter. Those trees that we call I think they are called pine trees, I'm not so sure if it's a pine. Some of them were black spruce, or spruce, whatever you call them, and then Tamarack. And the oldest sign of the trail that was ever used on the Hudson Bay coast is about within five to eight miles inland from the shore of the Hudson Bay. And it was say that one time, those trails were on the ridges of the old seashores that were just barely covered with grass and willows. But today it's trees are so high, and long. And in some of the trees that grew in those areas are about twenty-five feet high, probably about eighteen inches diameter at the bottom. And those are the trees that were there before, in further inland, they do not show, because they're already decayed and fall down but instead, the smaller trees are grew there which we call in our name, sesekaatahot.

Now, to get back to the to the activities of human activities during the fur trade, what I wanted to mention was here, about the story of a man, as the Hudson Bay Company begin to do its fur swing, full swing of its fur trade. They needed some transportation along the shores of the Hudson Bay, to deliver their goods to the major rivers. Mainly the Fort Severn from York Factory as a main depot. And, they wanted to distribute their goods along and around the Hudson Bay and James Bay. So they have agreed some kind of a transportation system locally.

And this was this was when they made the boats, that would sail around the bay, a

small bird maybe thirty-five feet long. Whatever width they were, perhaps about ten, twelve feet. It's not long for sure. And, they were open deck, they were not a floor, they were just open deck but have the latches close with some material, so it won't leak or it won't fill up with water. And these, a little boats were have either have one mast, most of them one mast, to hoist, to be able to hoist the sail for a day or two. For their motion, for they're...power. The windpower boats. Sail boat, we sailed. And some of those boats were two masts. And these, those were a bit longer than most.

And it was a local people were trained and hired to sail those boats around the bay. Recently, as as recently as eighteen hundred to nineteen hundred, the last story that we heard about people sailing and the local people. There was a name, there was a guy, a man named, I don't know what we call it in English but he was called Kahkechewish, that is all they call him. And this was not necessary as this was not necessary a bad thing. He was known as that and I assume he knew that he was called that. But Kahkechewish means something black. Person who is black, that's about all it says. But another another word, it can be translated as a piece of junk of coal. Black coal. So that is that is what is understood to have meant, because at that time, the Hudson Bay Company were using black coal for their steam ship, and they must have understand this thing, those people. So they call him because he has a very dark skin in his face, and his hand. And they say this man was not very big, but small. One of the smallest kind of a man, but not a midget, but the small man. And, in spite of this small size, this man was considered to be one of the most trusted person, and also courageous man to do the job. So he was assigned to be one of the captains of these York boats.

Those boat, sailboat that were created in York York Factory. The ones that sail around the bay, in Hudson Bay. So he was assigned to be a captain in one of them. And as he gained the knowledge of the bay, and the skills to do sail, he begin to be well known, and we admired his ability. There is a certain story about about him, at times that he didn't actually use the compass to sail, even during the night. To navigate without compass he was able to do that.

And there is a great story about this guy. He was really admired by many people. He was found to be the most courageous man that ever sail in the Hudson Bay at that time. There is a place in the Hudson Bay and James Bay, where many dangers can be

experienced by the sailings, sailors. Amongst the white people also and also those later, the Native people who sail around the coast, around the bay. Apparently the first depot was York Factory, and all the things will have to be delivered around the shore to the south, right to the tip of James Bay.

And it was this load that this man used to take make several voyages to Fort Severn from York Factory, and down to the James Bay, right down to the tip of the Moosonee. And the distance between about eight hundred miles maybe so. And, the danger lies in the, in the middle, the halfway through, right at the Cape Henrietta Maria. It was the most dangerous place for these sailors at that time. Because the peninsula is so far out into the bay, and it can be very deceiving if you see the land barely towards to your right or to left.

You would be think, one would think it's safe to sail around, but it's not. Many times they have found that they nearly collided into the bottom, because of the shallow waters and that protruding the limestone rocks. And that was very dangerous. So therefore, this man who have begin to be aware of danger, he had a custom of avoiding it and sailing away out there into the peninsula, past way out. Perhaps fifteen miles out to make sure that he doesn't hit anything. And it was said several times that he sailed from York Factory directly to Moosonee, without stopping.

And, regardless of the wind, no matter how strong the wind was, he would sail. And, the safer he wants to be, the farther out into the shore of the bay he sails. In a win, in in the daytime, no problem, because he know how far out he should be. It was at least once that people have talked about him that; they were so amazed about his ability and courage that no one else would have tried to do what he did.

What he did was, at one point when he was sailing nicely around the southwest coast of Hudson Bay, when he comes near to the to the Cape Henrietta Maria, it so happen the high tide was coming. And it was one of those days that the high tide would occur when there's a full moon. And usually at that time, in in the September, when that happens, the north wind will be very strong. And which also brings the water very very high. And also the pulling of the moon. And it was those that one time, that he, he encountered such a sudden storm, just at about, when he was about another thirty-five miles to the to the tip of of Cape Henrietta Maria.

And and one way the people used to do, the sails used to do is to turn back and, either go back to Winisk, to shelter themselves there on the river, or to go into one of those smaller creeks that are located between Cape Henrietta Maria and Winisk. There is a shelter there that they could go back in and, wait out the storm. But this man there is, to his knowledge about this situation. He knew he will have a problem to try to find shelter, and it was later in the night, very late in the evening. It was already getting dark, so he told his deck hands, that he says it's too dangerous to try to find a shelter into the shore. The wind is so strong.

And the safest way to be is out there in the bay, where there is rolling waves, and not breaking. And then he said, he decided that he should go around the cape, with that condition and rather than stay there. At the, at the mercy of the huge waves he set out towards that evening. And told his deck hands to stay under. Sent them under, below. And he himself tied himself into the steering gear, at that time which, which was not the wheel, it was just the simple wooden rudder. That you have to hold it in one place. At least he had some kind of a mechanical ropes that he will sort of use, to hold the rudder in place. With the very little movement that it will not just swing. And, besides that, he had created a belt for his body to hold him down, and then he sent the others down. And it was getting late, getting dark, then he sailed off by himself. He knew that it would take maybe two to three hours to go around the cape, and it was dark with storm and everything. He went. So they said, the deck hands. And they can hear on the top, the water was just simply washed away over the deck.

Many times they wondered if the person's still alive, or maybe washed over over the deck. But they can feel the little schooner. And it was still heading, was maintaining its course, and they can feel the control of the person that was steering. That, the boat was not just [inaudible] on the wave, but it was simply steered direct with control. And this was the most admiration they have for him, because he was able to to steer the ship and such a small man. And, actually not quite trusting the compass. Only his things and, and courage. And it was the most highly praised man that ever worked for the Hudson Bay amongst the First Nation.

Many sailors in that time have always said, stated, after he resigned. That they say whenever the storm is approaching they would say, now, if we would only have the his

name. He says, now, if we could only have him. That's their wish. They could be as powerful and courageous as he was. So they consider him as one of the powerful man.

And it has been said also that he was shaman. He was he was a powerful shaman also. So they say that you know, he accomplished those things by being a shaman only. Not because he is strong and powerful, but he is. So one time, at that time, when those deck hands were were told to stay below, they listened, they listened. They could not rest, they couldn't sleep, they just listen all the time.

And, to feel the ship if it will be lost control because if it's lost control they will be just roll over with the waves. But the man, the captain maintain to sail, not with the waves, but in angles, so that the ship is not going to get over the waves, but to ride in angle all the time. It was either onto the right angle or to the left angle because he's exact, not straight to the wind. Not straight into the wind. Because if he does that, he would be plunge into the high waves. And, causes him to either slip sideways or or plunge into the water. So that was the skill he had. And it says, at that one time, that he took over the rudder, steering wheel that time.

He sailed all around the Cape Henrietta Maria during the night. And maintain the course through the night with the very strong wind. And it was late. It was it was not yet morning that he went in to the Moosonee River. So that's the courageous man, went to set sail with the the Hudson Bay Company York boats, in the James Bay, in Hudson Bay and James Bay. So this is one story that I wanted to tell, because many men have talked about that. And man that I knew myself is my grandfather. And he was the one who tell the story.

My grandfather have work with those York boats with the other people as captain. But he was shall we say a pilot at times, as a day captain. And he knew the dangers about these these things. And, to have such person to accomplish such deed was far beyond one-person capability. So the reason why I'm telling this, this is a man who literally would do anything for the Hudson Bay Company. Or was it because he has a pride that he has to prove himself that he's a stronger man than he looks. Or, to show that his power is not just a strength, but the wisdom and the knowledge of the element.

It was said it has been said that he would even wish the weather to happen the way he wants. That was a exaggeration. Some people say they, he would summon the

favorable wind, whenever he wants. If he wants to move fast, he would just summon the right direction wind so he can travel fast. There were such things in the past. There were such people who have such power, really. Like a shamans, the older people. If you ever want to go somewhere by the bay or by water and you want the favorable wind for you to go where you want to go, around the Hudson Bay or James Bay, all you have to do supposedly is to approach an elder. Respected elder who is very wise. And to offer him some gift and say: “may the wind be in favor for my my journey”. And the man would, the old man would say:” may the wind be in favor for you”. That’s a thanks. And he promise the wish to happen.

Most of the time, our First Nation people believed this this practice. And it was those those times that people sail these wooden schooners or, or boats, they were not schooners. They were not shaped like a schooners. They were the flat bottoms and maybe at least six inches keel anyway and to keep it to keep it, go straight, and with the rudder. And, they did not; I cannot say exactly what the measurement they use to measure them.

I understand in the modern world, scientific meaning there is a pun age that’s displace the water. But these were the very small boats. They could carry perhaps maybe one, two ton, maybe three ton. And, maybe one hundred ton, I’m not to so sure. Anyway they were not, they were not big. They were about thirty-five feet long and, probably about ten feet wide and, six feet maybe four feet, maybe three feet deep in the water. Some were a bit large than the other.

So anyway this was a man. To include a link in this story, I like to mention also other people who have done the same thing. Those who have sailed those York boats around the Hudson Bay and James Bay. And there was a man, who was known to be called Bernard Gull, in English. But his name was in, in Cree was Pe-nas. Ki-yask is a gull, seagull. So he had been assigned to be a captain one of those smaller, smaller York boat, which was about thirty-five feet by ten feet wide and probably seven feet or eight feet deep, from the keel to the top. But he do take a very shallow water to and when they are not loaded.

And it was this kind of boat that mister Bernard Gull, he used to be a captain. And he beached three of them. And, the first one in between York Factory and Winisk area.

All three, he wrecked them into the shore. It has been said, on the last one, that he did it on purpose. Because he wanted to, he wanted the Hudson Bay goods to be unloaded on the halfway through point, because it was there that the fox hunting was very plentiful. Foxes were that in that year, good foxing hunting there.

It was in that period when the beaver will dam and, most people were just fox hunting along the Hudson Bay. So some people say he did it on purpose he just make it happen. So the goods that were washed ashore you know he kept them there and he managed these things to sell for the Hudson Bay. As he did before, because he used to be, he used to keep the few Hudson Bay goods in Winisk.

For the Hudson Bay company make a very small food item, basic, a process food like lard, or flour, or a little bit of this. Mostly, mostly gunpowder and shots for for gun, and a few items. So he did it for a certain years as he was, the same time as a captain for these smaller York boats. There is a place there at the mouth of the Winisk where he used to beach his boat and drag it up to the shore and, to winterize.

There's French stories about this man too. But he was a Hudson Bay man. He was one of those who were considered probably as home guard or Hudson Bay employee. Without much of a wages. So that is a story about the York boats and also the people who manned them, and a person who made to be a captain about.

So there was another man that I want to talk about now. There was such also that required, a special skill or, or durability, for the Hudson Bay Company that was a mailman. A special person who deliver the mail, a special mail through between the Hudson Bay, in practice or managers if you wish. Between York Factory and along the east coast of Hudson Bay and James Bay south to Moosonee. That is a district, that the mail mail service was required.

And it is certain time of the year that the managers or company employees, or factors needed to communicate, and they have to have this mail delivered to each post, regardless the condition of the winter. And it was this time this man existed, who was then called by the Native people, the great servant of the Hudson Bay Company. That's all he was known. His name has never been mentioned who he was. Whether he was by himself, whether he was just only one man, or it could have been a sequentious of series of man, or, one after the other, in time period. But, this particular man was stand out of



all those, and the same way as this Ka-kiche-wish was stand out of being a sailor.

And this a mailman, was mystified by other people, mystified other people because his capability to deliver the mail, in that any weather at any, any time of the season. Whether if it's middle of the winter, cold and, no other beast the human would travel but he did. And it does it with short short time. Nobody actually say exactly how many days that he travel from one point A to the point B. So that's the man that I'm talking about. That's the man that has been talked about. Not quite being glorified but, sort of admired and, people wondered how does he manage to do that.

Especially in the different season. They are two seasons in a year, in the in the James Bay lowland, that is not possible or not desirable or even advisable to travel. That is between the middle of May to the first of June. That is a time when the spring thaw is happening. Spring thaw, when the snow is melting, and the ice begin to drift. It's the worst time for anyone to travel in this area, in that area. James Bay lowland.

The muskeg it's full of water, there's hardly any dry ground, when the snow is still there melting it's impossible to travel. And the rivers are are flooded and, rushing and dangerous and ice breaking in that condition. And it was at times that this person was required to take the mail one post to the other. So it has been said, this man did manage to bring the mail across the country. He had establish his own routes, he knows exactly where to walk, where he will be able to walk without much danger, and also he had a system of getting the major rivers without much endangering his life. But nobody actually see him done that. They only know is he left one community, one village, or a settlement of the European, or Hudson Bay Company settlement. Because there was no villages with the Native people at any time. Then he would leave. In the springtime when there's lots of water. Only he carries a small bag and a gun and an axe, that's about it. And, within a given time, he would arrive at the York Factory, at the same season. How many days? How did he do it? How did he cross the rivers that are dangerous and wide and fast? So there is a mystery. But how many of those kind of people existed from sixteen-eighty-two through to eighteen hundred? During the two hundred year period. Not one man can do that. They have to be at least five different men. But this person was outstanding.

That those who have followed this trade were having a difficult time to make the

same speed as he did. And, to find the easier way to travel. But he found, this one particular person. But we forgot, nobody know his name. Nobody remember his name, this person. So how would we find a name for him? And he was sort of a person that, in the white man's world in, in the early days, that we hear about a pony express man. Where people used to ride their horses but the small ponies and deliver the mail across the country in such a given time. So this man practice the same thing. Not because he wants to be a glorified man but he just simply, to prove that he can do it.

And also, perhaps he was enjoying it. And and the Hudson Bay Company paid him, how much, and how? And that's...is it the same person who delivered the mail from the James Bay into the York Factory. Is he carry the mail back or does he go home in his own time? That was the question. And who is this person? Is there any record to know that? Who was the person who would be, who would be doing this? Because our people Omushkego, they don't they don't carry the name, they don't remember the names. Unless they have a nickname or extraordinary name that they could be remembered. Something like a Wiisaakechaahk. So that's a story about the mailman. Hudson Bay mailman and he was known only as the great servant of the Hudson Bay Company.

You don't even have to say Hudson Bay Company; all that was said was the great servant, that's it. Just Ki-chi-a-tos-ke-na-kan, that's the name that was applied to him. So that's as far as I'm gonna talk about this person.

And, the next one I'm gonna talk about is the person that was work, that worked again for the Hudson Bay Company. Somewhere around sixteen-eighty-two and when the, the fur trading company that's known as the Hudson Bay Company, begin to operate all around the Hudson Bay and James Bay. Having to have a distant places to do fur trade with the people, with the First Nation. And also to got all the fur around the bay, requires a lot of volunteer work, or even hundreds trappers have to travel distance to bring their furs to the trading post. And, also, the departing point or receiving point has to be located, which was then, at the beginning, at the York Factory.

And the York Factory was the center of the activity at that time. And so is recorded in the Hudson Bay history. But never was recorded very much about how the Natives cooperate. There never is any, any given credit to these people. And they are the one who establish the company. Not the fur-traders, but the people who gathered the

furs, harvest the furs of all kinds. And they work at the same time. And they were the local people who were hired to do all the, all the labor. To get the to get the factors, make settlement of the European to stay alive.

To get the wood, the heating supply, and all those things. And the food. To be able to feed the people who work there during the summer. And also, especially in summer, they would have to have a food to feed them early spring when they begin to work. And, there were many. And when the ship begin to come, there were more coming, and there was no food. There was actually there was not enough food for them and they had to have a local food. And it was said that time then, the Hudson Bay Company had, a harvesting activity. Let's say, local food.

And therefore they establish some sort of a goose camp operation, and also a fishing camp operation. And then now we come to the point of goose camps. Some local people, elders, some are elders in James Bay who remembered the stories from their grandfathers who passed on to them, have mention about how the Hudson Bay Company used to set up the a goose camps.

And, hired the locals to shoot the geese, and then the geese would be stored into the a wooden kegs where the, the bacon and those things had been brought in. And there was a trade. And it was those wooden kegs you know the snow geese were packed and they were salt. And these kegs would be shipped into the the York Factory. By these a little York food for them that I have mentioned. And the keg of salted geese is heavy. I think they can pack about thirty to forty geese in those large ones. And they were very heavy.

They have to be ship into York Factory, and then there're also local people who did fishing, and the same time, after they shoot the geese and they begin to fish. And they were those employees of the Hudson Bay Company, something like a Moose Factory, and maybe Kashechewan and Fort Severn, in the years later, that they begin to harvest the geese and the fish. And the fish they have is, the local people prepare them and preserve them.

They make a smoke fish, and they make a powdered fish, for Ni-wa hi-jun. Many people call pemmican just because of day is made. But actually, it's dried meat and also fishes, dried and grounded into a a powder. And then when it's cooked, when it mixed

with the oil, or anything else, that's when it's called pemmican. Not before. So that's a story is about these kind of things that happened. And so, it was then that things begin to happen. When the goose hunting comes we establish and also the fishing. So the story is centered now into the Winisk area. Winisk is one of the finest place for the geese hunting.

And, the company really benefit from it. All they have to do is bring in one of their staff, employee to come and bring the black powder in, shell, shots, and primers for the gun. And the local people will do the shooting. It was say that a pound, a cup of, measuring cup of gunpowder was given to each person and a few pound of shots. And this cup, they say you could fire maybe eleven shot. So the eleven shot...(tape runs out).

That you got left after you have shot five geese. And that belongs to you, as a payment. And, when this thing was over, when there's no more way to be able to preserve the geese or to store them away for the shipment to York Factory or Fort Severn, and that's when they stop. And this man, who have brought those shots, I mean powder and the shots, then now he turns his attention to fishing. He has a nets, keel nets, and also he has a sea net.

And so the local people begin to fish. And, the women try to fish and powder the fish, and all these were package and delivered to Fort Severn, or either to York Factory at the last fine season of the year. That is Indian days. So sometimes the people, the sailors from the York Factory were able to come and sail, and pick up all these preserve food then take them to York Factory.

It was one of those people that we talked about in Winisk. And these, these men who worked they were called fishermen. He who come to fish, whatever it is, he who come to set a net was his name. Opaakitahwe. Again, here is not...there is not a sureness that there was only one person who did that. They could have been a series of man. And most of them were home guards from Fort Severn or from the York Factory. And they, most of them they were half- breeds.

And one of the story that we got from, is that one, the last one that was there from York Factory, begin to be very old and turn blind, and wasn't able to walk. And his trainee, which eventually was known as Bird, Pennishish. This the last Opaakitahwe, the last fisherman, was carried back to Fort Severn by his servant. Carried him on his back like a, like a baby (chuckles). And taken back to the Fort Severn for retirement. His

name has never been known. That's the only thing that is known to this kind of person is Opaakitahwe.

That's a name given to this employee. And, the question is, when did this operation begin? And when did it stop? Who were the names? And, in Winisk story, the last one that did the job was a family called a Bird. The first Bird, and then his son, and then finally, the service was not required. I don't know what year was the last Opaakitahwe came, from Fort Severn or York Factory. So that's one other thing that happens during that time.

Many of those people have done a extraordinary work for the Hudson Bay Company but they're all totally forgot. And they they were some, the local people who did most of the work and they were not even mentioned in there. In the great Hudson Bay Company. They were the people in my opinion who created the Hudson Bay Company. So, this is the end of my story. Thank you for listening.